

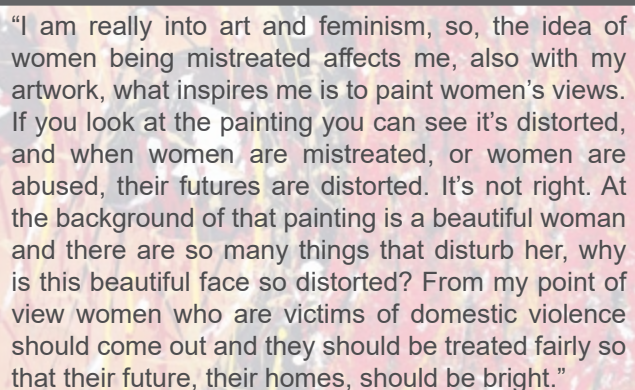
# **Women's Experiences of Family Violence Services in Solomon Islands**

November 2019





### Cover Artwork



"I am really into art and feminism, so, the idea of women being mistreated affects me, also with my artwork, what inspires me is to paint women's views. If you look at the painting you can see it's distorted, and when women are mistreated, or women are abused, their futures are distorted. It's not right. At the background of that painting is a beautiful woman and there are so many things that disturb her, why is this beautiful face so distorted? From my point of view women who are victims of domestic violence should come out and they should be treated fairly so that their future, their homes, should be bright."

Laura Linda Keyaumi Richardson is an artist from Isabel and Lord Howe, Malaita in Solomon Islands.

**This report was written by Dr Anouk Ride and Pauline Soaki with assistance from Ruth Maetala and Lorio Sisiolo.**

**PLEASE REFERENCE THIS REPORT AS FOLLOWS:** Ride, A & P. Soaki (2019) *Women's Experiences of Family Violence Services in Solomon Islands*. Honiara: Australian Aid/Solomon Islands Government.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CCC</b>	Christian Care Centre
<b>DFAT</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australian Government)
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>FSV</b>	Family and Sexual Violence
<b>FPA</b>	Family Protection Act
<b>FSC</b>	Family Support Centre
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>IPO</b>	Interim Protection Order
<b>JIMS</b>	Justice Information Management Systems
<b>MHMS</b>	Ministry of Health and Medical Services
<b>MJLA</b>	Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
<b>MPNS</b>	Ministry of Police and National Security
<b>MWYCFA</b>	Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs
<b>PO</b>	Protection Order
<b>PSN</b>	Police Safety Notice
<b>PSO</b>	Public Solicitor Office
<b>RSIPF</b>	Royal Solomon Islands Police Force
<b>SIG</b>	Solomon Islands Government
<b>SPC</b>	Pacific Community Secretariat
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNW</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
<b>VAW</b>	Violence Against Women
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solomon Islands has high rates of violence in families – with 64% of women between the age 15 – 49 years found to have experienced sexual and physical violence by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup> In response to this pressing security issue, Solomon Islands Government has taken a number of measures including the gazetting of the Family Protection Act 2014 (FPA) in April 2016.

Key government agencies such as police, justice, women and health were collectively trained in a whole-of-government response to provide services to advance protection and safety of women and girls. These agencies are referred to collectively as service providers in the report and are the implementers of the FPA in Solomon Islands. The FPA includes options for women to take out Police Safety Notices (PSN) (issued by police, valid for 21 days with conditions for violent perpetrators), Protection Orders (more permanent orders issued by the courts), pursue court cases and obtain other services such as counselling (see Figure B).

Three years later, in April 2019, this research project began fieldwork to ask women what their experience was of using services under the FPA and whether these services had improved their personal sense of safety. This study aims to learn from survivors' stories – particularly about how they have accessed, used and received support from the service providers as stipulated by the FPA – to examine the effectiveness of the legislation functions from a service user perspective. Through gathering and comparing the perspectives of women survivors of violence, this report has identified what is working well, what is not working so well, and what changes to the process could enable more women to be more satisfied with outcomes.

This report is a collaborative effort with many contributors. The main data set includes interviews with 126 people who have used FPA services – 123 women and 3 men – in Guadalcanal, Isabel, Malaita, Temotu, Western Province, plus 24 province-based staff (a total of 150 interviews). This study represents the perspectives of approximately 10% of all women who have used the family protection system from 1 January 2016 to 1 September 2019. A representative sample of women living in urban and rural areas was selected across five provinces where violence is high and there have been some records of service use to date.

The questions and recommendations were formed in close collaboration with Ministry for Justice and Legal Services (MJLA – during 6 meetings including with Public Solicitors Office and Justice Information Management System staff), Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA – during three coordinating meetings) Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF – during 12 meetings including with the Family Violence Unit, Policy and Strategy Division and provincial police stations) and survivor services (namely the national referral centre Seif Ples, support service Family Support Centre and refuge Christian Care Centre, as well as provincial level refuges). The recommendations were also endorsed by the Family Protection Advisory Council whose committee members are permanent secretaries and the RSIPF Commissioner.

The research process itself was led by Pauline Soaki (Gender Consultant and former Director, Women's Division MWYCFA) and Dr Anouk Ride (Gender and Social Inclusion Researcher) and supported by Ruth Maetala and Lorio Sisiolo who both work in the women's sector. Collectively, the team has 50 years' experience working in the women's sector and on family violence research and policy. The research was funded by the Australian High Commission and special thanks are provided to former Counsellor - Heath, Education and Gender Equality Melissa Stutsel who was key in formulating the scope of this project.

Over a period of five months, researchers visited Guadalcanal, Isabel, Malaita, Temotu and Western Province to interview women known to have used the FPA services about why they decided to go to that particular service, what information and action was provided from that service, decisions women ultimately made as a result (and influencing factors on these decisions) and women's safety and satisfaction after service provision. These research questions and themes are visually represented in Figure A below (the coding tree). Interviews were conversational and conducted in settings women had chosen because they were convenient or comfortable (such as community spaces, homes or service provider offices).

Around one third of women went to services because of encouragement and information given by family and friends, 15% went because of media or awareness, 6% due to information given by chiefs and the rest

because they had the feeling the police was the “right” place to go as they are in charge of law and order. It was found that many women faced common influencing factors as to whether or not they would continue to use a service: financial pressures (reliance on husband to provide for children), housing (lack of a safe place to stay for women, or being told to leave the family home because of taking action against a violence perpetrator), family pressure (particularly from in-laws, and less often from the woman’s own family) or alternatively family support (direct support within the family to access services or pursue a violence matter with police or courts), employers (some helped women to access services, others discouraged women from using services) and personal contacts (people who knew someone working at a service were more likely to go there and more likely to have positive experience at the service).

However, it was also found that attitudes and information of service providers themselves have a prominent role in decision making as to whether or not a woman would pursue a matter under the FPA. Health service staff encouraged women to make police reports and, in some cases, made reports on behalf of women and children. Violence services – particularly Seif Ples (a national GBV referral centre and 24-hour refuge), Christian Care Centre (CCC, a refuge run by Anglican nuns) and Family Support Centre (FSC a legal, counselling and support service with provincial offices) – were found to give consistent information about options to pursue matters with police or through other services. Only one case was reported where a provincially-based service sided with the violence perpetrator and discouraged a woman from using a PSN. It was noted that the lack of refuge services in the provinces provides risks for children and women awaiting court cases and this was a gap in current violence services.

Women who had sought legal advice from the Public Solicitors Office and/or pursued court cases generally had high satisfaction as their visits to these services resulted in court cases or referrals. There was only one woman in the study that had agreed to reconcile with the partner and therefore the court case had been withdrawn. It was noted that women interviewed for this study who went to the Public Solicitors Office in this research were those who had some knowledge of the system either through their own work and personal contacts or through other service use (e.g. referral from FSC).

The most commonly used service under the FPA is RSIPF. This research included stories of 149 visits to police by a total of 107 women interviewed who had visited police stations in relation to violence. The majority of women who had PSNs issued by police were satisfied with the service and felt safe - 70% of all women issued PSNs – with others facing further difficulty because violence continued, and action was not taken due to service provider response or influencing situations or a combination of these two factors. While PSNs are clearly a valued intervention for women experiencing violence (see testimonies in Figure H and I) there is still a gap between the number of women going to police stations with injuries and reports of violence and the number of women who are given information and action in regard to PSNs. Of the 107 women who went to police stations, while all but 4 women had experienced physical violence and felt under threat, only 38% of women who went to police about family violence matters were issued PSNs.

Looking at all visits to police stations, the number one most common information and action provided by officers was no information or action. In such cases women may be told to “come back later”, discouraged or other responses given. The second most common information and action by police was to give information and action about Police Safety Notices, indicating uptake of the system is progressing and can be expanded.

