

# Local responses to transform gender-based violence into gender justice and healing

Autonomous Region Of Bougainville Papua New Guinea

SHARE

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Where can you turn, as a young girl in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, when your cousin brothers and relatives want to force you to marry a man twice your age? A Pacific Women-funded project titled From Gender Based Violence to Gender Justice and Healing implemented in Bougainville can help in a number of ways.

The first phase of the project, implemented by the Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), has drawn to a close. Findings from the end of project report (released in July 2018) will inform phase two.

The girl who found herself in the situation above contacted one of the project's safe houses. Whilst she was being cared for in the safe house, a counsellor from the project's men's hub went to speak with her family. The counsellor talked about the issue of forced and child marriage, how it violates the girl's human rights and what it would mean for the girl's future and safety. After a number of sessions that lasted over a month, the family members came to realise that what they were doing was illegal and against the girl's will. The girl then felt safe to return home.

Safe houses and the men's hub are only some of the ways the project has worked to achieve its outcomes, key objectives and milestones. An excerpt from page 31 of the end of project report clearly describes some of these ways.

'Results of project implementation of this 3-year project showed that the approach taken by Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation and IWDA is successful, effective and working. It is a coherent and comprehensive approach that looks at different areas of change (individual, community, structural and institutional). It engages various types of strategies, such as

service provision, advocacy, awareness raising, capacity building, educating, and networking. The NCfR team feels that their work is innovative, as they pilot project strategies, and through action learning approaches, they adapt to changing contexts and integrate lessons learnt into future work that allows a better response to the needs of women and children of Bougainville. This was also recognised by partners.'

Over three years, the project directly reached 21,888 people (13,163 women and girls, including 31 with disabilities and 8,725 men, including 19 with disabilities).

The end of project report highlighted some of the achievements and lessons learned during this time. It was found that the proactive engagement of women human rights defenders at the community level to address gender-based violence and gender inequality through awareness raising, education, providing support and initial response to cases of violence had made a difference and brought positive change to communities. Women reported feeling safer in their communities, attitudes changed towards more respect of women and non-acceptance of violence, women human rights defenders and police collaborated successfully in responding to cases of gender-based violence and there was a reduction in alcohol and drug sales and consumption.

Other related outcomes from the project included increased women's leadership and decision making opportunities. For 46 women, involvement in the project led to roles as leaders and community facilitators in other development projects (12 women) or being elected to community governments (24 women).

The full end of project report can be found on the IWDA website:

<https://iwda.org.au/resource/from-gender-based-violence-to-gender-justice-and-healing-end-of-project-report-iwda-ncfr-july-2018/>