The third most common information and action by police when women went to stations for assistance about family violence was arrests and actions related to court cases. The fourth most common information and action by police was encouragement to reconcile or police actively doing reconciliations at police stations. While reconciliation is a part of traditional dispute resolution, it is forbidden under the Family Protection Act for police to reconcile parties. Courts, however, if given evidence of a reconciliation and agreement of the parties can decide to withdraw court cases. In Solomon Islands, the power discrepancy between men and women and women’s feelings that male police mediators will side with male violence perpetrators are contributing factors to women’s dissatisfaction with police reconciliations. In contrast, women were satisfied with reconciliations facilitated by the nuns at the Christian Care Centre, which have a model of individual perpetrator and victim counselling and/or couples counselling prior to reconciliation. When reconciliation was proposed by police officers it was always as the *only* option for women and other services that could be helpful such as counselling were not mentioned as an option.

Overall, of all the 107 women who went to the police, 46% felt safe after the police had done their work:



mostly because PSNs had led perpetrators to change their behaviour or a warning had the same effect. Encouragement and referrals from other services to police to ask for PSNs is also having a positive effect on uptake of PSNs as evidenced in the testimonies provided in this report.

Increased use of the FPA is likely to have many benefits for families. While some types of violence, for example child sexual abuse and rape, were viewed as a matter best pursued in criminal cases, for other types of violence women interviewed in this study were favourable to the use of PSNs as a measure that could act as a warning and stop violence without having the time and financial burden of lengthy court cases. While the FPA is sometimes accused of “breaking up families”, this study indicates that opposite is true. Most of the women who reported their partners to police and had positive experiences ended up staying with their partner or other family member: 57% of all women who were satisfied with their safety after using police reports or PSNs. 31% ended up separating from their husbands or other family members and feeling safe after use of services and the remainder had family members in prison or custody. Of women who went to police and had negative experiences (no action and/or discouragement to use services) 50% of these women ended up staying with their abusive partner or family member and 45% separated from their partner or family member involved in violence but still felt unsafe.

It was noted in the study that there are certain types of violence not well covered by the current FPA services that could do with further attention and projects in the future. The most important of these, in terms of the scope of its effect, is a lack of knowledge and action in FPA system about children. Examples include children being interrogated by police or medically examined (in the case of child rape) without a guardian present, and children not being referred to specific counselling and refuges when needed.

It appears there are not many users of services who are people with disabilities, and the one interviewee in this study who had a disability was dissatisfied with police response to her case and suggested police be better sensitised about rights of people with disabilities. This also may be an area where violence services can better link with disability networks to encourage use of the system. Other issues discussed in this report was the need for specific policies and procedures for law enforcement officers who are experiencing violence at home, and the need to strengthen legal protection and services for women who are forced to or voluntarily marry foreigners (such as mining, logging workers and new migrant business owners) and face added obstacles to obtaining legal advice and prosecution of cases.

Economic violence, in particular distribution of assets and property rights for women, was not treated as a criminal matter and it was more difficult for women to access legal support. The few cases in this study dealing with economic violence indicate that there is a need for further research to scope how economic violence impacts women’s work and livelihoods and what can be done to improve access to legal services and protect women’s rights.

The report concludes that around half of service users were satisfied with the services and felt safe after FPA service use. Of all the 126 interviewees, 62 people felt satisfied that services had improved their safety and 64 felt dissatisfied that services had not improved their personal safety (or that of their children). Their satisfaction was based on their assessment after a range of services had been provided (sometimes as many as five different types of services, and sometimes just one service). If a visit to a service resulted in an action by the service, violence perpetrator behaviour change or separation from the perpetrator to a safe place then women were satisfied and appreciative of the FPA services. Common features of the satisfied service users were their visits had always resulted in referrals or actions, that perpetrators had changed or been distanced from the woman and also, one third of satisfied users knew personally a service staff member which increased trust and accountability of services.

Recommendations to strengthen the system more broadly and increase its effectiveness are provided in the final section of this report. Cross sectoral recommendations include development of three key tools 1) a “decision tree” to give service users and service providers an understanding of options for actions under the FPA 2) a guide on how to provide services to children in an appropriate and safe manner 3) a feedback form for service providers to follow up and assess themselves satisfaction and safety after services.

Each government agency and the NGO sector are also provided with specific recommendations as per their responsibilities under the FPA in the final section of this report. While many of these ideas are not new and currently underway, the scope of recommendations also suggests government and donors look at greater resourcing of FPA services in order to fully address family violence. Particular thanks are provided to the following agencies for their close collaboration and input into the recommendations: Ministry for

Justice and Legal Services (MJLA), Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and survivor services (namely the national GBV referral centre Seif Ples, support service Family Support Centre and refuge Christian Care Centre, as well as provincial level refuges).

Improving services for women provided under the FPA will require procedural changes at service provider agencies, further training of service provider staff and awareness and knowledge of the women themselves. As one Malaitan mother of six children, aged 40-49, resident in Guadalcanal explained, it can be a challenge to have family violence considered seriously: “The police woman wanted to come and arrest – but the police man wanted to treat this as a family thing. Everyone agreed but I was not satisfied, so *me lukim* [how I see it] there was a kind of bias, not effective, other friends too say that they did not get safety notice most of the time, they [the police] just want to put it aside.” We thank the 150 women and service providers who gave information to the research team for this report in order to help change perception and action about family violence from a private or family matter to a “serious crime.”





# INTRODUCTION

## Why understanding experiences of family violence survivors' matters

Solomon Islands has relatively high rates of violence against women and girls. The *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study* in 2009 reported 64% of Solomon Islands women aged 15-29 years surveyed recounted experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> This pressing social issue has recently attracted more investment from donors and intervention by Solomon Islands Government (SIG) in the past decade. This has included a dedicated national referral line improved for response, the strengthening of the formal referral network (SAEFNET) and its rollout to provinces and increased access to justice, with the Family Protection Act (FPA) coming into effect in 2016.

SIG has made several commitments to address the most commonly experienced violence in the country, violence against women and girls, which includes family violence (perpetrated by family members and people living in a family-like setting) and sexual violence (particularly rape, which is believed to have increased during and post the civil conflict from 1998-2003 known as the tensions)<sup>3</sup>. The government's key strategy is the *National Policy on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls* (EVAWG) 2016 – 2020, recently revised from its first implementation in 2010. The EVAWG policy outcome 2 is focused on actions for strengthening the legal frameworks, law enforcement and the justice system. The FPA stipulates that victims have access to the following services: counselling and medical services, police, legal services, and a safe place in the community. The policy then recognizes that many women and girls experiencing violence currently do not have access to these critical services and change involves strengthening of existing medical, counselling, police, legal and social services and facilities. Services must be victim/survivor centred and accessible by all women and girls, including marginalised groups (such as rural women and girls and women and girls with disabilities). Of particular interest to this research study are the array of needed actions to eliminate violence such as (2.3) Increase understanding of gender inequality, violence against women and girls, the responsibility of police, court officials and local court justices and on the application of relevant Acts to enforce laws; and (2.4) Strengthen data collection and analysis for use by service providers, including case management and data sharing on VAWG<sup>4</sup>.

Together with the launch of the revised EVAWG policy was the *Solomon Islands Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan 2016 - 2020*, the first of its kind in the Pacific Islands region, with several agreed actions to reduce risk of gender-based violence. This report specifically contributes to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan Action 3.2b: "Review and analyse barriers to reporting and develop mitigation on strategies and promote victims/survivors' access to justice, including staff and partners".<sup>5</sup>

In April 2016, the Solomon Islands Government gazetted the Family Protection Act 2014 (FPA), criminalising domestic violence, and police and courts started cases under the FPA. The Act covers a range of types of violence including physical violence, emotional violence and economic violence and covers any persons in a family or living in a family setting.

The Family Protection Act provides options for services to address violence including services such as awareness, counselling, medical reports, Police Safety Notices, Protection Orders and court cases (see Figure B). The FPA services are intended to protect and assist women and girls from further risk of violence and to hold and penalise perpetrators accountable for what was once treated as a family private matter. Key government agencies such as police, justice, women and health were collectively trained in a whole-of-government response to provide services to advance protection and safety of women and girls.

While Solomon Islands has seen a rise in the number of prosecutions for family violence cases, it is difficult to track experiences of service use. The Justice Management Information System (JIMS) coverage for recording data is limited to police and justice institutions in Honiara and provinces where data management is electronic and regularly reported. Information in the provinces is often in paper documents and remains difficult to ascertain, as these paper documents are rarely transmitted to JIMS or Family Violence Unit but are kept by the service providers' files on location. Incomplete recording of violence type, province, ethnicity and age of those involved in cases means it is difficult to track use of the FPA in different provinces and by different people. Available data from MJLA indicates from April 2016 to December 2018 there were 83 FPA cases, 39 of which were still open and 44 were closed. There have also been 20 Interim Protection

5 Solomon Islands Government (2016) *Women, Peace and Security NAP*, pp 25

Orders issued by Authorised Justices under the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team pilot project which aims to increase access to justice by women in Malaita and Guadalcanal.<sup>6</sup>

There were 1034 Police Safety Notices issued from 1 January 2017 to 1 May 2019 according to RSIPF headquarters records. Although all PSNs should be sent through to the Family Violence Unit, there were sometimes stations relying on paper files, and it is suggested that maybe not all PSNs are captured in available records to date. Use of PSNs varied across provinces with usage of PSNs highest in Honiara and Malaita, low in Isabel and Temotu and non-existent in Rennell-Bellona (with only 1 recorded PSN to date).

One of the key challenges in FPA implementation is broadening service provider and service user knowledge of options for action and services under the FPA. In a recent study by the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWCFA) across three provinces, 90% of people (men, women and youth in focus groups) were unaware of the 132 national survivors' referral line or the FPA. Lack of awareness of justice and support services was compounded by social norms that support gender-based violence, particularly the use of violence to enforce gender norms and victim-blaming attitudes which means women may feel they should not or cannot be supported if they seek assistance.<sup>7</sup> The study identifies 10 key findings and recommendations related to communication around the FPA and family violence (see Appendix A). Another report also indicated that lack of financial autonomy of women and dependence on husbands and other men for financial support also appears to be an obstacle to women in violent relationships seeking help and participating in the economy.<sup>8</sup> A survey of 347 women in Guadalcanal and Malaita found 28% had heard of a law about domestic violence and only 13% of women correctly identified the FPA as the relevant law.<sup>9</sup>

Social attitudes and their adoption by police and service staff may be a factor in service provision: in a small sample of survivors who had accessed services in 2018, women said they had faced negative attitudes and been told to go back and reconcile with their husband from both justice and refuge services.<sup>10</sup>

A quantitative study on access to the entire justice system (not just FPA) has been completed this year by UNDP's Access to Justice Project which provided some statistics on perceptions of justice and how much justice services costs. Findings relevant to this study include the lower satisfaction of people with disabilities in services overall compared to others. Higher proportions of women (46%, vs 26% of men) surveyed said they would take family violence cases to police (rather than chiefs for example, however the majority of women also reported dissatisfaction with police in resolving disputes).<sup>11</sup>

In 2017, Solomon Islands was one of the countries selected to pilot the UN Essential Services Package, and this research is a key action under Core Element 2.1 which includes research on outcomes of coordinated service delivery. The effectiveness of services will be explored in this research, with potential applicability of findings to other countries explored as part of the conclusions to the report. Locally, this report will also inform the roll out of SAFENET (a network of agencies responding to violence) into the provinces in Solomon Islands.

April 2019 marked the three-year anniversary of the enforcement of the Family Protection Act. It is an appropriate time then to assess experiences of women and girls from April 2016 to April 2019, with a view towards recommendations for the duties of service providers and referral from 2019 into the future.

6 Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) Pilot Project to Increase Women's Access to Justice in Guadalcanal and Malaita in the Solomon Islands Baseline Report, July 2018.

7 Ride/Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs. (2018). *Stretim: Social Attitudes and Communication about Violence Against Women and Girls*. Honiara: SIG.

8 Ride/World Bank/CAUSE Gender and Social Inclusion Report, Forthcoming 2019.

9 Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) Pilot Project to Increase Women's Access to Justice in Guadalcanal and Malaita in the Solomon Islands Baseline Report, July 2018.

10 Ibid.

11 Solomon Islands Government/UNDP/Australian Aid, *Solomon Islands Access to Justice Study 2019*. Honiara: SIG. The study is focused on perceptions of services and includes a sample of 39 men and women who had family violence related disputes.

## Research collaborators

### Donors, key ministries and stakeholders

This research involved close collaboration with the Ministry for Justice and Legal Services (MJLA), Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and survivor services (namely the national referral centre Seif Ples, support service Family Support Centre and refuge Christian Care Centre, as well as provincial level refuges). These agencies were involved in defining the research questions, identifying potential interviewees, receiving draft research findings and acting on any operational matters, and drafting sector-wide and organisational recommendations arising from the report, particularly during four stakeholder workshops held as part of this research process. There were six meetings with Ministry for Justice and Legal Services (including the Public Solicitors Office, JIMs staff and senior management), three coordinating meetings with Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (particularly with the Women's Division), twelve meetings with Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (including provincial station commanders, RSIPF Policy and Strategy division and RSIPF Family Violence Unit) and survivor services (namely the national referral centre Seif Ples, support service Family Support Centre and refuge Christian Care Centre, as well as provincial level refuges).

Kind thanks are provided to all agencies assisting with this project. As it is unique in the Pacific, this research report also intends to inform donors about strategies for improving services and gaps in service provision and use by women. Acknowledgement is provided to Australian High Commission for funding this research as a contribution towards its support for gender equality and ending violence against women and girls in the Pacific.

### Research team

At the same time as this research is highly collaborative, this research was conducted by independent researchers, Pauline Soaki (Master in Gender and Development, University of Melbourne) and Dr Anouk Ride (Phd, University of Queensland) with the assistance of Ruth Maetala and Lorio Sisiolo. This team of gender researchers collectively has fifty years working in the women's sector and/or on family violence research and policy. The researchers worked autonomously and as representatives of Sukwadi Media and Research, to enable survivors to tell their views freely, to de-link the interviews from service providers to encourage a free discussion of views about services, and to provide recommendations for change in agencies or sectorally as needed, rather than solely for a particular service or agency.





### Approach

The primary intent of this research was to examine the effectiveness of the Family Protection Act system from the perspective of women who have experienced violence and used, or attempt to use, the system. Through gathering and comparing the perspectives of women survivors of violence, researchers identified what is working well, what is not working so well, and what changes to the system could enable more women to be more satisfied with outcomes.

This focus means the research questions were around what happened, and its impact on the situation of the woman and the thinking of the woman survivor of violence. It is a review of women's perceptions of service effectiveness, not a broader analysis of causes and manifestations of violence, or around what non-service actors (such as chiefs and churches) may do in situations of violence.

To date, most use of the FPA system has been for cases involving physical violence, rather than economic or emotional violence. For this reason, this study focuses primarily on physical violence, although a key question for researchers was if women experience other forms of violence during or after service intervention. So, economic and emotional violence is addressed in coding the women's experiences and the findings below.

This research uses a "do no harm" approach, which meant research design and conduct was acutely aware of, and responsive to, any risks to women that arose from the research. The approach is informed by other practice guides on researching violence, particularly from the World Health Organization.<sup>12</sup> Among the measures taken to minimise risk is to frame the research to be about services rather than violence experienced, and to have a process of ongoing consent, where consent is taken over several rounds, allowing women to amend or withdraw their participation if needed.

The first consent was provided at first contact where the questions, confidentiality of what is said, and use of the interviews was explained. The potential interviewee was asked if she has any questions or concerns about the interview and the researcher responded to these risks by, for example, letting the interviewee choose the location and time of the interview, providing travel assistance if needed, addressing any concerns over the interview's use. If the concerns could not be addressed, then the interview was cancelled. If the interview proceeded, consent was recorded via a script and form, which explains the conditions of research and what to do if the interviewee finds telling their story distressing or disturbing. The final consent was at the end of the interview, where the interviewee can reflect on their story and amend if needed.

Even though the questions were about services rather than violence experienced, negative experiences using services can be traumatic and the process of using services may ask the survivor to recall traumatic experiences. If the interviewee was visibly distressed during the interview, they were asked to take a break, stop the interview and were reminded of local counsellors in the area that can assist interviewees with feelings of sadness, anger, fear or other thoughts and behaviours that arise after traumatic experiences.

In the Solomon Islands context, confidentiality is bounded by the lack of private spaces and individual autonomy for women. In particular, a woman accessing a service in secret is almost impossible, as movements of women are known and shared in small communities, and there are very few private spaces or modes of transport. For this reason, the researchers framed the research as about "women's services" and conducted the interviews at services the women interviewees have previously visited, so the visit can be seen as part of a woman's "ordinary" business, be conducted at a place where the woman feels safe and maintain the focus on "women's services" rather than violence of men or problems in the community more broadly.

In the coding of data, de-identification covered names, village/suburb, and attention was paid to the likelihood of identification and numbers of women using the system in each province. For example, if there were only three Police Safety Notices in a particular province in a calendar year the chances of identification of interviewee was high and the interviewee may be listed as a "interviewee in the provinces" rather than naming a specific province.

The intent of putting women's voices at the heart of a report, which features anonymous interviewees rather than identified women, is also an ethical issue to consider in the research's analysis. In this case, the researchers used the words of the interviewees directly without editing and attend to multiple meanings in the comments of interviewees rather than single interpretations in coding responses to questions. This project aims to represent the diversity and lived experience of women, through using their direct words, as well as identifying common factors that can lead to improved service delivery.

The research also aims to have an impact on service provision and conduct of agencies responsible for the implementation of the Family Protection Act. The researchers established a collaborative and constructive engagement with the implementing agencies. Initial consultations were held with representatives from MWYCFA, Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), MJLA, RSIPF, Seif Ples, Christian Care Centre, Family Support Centre to confirm the scope of the study and research questions. This established the scope of knowledge currently and relevant research questions to explore the research topic. These meetings also helped to formulate a list of potential research participants in the selected provincial locations.

Specific feedback from interviewees on a service provider was provided in side meetings between the researchers and offices of the service provider involved, and these meetings could include recommendations to the service provider to respond to these issues.

## Recruitment of interviewees

Recruitment involved approaching interviewees from a range of ethnicities, education and employment levels, aged 15 years and above. Where possible, women with disabilities were included in recruitment efforts, particularly by meeting with disability organisations and advocates to try and use their networks to solicit participation of women with disabilities, however, it was found only a few women with disabilities have used the FPA system, and disability is not recorded in service provider data systems.

Participants were recruited through service providers or community members with which they already had some contact. Conditions of research were clearly explained prior to commencing interviews, the interviewee chose the time and place for the interview, and interviewees were reminded the research was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Women were invited to outline any risks of the research and strategies to deal with this risk. It was explained that the intent of the research is not to relive the traumatic incident or incidents of violence but what followed in terms of assistance and services provided. When given this information and options, 98% of women approached for interviews agreed to participate.

## Data collection

The research methodology was tested in two provinces (Guadalcanal and Western Province) over the dates 1-12 July. As a result of the test the first question in the study was changed to ask the question more directly, in Pijin expression, but otherwise the methodology was unchanged. To address barriers to accessing counselling services, a practice was adopted for researchers to provide mobile phone top up to interviewees who expressed interest in counselling, legal services or contacting the police following their discussion with the researchers. For some interviewees, the analytic process of the interview helped the women identify further actions they wanted to take: these included counselling for anger and stress, following up with police the status of their report or order, and seeking advice on legal issues (such as divorce or child custody).

Trained female interviewers recorded consent on a form prior to commencement of the interviews, which also noted demographic data such as age, residency, ethnicity and educational level. Participants were invited to tell of their experience interacting with service providers and the system in semi-structured interviews, using the agreed research questions. A story telling approach was taken to interviews, where the research questions provide prompts if answers to these questions were not provided in the interviewee's story.

Participants were interviewed one-on-one in Pijin and audio of their conversations was recorded on mobile phones. These audio files were transcribed into written texts as soon as possible after the interview had taken place and paired with their demographic data from the forms. This data was de-identified (without name and specific place) and during the coding process further details were removed (such as specific names of other people or titles that would only be held by a small group and could be identified).

Interviews with service users lasted from 0.5-2 hours and were supplemented with 24 background interviews with service provider staff.

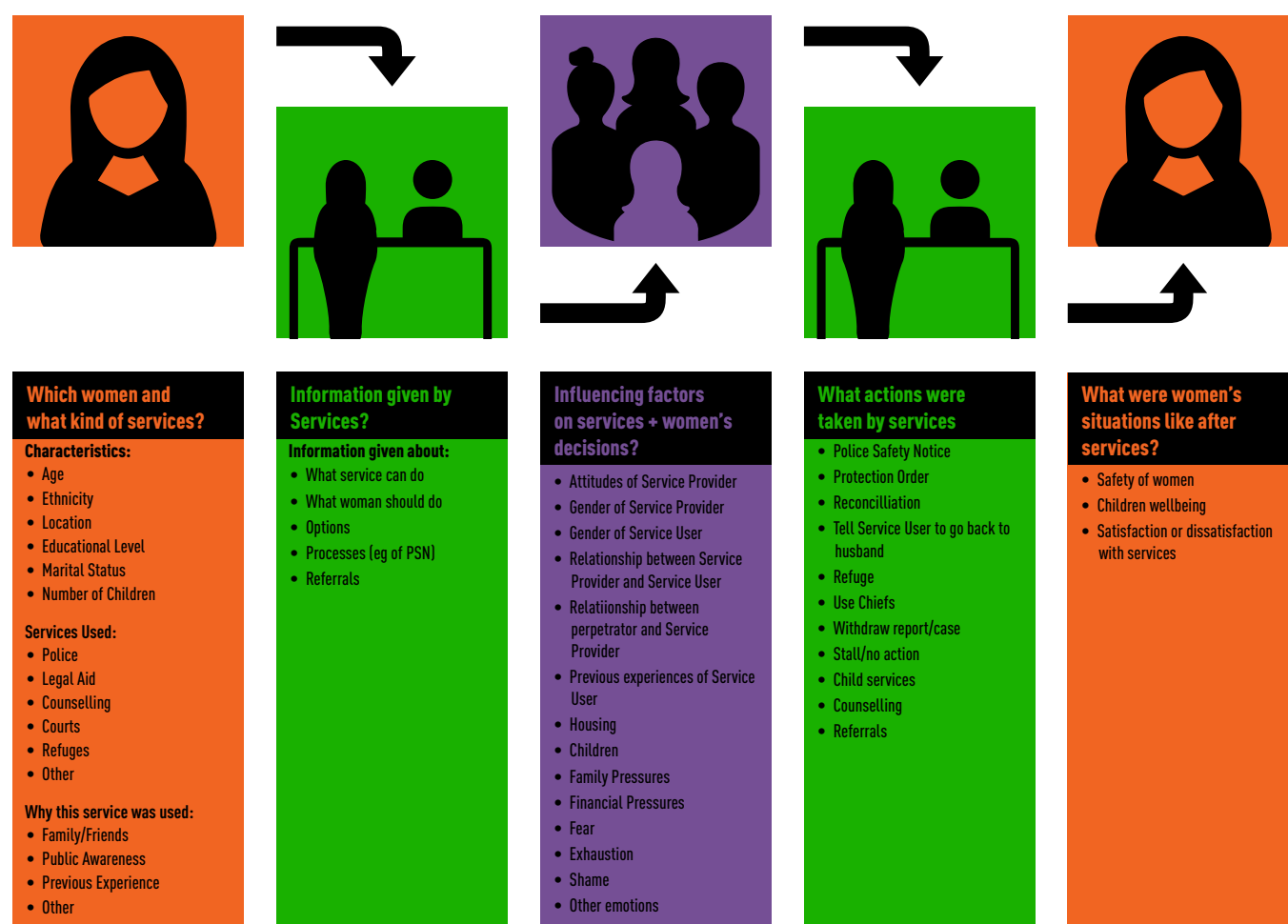
## Analysis

Each paragraph of the interview transcripts was coded according to pre-set themes (see Figure A below) with new themes added as appropriate. This analysis allowed researchers to search themes and demographic information for correlations and also to consider many ideas in a single expression. Attention was paid to the transcript as the primary means of control the survivor women have over their narratives, and where any confusion came up in what was said, this was checked back with the women.

Analysis then worked from comparing all answers to a question. From here, common and rare comments were grouped together and presented as findings. Recommendations were drafted based on these findings, with the view that while the report sought to address barriers faced by the most women, any barrier faced by any woman was important to consider and include.

Findings from the draft report was then fed back to Honiara-based service providers. These sessions confirmed findings, discussed any differences between service provider and survivor perceptions about and use of the system and helped draft recommendations. The same group of stakeholders that participated in the inception report were invited back to undertake this review and confirmation of findings prior to the report launch.

**Figure A: Questions and themes examined in this report (Coding tree)**





## FINDINGS

### What survivors experienced and lessons learnt

Experiences of women and children who have used services under the Family Protection Act are highly diverse. Data for this study includes 126 interviews (with 123 women, 3 men). These interviewees went to services for help about a range of problems: economic violence (destruction of property by partners or sons), child custody and maintenance issues (including neglect), physical violence causing temporary or permanent injuries, sexual violence (including rape, incest and sexual abuse of children) and domestic disputes (including arguments between couples about drinking, socialising, extra marital affairs and disputes about rights of first and second wives).

Support from families to access services, or alternatively, pressure on women by family members not to pursue the matter with services, varied widely. The response of services and the types of information given to people with family violence problems was highly specific to the relationship of the person to the service provider (and/or the perpetrator to the service provider) and the views of the service provider, rather than standard across services or locations. Women's outcomes related to safety after they had accessed services, and satisfaction about services have more in common and from these common threads, several findings and recommendations become clear.

Services studied in this report include counselling, legal aid, refuge accommodation, the courts, police, Police Safety Notices, Protection Orders and medical services, particularly information given when presenting with injuries caused by family violence, or to seek medical reports for police matters, as well as the role of local chiefs and authorized justices. An outline of what these services do and how they are intended to operate is provided in Figure B below.

### Data sample and characteristics

The data set for this study is small but representative – interviews were conducted with 10% of all women who have used FPA services (from 1 January 2017 to 1 September 2019), across five of the provinces where family violence is known to be high, and some records exist of service use. It was noted that because of poor information management, it was often difficult to locate service users in provinces, particularly those not serviced by Family Support Centre or another service aimed specifically at violence survivors, with details of where clients could be located. The data for this report is 150 interviews: 123 with women and 3 with men who accessed services under the FPA system and 24 with service provider staff. 36 interviews with service users were in Guadalcanal, 15 in Isabel, 19 in Malaita, 26 in Temotu and 31 in Western Province. People from various ethnicities and age ranges were consulted, however, it was observed women older than 30 years were more likely to use the system, with 67% of people in this study aged between 30-49 years, as illustrated in Figure C. 21% of service users interviewed were aged 15-29, 36% aged 30-39, 31% aged 40-49 and 12% over 50 years.

**Figure C: Age and ethnicity of people accessing services (n=126)**

PROVINCE/ AGE	15-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total Ethnic Links
CENTRAL	1	0	0	0	1
CHOISEUL	0	1	1	0	2
GUADALCANAL	4	4	3	0	11
ISABEL	3	8	8	1	20
MALAITA	9	15	15	5	44
MAKIRA	0	0	0	0	0
RENBEL	0	0	0	0	0
TEMOTU	3	13	9	6	31
WESTERN PROVINCE	7	8	8	4	27
OTHER PACIFIC IS. NATION	1	1	0	0	2

**Figure B: Family Protection Act – its tools and scope**

### **POLICE SAFETY NOTICES (PSNs)**

A Police Safety Notice is issued by RSIPF if officers determine violence has taken place or is likely to take place in domestic relationships (such as between husband and wife, parents and children or other family members). PSNs can also be issued on behalf of a vulnerable person, defined as a child or person with a cognitive impairment. The PSNs lasts for 21 days (with a possible extension of another 21 days) and forbids violence and sets out other rules for the person who has been or is determined likely to be violent. A copy of the PSN is to be given to the person affected by the violence, the person who committed the violence and to the Magistrates Court.

PSNs can include the following types of rules for the violent person: to forbid the person going to certain locations or areas, to forbid the violent person to approach the affected person (within a certain distance), to stop the person from contacting the affected person, forbid the violent person engaging in behaviour that is likely to lead to violence (e.g. consuming alcohol) and a ban on possession of firearms or weapons.

Police are also required under the Family Protection Act to help the affected person to find a safe place to stay, access counselling and medical services and legal services.

### **PROTECTION ORDERS (POs)**

There are two types of orders - Protection Orders issued by the Magistrates Court, and Interim Protection Orders typically facilitated by Authorised Justices. People also go to the Public Solicitors Office and Police for assistance to make Protection Orders. Protection Orders can be used for family law and criminal law proceedings before a court where the violent person and the person affected by the violence are in domestic relationships with each other. Social welfare officers or police officers can apply for a Protection Order on behalf of the person if they are deemed vulnerable.

Police Officers of the nearest police station must give the Protection Order to the violent person. This is a complicating factor in the case of Interim Protection Orders, as Authorised Justices often are some distance from police stations, and police officers may not be able to travel to hand over Protection Orders. Interim Protection Orders can remain in place until it is revoked, a Protection Order is made or the affected person withdraws the application for a final order.

Protection Orders can include a wider range of prohibitions than Police Safety Notices. Protection Orders can include all of the rules of Police Safety Notices plus they can forbid encouraging another person to do any of the forbidden actions to the affected person, ban damaging property of the affected person or give them the right to retrieve property or have it returned to them, require the violent person to vacate a residence and to set out temporary child custody or maintenance arrangements. To revoke an order, the Court or Authorised Justice must be satisfied there is no further risk of violence.

### **MEDIATION**

The Family Protection Act also allows for mediation between the violent person and the affected person. When a Protection Order is received by the court, the affected person is given the option of mediation and if the affected person decides to pursue mediation then the hearing for the Final Protection Order cannot take place until this is done, and the court must take into account the outcomes of mediation.

### **HEALTH REFERRALS**

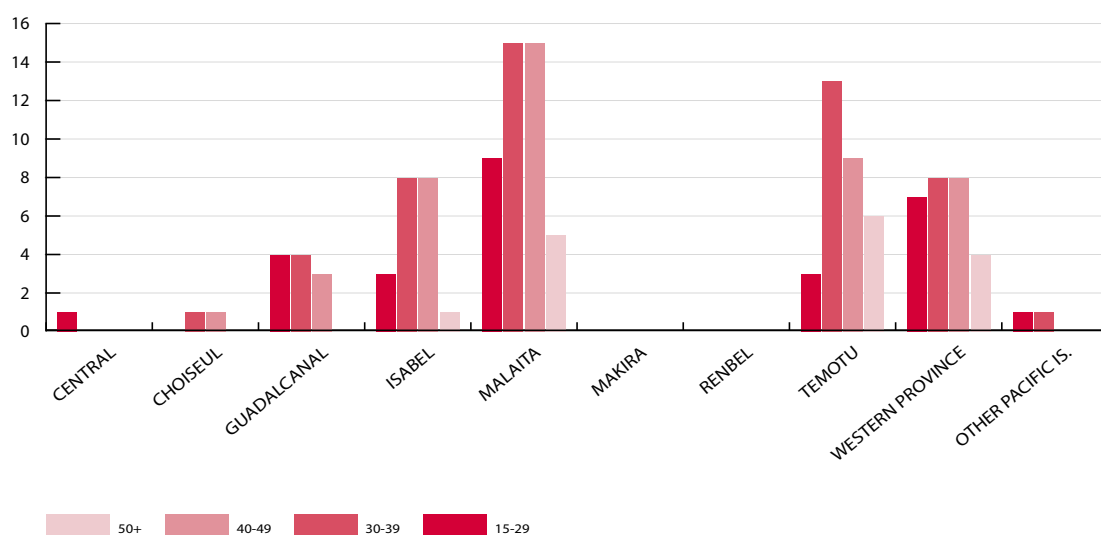
If a person at a clinic or hospital says they have been a victim of domestic violence, the health care staff must refer the person to family violence services, advise them about filing a report with police and in the case of a child, report the violence and injuries to a social welfare officer or a police officer.

In addition to fines and prison sentences for breaching Police Safety Notices and Protection Orders, the Family Protection Act also states it is an offence for anyone to obstruct or threaten service workers providing support to an affected person.

### **REFUGES AND COUNSELLING**

Under the family violence system more broadly, people can access counselling and advice at Seif Ples (a national referral centre and temporary overnight shelter in Rove) and Family Support Centre (a counselling and legal support service with bases in Honiara and in provinces). Some employers and churches also provide counselling services. Christian Care Centre (a refuge for women and children in Guadalcanal) as well as other smaller church-run safe houses in the provinces for people to stay safely while under threat of violence, pursuing court cases and in other circumstances where they are unable to stay in their communities.

## Age and ethnicity of people accessing the services (n=126)

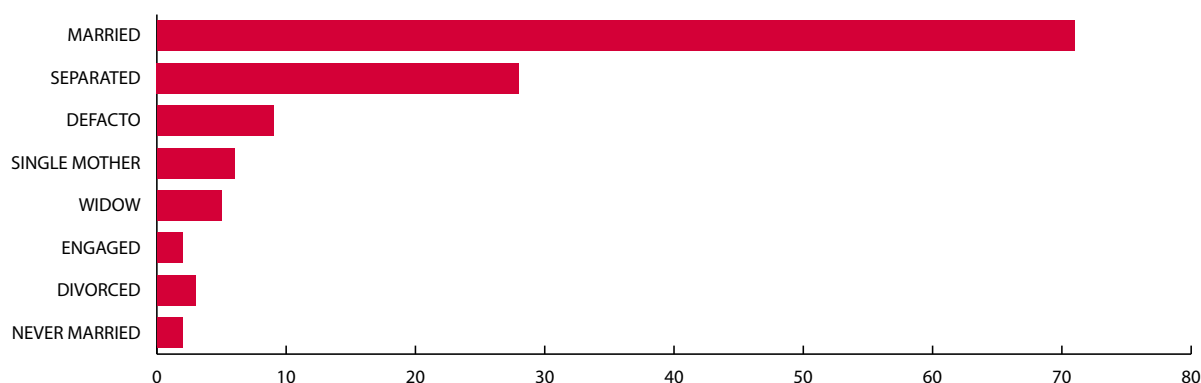


Most of the women and men using the system who were interviewed were married with children, as indicated by Figure D. 56% of women in this study were married with an average of 3 children each. However, the study also encompasses 22% of interviewees who were separated and three women who had been legally divorced following ill treatment by partners. The rest of the interviewees were in defacto relations or single mothers, widows, engaged to be married and two were never married. Collectively, the 126 interviewees had 147 children, so, on average service users have one child, although this average masks divergence of family composition (with 11% of people having 6 children and 16% one child).

**Figure D: Marital status and children of survey people accessing services (n=126)**

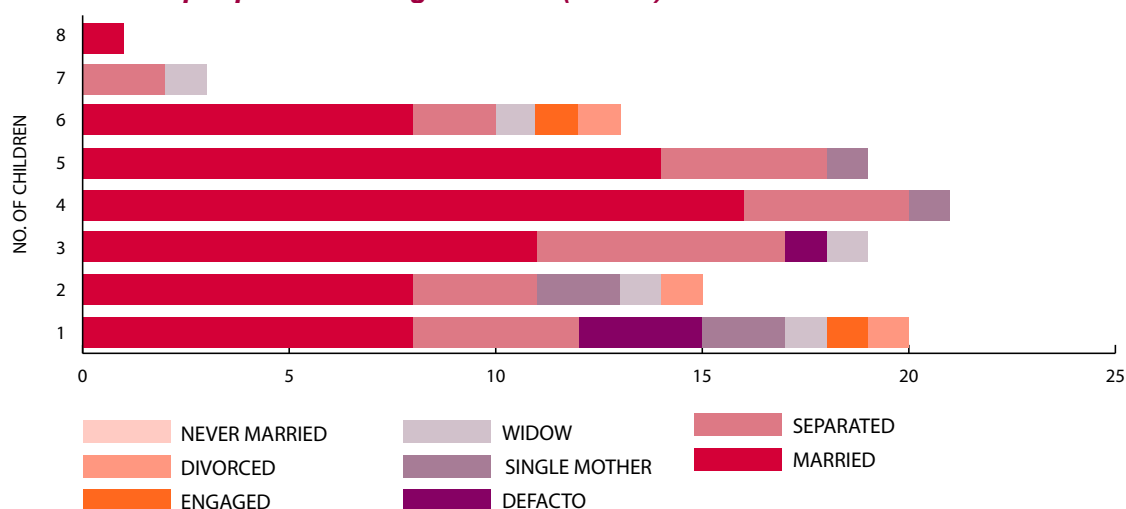
MARITAL STATUS	NO. WOMEN & MEN	NO. CHILDREN PER PARENT							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MARRIED	71	8	8	11	16	14	8	0	1
SEPARATED	28	4	3	6	4	4	2	2	0
DEFACTO	9	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
SINGLE MOTHER	6	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
WIDOW	5	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
ENGAGED	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
DIVORCED	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
NEVER MARRIED	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## Marital status of survey people accessing the services (n=126)



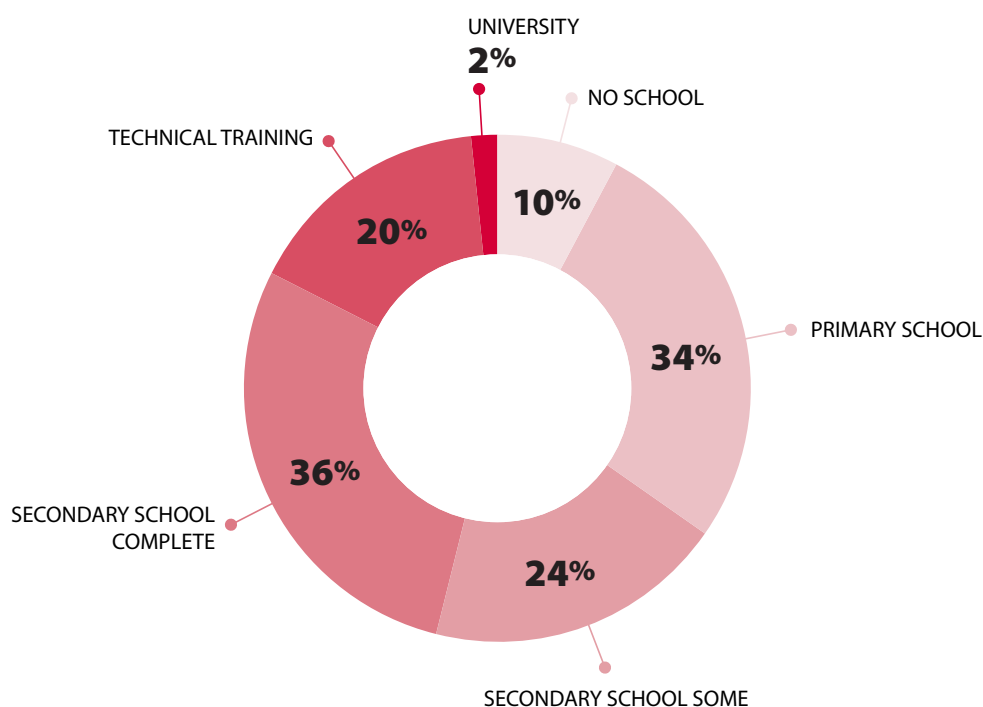


### Number of children of people accessing services (n=126)



Educational level was varied and tended to reflect the educational profile of geographic areas (people in rural areas having slightly lower levels of education attendance according to the 2009 Census, and girls had a lower secondary school attendance rate than boys). The interviews illustrated that women with various levels of education had accessed services due to violence: 48% had some secondary school education and 17% had a tertiary education. 35% of interviewees had no schooling or primary schooling only.

**Figure E: Educational attainment level of people accessing services (n=126)**



### Services choice by women

Women were asked where they first went for help and what made them go to that service. Most went because they heard information or had encouragement from friends or family (41 women) – 33% of all women using services. Encouragement included knowing someone at a service provider personally, having family and friends suggest service use or give information about services, having friends or family accompany people to services or provide other support to use services (e.g. transport).

Another common influencer of services choice was awareness and media, 15% of women went to a

service after hearing information from some sort of awareness, although a third of these people heard the awareness because they worked in organisations conducting or facilitating awareness. Another third of those choosing a service because of awareness and media had heard about services because of RSIPF activities in their community (6% of all female service users).

A considerable number of women (12%) reported while they had not had specific information or encouragement to go to police, they had the feeling that RSIPF was the “right place” to go for help. A feeling of threat to their safety was usually cited as why people went directly to the police:

*Mi decide for go lo Henderson Police Post becos mi save waka blo oketa police nao for helpm pipol taem problem go out of hand and nara person hem karakil nogud.*

*I decided to go to Henderson Police Post because I know the work of the police is to help people when problems get out of hand and another person hurts and injures.*

Guadalcanal mother of one child, aged 30-39 years

Six women said chiefs were an influence on service choice, this occurred in Isabel, which has a cultural norm of seeking chief advice on disputes. In Isabel it is common for police officers to ask whether or not a person has been to the chiefs before responding to a complaint or case. One woman explained the situation in Isabel as such:

*Interviewer: Wae na u disaed fo go lo ota chifs fes taem?*

*Interviewee: Osem hem prosida, hem umi duim lo hom go kasem chifs fas taem, sapos disfala problem ia hem incris o aniting? Go het nomoa bifo ota chif save ripot lo polis osem proses ia.. sapos ota problem kasem mi, mi hav tu lukim ota chifs ia. Den ota solvim sapos ota hati fo solvim den go lo polis.*

*Interviewer: Why did you decide to go to the chiefs first?*

*Interviewee: Like that is the procedure, what we do at home, go to the chiefs first, if the problem increases or anything like that? Then we go ahead and chief can report to police, like that is the process...If a problem happens to me, I have to see the chiefs. Then they will solve it but if it's too hard, then go to police.*

Isabel mother of three children, aged 30-39 years

However, three of the six women who mentioned chiefs as an influence on service choice, said they chose to go to the police because they thought the chiefs would not act. Four women who did seek help from chiefs reported dissatisfaction with chiefs, as they did not act within 24 hours of the violence, sided with the violent partner, and/or the violence continued. An example was provided as follows from an interviewee in Malaita:

*Interviewee: Oketa [chiefs] talem husband for kam mifala story so hem kam den hem say dat me no save waka lo haus, so me say hao nao by me waka samting pikinini small den nara wan moa...*

*Interviewer: Hao u satisfy wetem services where chief duim?*

*Interviewee: Nomoa me nating happy nomoa becos chief and husband nomoa toktok*

*Interviewer: So what na happen next?*

*Interviewee: Me kam back nao lo home blo me but no any folo up na*

*Interviewer: Story ya changim situation or nomoa?*

*Interviewee: Nomoa*

*Interviewee: The chiefs told my husband to come and talk so he went then he said that I don't do enough work in the house, so I said how can I do everything when the kids are small, and there is another one...*

*Interviewer: So are you satisfied with the work the chiefs did?*

*Interviewee: Not at all, I am not happy because only the chiefs and husband talked about it*

*Interviewer: So what happened next?*

Interviewee: *I came back to my home but there was no follow up action*

Interviewer: *So the talk [with the chiefs] changed your situation or not?*

Interviewee: *Not at all.*

Malaitan mother of five, aged 30-39 years

Four women went to the police because nurses and other medical staff encouraged them to report the violence after attending to injuries caused by violence. One woman said she lied about the cause of her back injuries to medical staff in order to avoid the police. Two of the three men in the data sample all went to the police either because they knew an officer or had previous dealings with the police.

Further encouragement by service providers, families and chiefs could help more women initially choose to go to services for assistance with violence at home.

Once women make the first contact with services, it was found several situational factors influence women's decisions, particularly as to whether to pursue the matter under the Family Protection Act. Common influencing situations which discouraged women from taking further action (such as through police or courts) were financial pressures (reliance on husband to provide for children), housing (lack of a safe place to stay for women) and family pressure (particularly from in-laws, and less often from the woman's own family).

Financial pressures were mentioned directly by 40% of women, usually due to women's reliance on their husband or partner for basic expenses for their children and the social norm that women stay in a house owned by the partner and so these women had no idea of where they would live if they had to leave the partner. One woman explained her decision to withdraw a case about physical violence thus:

*Mi garem pikinini so mi go withdrawim case blo mi ia. Osem mi say, oh daddy blo mifala nomoa hem save luk outim selen for mifala osem. Time hem go bae oketa pikinini hao, den no any one, Osem oketa brother blo hem osem ia bae oketa garem family too ia so bae oketa like help but hard. Den nomoa osem mind blo mi kam back lo mi so mi withdrawim case. Time nara police ask kam lo Lata den mi say, oh case blo mi bae withdraw nomoa, mi say lo hem.*

*I had children so I went and withdrew my case. Like I said, oh daddy is the only one who can find money for us. When he goes how will the children be, then there is no one to help. Like all his brothers have family too so they might like to help but its hard. Then my thinking came back to this, and I wanted to withdraw the case. When another police from Lata asked me, I said "oh that case, I will withdraw it" I said to him.*

Guadalcanal mother of 3 children, 30-39 years living in Temotu

Those whose husbands had left could be left to raise children without support, those with assets were worried separation could mean loss of assets they had helped establish (for example women who ran businesses with their husbands), those in marriages often relied on their partner to pay for expenses while they were busy raising children. The lack of financial autonomy of women influences security. In Malaita, a woman whose husband had been physically violent to her and her children explained:

*Interviewee: Dis time ya me no really safe tumas yet ya. But olsem me try hard for mekem marriage blo me waka too. But for safe ya me no olsem me no yet becos me feel – feeling blo me feel insecure yet ya but me try hard for tufal agirls ya at least tufala stay wetem mummy and daddy blo tufala tufala garem or tufala skul or at least mitufal dea for tufala. But for safe hem not really safe enough.*

*Interviewer: U no secure? Ya. Becos of samfala?*

*Interviewee: Ya olsem if me garem own samting blo me for wakem selen den me save lukim slen den at least for anything happen, den me save takem gud care lo tufala girls blo me, but at this point of time, nomoa yet becos me no waka too...*

*Interviewer: So u lukim dat area ya now women fright for come out and report lo hem?*

*Interviewee: Ya becos oketa dependent entirely lo oketa husband*

*Interviewee: At the moment I am not really very safe yet. But I try hard to make my marriage work too. But for safety, I am like, I am not yet, because I feel – my feeling is insecure yet but I try hard*



*for the sake of my two girls schooling or at least we are both there for them. But for safety, its not really safe enough.*

Interviewer: *You aren't secure? Because of these things?*

Interviewee: *Yeah, like if I had my own things to make money then I could get money when anything happened, then I could take good care of my two girls, but at this point in time, not yet, because I am not working...*

Interviewer: *So you see that makes women frightened to come out and report?*

Interviewee: *Yes, because they are entirely dependent on their husband.*

Malaitan mother of two children, aged 30-39 years

For others the cost of accessing services was an issue, as one woman explained:

*Osem iumi save lo hia fo kaen fo go kasem ota polis ia umi no garem akses so bae lusim petorol o bae umi hav tu spen bifo umi go kasem ota ples ia so dat wan nomoa wan fala samting wea mi lukim. Bat ota sud visit, at list visit raon lo ota vilij fo tekem na stori o hao ufala garem ota samting osem mekem hem akses fo ota woman kam den storim ota isus wae hem kasem oketa kaen osem..*

*Like us here to go and see the police here we do not have access, so you need petrol [for boat] or we have to spend before we can get to these places here. So that is one thing I experience. But they [police] should visit, at least visit around the villages to take stories or ask if you have something [to report] make access for the women to come and tell out their issues which affect them, like that...*

Isabel mother of three children, aged 30-39 years

23% of women interviewed mentioned direct support within the family during the process of using services or pursuing a violence matter with police or courts and 30% had family pressurising them not to do so. Support included relatives encouraging women to go to police or women's services, accompanying them to services, helping with costs to access services and supporting women in making statements leading to orders or prosecution. Family pressure included suggesting the woman go back to her violent partner, stressing obligations for the woman to stay married, underlining consequences if husbands ended up being prosecuted, and threatening the woman with violence if she took the matter further. Pressure was particularly intense from in-laws and in cases where the woman stayed with and relied on in-laws economically or for children's care. An example of this includes:

*Hem findem me gogo hem end up lo oketa barata blo me so hem stori wetem oketa barata blo me gogo oketa barata blo me oketa talem hem nao, ok iu say iu change ba iu no duim moa samting wea iu duim hem nogud lo pikinin blo iu wetem wife blo iu, iu say iu change ba iu no duim ba mefala forgivem iu. So mefala seke noma oketa arrive kam nao lo Christian Care Centre. Taem oketa arrive kam me bat me les nao, me les fo go baek nao. Me talem nao, o me les fo go baek nao becos hem barava olsem lo oketa pikinini blo me gogo, me suffa gogo me les nao. Bat oketa barata blo me nao tok lo me gogo me change mind nao.*

*He was trying to find me and ended up with my brothers so he talked with my brothers and then my brothers told him: ok you say you will change but you must not do the things you have done which are not good for your children, and your wife, you say you change, if you do not do it again, we will forgive you. So, all of a sudden they arrived at the Christian Care Centre. When they arrived I really did not want it, I did not want to go back. I told them, oh I don't want to go back because he is really like that to my children, I suffer and I don't want it. But my brothers talked and made me change my mind.*

Guadalcanal mother of six children, aged 40-49 years

One woman had taken a Police Safety Notice but her husband had broken it and instead police also sided with the husband and told her to reconcile. As a result she said she would not go back to police as they had "ruined my life" along with a forced reconciliation from the husband's family. She described feeling left alone and without help:

*Barata blo me hem kros tumas lo me taem hem herem me ba go baek lo man wea hurtim me ia.*

*And hem talem me fo me no go baek lo family blo me becos me go baek lo hasban blo me. Me fil olsem me no garem eniwea fo go lo hem and no eniwan fo tok wetem. Hem barava had ples fo me lo taem ia.*

*My brother was very cross at me when he heard I went back to the man who had hurt me. And he told me to not go back to my family because I had gone back to my husband. I felt like I had nowhere to go and no one to talk with. It was a a really hard place for me at that time.*

Malaita woman, 30-39 years, resident on Guadalcanal

Notes from one interview indicates police may not consider the influence of housing decisions on a woman's decision making:

Interviewer notes: The victim is a woman from [Province] married to [Province] man who is the [religious leader] in the church. She disagreed with a part of his sermon so he was angry and slapped her and threatened her to go out of the house. She went to the police but after recording her story, the police concluded the case was minor, first time offence and because the husband is a [religious leader], they will give verbal warning and conduct reconciliation. The woman requested a PSN but the police explained that if she get a PSN for her husband, she has to move away from their house and so it was not an option for her.

Mother of one child with family ties to two provinces, aged 40-49 years

A few women also were influenced by their or their husband's employers. One woman gave a report about her husband's violence to his corporate employer and the man was terminated. Another woman said it was only when her husband's corporate workmates talked to him and told him to stop the abuse that the husband responded and the violence stopped (the employer was part of the Waka Mere<sup>13</sup> program and had policies to reduce violence).

The researchers talked to three police women and each had experienced violence and had different responses by their colleagues. It was not the initial intent of this research to study violence within RSIPF, however, police staff in four out of the five provinces mentioned it voluntarily to researchers, and so a small set of data was collected about responses of RSIPF to family violence within the force. One female officer regularly complained about abuse by her husband, a fellow police man, but had no response by colleagues, another was told not to complain or report her husband because "it will affect your work" and one had a positive experience where fellow police officers talked sternly to her husband and as a result the violence reduced. One police woman explained the usual situation in her station where women responded to violence in the community and faced it in their personal life as well:

*Mifala officers ya sometimes big boiler no gud but kam lo waka, kam in nomoa. Dat wan no lo mifala seleva ya hem happen, kosap every work places ya osem nomoa ya. But kam dat wan oketa no save givim but say, "oh iu kam garem problem so iu rest osem" bara nomoa. Samfala bae big boiler, eye boiler but kam for waka... mifala try for sortim out problem blo oketa family but mifala police ya na no stret too becos mifala but garem problem too oketa kaen problem osem ya.*

*Us officers, yeah, sometimes black eye not good but we come to work, just come in. That happens not just to us, almost every work places are like that. But when it happens, they don't give anything but say "oh you have a problem so you rest" like not at all. Some with a big injury, black eye, but come to work... we try to sort out problems of local families but us police are not right too because we have the problem too, these kind of problems.*

Female RSIPF police officer.

This officer called on RSIPF to introduce a counselling and referrals service specifically for police and their families. This is currently available due to a Memorandum of Understanding between RSIPF and Empower Pacific and has meant Guadalcanal based police can access counselling, however, those in the provinces are without counselling options. In all interviews with police women they said female staff faced additional obstacles to reporting violence by partners or accessing other services and called for institutional change at RSIPF to reduce violence in police officers' families.

Norms relating to forgiveness and reconciliation in church congregations was also an influencing factor in

<sup>13</sup> Waka Mere is a project of International Finance Corporation to assist corporate employers improve policy and procedures related to women in the workforce, including addressing gender based violence.

women's decision making about whether to use a service. While many mentioned the soothing and calming power of prayer, the pressure by church leaders to reconcile and stay together with abusive husbands was often seen as not helpful to solving the problem of violence. For example, one woman whose husband worked for the church in Malaita said church leaders repeatedly told her to go back to her husband:

Interviewer: *Wat nao ogeta [church] tallem yu?*

Interviewee: *Olgeta tok olsem lo mi ya, becos mifala marit lo church ya, mitu fala marit lo church ya, hem tru yu tufala stap separate olsem but becos utufala marit lo church yu mas forgivem hem, for mi tingting blo mi, mi tellim lo algeta mama, this fala man ya mi forgivem hem staka time, everi time hem cross lelebet lo haus, hem breakem algeta calico blo mi lo cicis, hem save cutem all calico lo cicis, even hem cross lo mi go hide lo room blo parent blo mi, if mi runaway go hide lo mommy blo mi lo room blo hem, hem no respectim nomore, pullem mi killem mi lo eye blo tufala pikinini blo mi, anikind treat nomore he savi doin lo mi, which is hem no luk gud lo eye blo dadi and mommy blo mi...*

Interviewer: *What did they [church leaders] tell you?*

Interviewee: *They talked like this to me, because you are married in the church, we married you in church, its true you are living separately but because you are married in the church, you must forgive him, for me, my thinking, I told all the church leaders this man I have forgiven him many times, every time he is cross at the house, he breaks all my clothes with scissors, he cuts all my clothes with scissors, even when he is cross I go hide in my parents room if I runaway I hide with my mummy in her room, he doesn't respect anymore, pulls me and hits me in front of the eyes of my two children, any kind of treatment he does to me, which is, it does not look good in the eyes of my parents...*

Malaitan mother of two children, aged 15-29 years

Family support was mentioned as significant, in cases of injuries which were life-threatening it was often the woman's family who intervened and took women to the police, particularly brothers and fathers. One woman explained her brothers took over the situation:

*Hem hittim me den hem tiem me up, gogo me run away lo oketa brada blo me, me no like kam back now, so mita stay away about 3 months gogo hem me save dat wan too mekem hem change, change lelebet becos oketa brada blo me givim big warning lo hem. Time hem callem mifala for settlem, oketa bro blo me hesitate, oketa no like, gogo hem insist insist go go oketa agree Ok. On conditions that, umi by go stretem lo polis station, so mifala go end up lo ahh traffic [Kukum station]...Polis station na for sortem things. So oketa brada blo me say umi mas story lo polis ya mekem next time hem duim moa, record blo hem lo there. So... hem na ia.*

*He hit me then he tied me up, then I ran away to my brothers I did not want to go back, so we stayed away for about 3 months then I knew that made him change, change a bit because my brothers had given him a big warning. When they called us to settle it, my brothers hesitated, they did not want, then they insist, insist and then agree, OK. On the condition that we went to straighten it at the police station, so we ended up at the traffic [Kukum station]... police station to sort out things. So, my brothers said we must tell this to the police to make it so next time if he does it again, his record is there. So... that was it.*

Malaitan mother of eight children, aged 40-49 years, residing in Guadalcanal

In another case the daughter of a woman in Malaita was critical in arguing for the police to act as she was a law student:

*So hem go daon kasem lo dea, ating lucke tu becos hem tekem law, so hem go daon and hem repotim evvriting wea dadi blo hem tritim tufala lo haus, hao dadi blo oketa save lokem doa lo oketa naeat den hem go raon- hem talem evvriting. Den polis..ah Family Sapot Centre go baek lo polis nao. So taem kasem polis moa, mefala argue moa wetem polis moa and olman ia. So taem mefala gohet fo argue, taem man ia stat fo blamem me, hem had na becos pikinini nao lukim wat hem happen. So taem hem laek fo tanem raon protecsin oda kam lo me, pikinini ia say, noma me na me tekem fo iu. Den pikinini ia say taem dadi blo hem ring kam pikinini ia talem fo dadi blo hem, evvriting hem happen lo haus, wat iu duim me save. So me repotim iu na. So ba iu no kam klosap lo mefala oketa pikinini. So a certain number of mans dadi blo oketa no save tok lo oketa pikinini,*

*no save muf klosap within certain meters away from wea nao mefala stap.*

*So she went down, I think it was lucky too because she was taking law, so she went down and reported everything her dad did, treatment at the house, how her dad used to lock the door at night and then go out, she told everything. Then police... ah Family Support Centre went back to police. So when they went to police again, we argued with police and the old man. So when we went ahead arguing, when the man started to blame me, it was hard because the children had seen what happened. So when he tried to turn around the protection order against me, my daughter said, no, I will take it out for you. Then she said when her daddy rings she said everything happened in the house, what you did, I know. So, I report you now. So you can not come close to us children. So a certain number of months their father did not talk to the children, could not come close within certain metres away from where we were staying.*

Malaitan mother of five children, aged 40-49 years

Families of the husband usually supported the husband rather than the wife in cases of violence, but one woman said it was her in-laws that encouraged her to report serious injuries and a history of violence resulting in permanent injuries:

Interviewer: *During taem iu repot ia, eniting wea hem mekem iu fil uncomfortable? Wea iu fil nogut o noma?*

Interviewee: *Ia, taem day wea hem swear lo me, hem swear , hem sutim me lo ston...taem me repot finis... me lo haus den hem sutim me lo ston, hem bonem me lo faea...*

Interviewer: *Taem iu stap lo polis, oketa givem warning tu, oketa garem options laek oketa givem chance fo iu dat iu tingting festaem befoa iu repot, o hao nao polis?*

Interviewee: *Noma, becos taem me kasem polis body blo me kara kil finis.*

Interviewer: *Taem iu go repot ia, iu filim risk?*

Interviewee: *Taem me repotim hem oketa family blo hem helpem me. Oketa say, ia iu repotim hem.*

Interviewer: *When you report, anything make you feel uncomfortable? Where you feel good or not?*

Interviewee: *Yeah that day he swore at me, he swore, and shot at me with stones... after I reported him... I was at home then he shot at me with stones, he burnt me with fire...*

Interviewer: *When you were at the police, they gave him a warning too, they gave options like to think before you report, or how was the police?*

Interviewee: *No, because when I went to police, my body had been injured already.*

Interviewer: *When you went to report, did you feel at risk?*

Interviewee: *When I reported him his family helped me. They said: you report him.*

Malaitan mother of six children, aged 40-49 years, residing in Guadalcanal (G15)

These situational factors are important in considering use of the Family Protection Act and services. Situational factors, such as economic reliance on partners, lack of housing rights, cultural and familial restrictions on women and gender discrimination in society can prevent women from seeking help, and attitudes of service providers reinforcing these situations can deter women from pursuing further help. However, lack of use of the FPA system is less due to cultural norms than it is of awareness of the system and responsiveness of the system to women's concerns. Whether or not a woman continued to use a service or take an action under the Family Protection Act was strongly influenced by information given to them by service providers and attitudes of service providers themselves, as discussed in the next section of this report.



## Information and action by services

Women detailed what information they were given by services, particularly any advice on options to take actions, access services, or on what the women should do. This section of the report looks at what types of information was provided to women accessing different types of services and the impact this had on the situations of women who had experienced violence. Since most use of the Family Protection Act to date is for physical violence, the majority of interviews (94%) discussed in this report are service responses to physical violence, with the rest being matters related to child custody and maintenance and economic violence (destruction of property).

## Health services

Thirteen women described being given direct advice by a doctor or nurse about what to do about family violence when they presented at services with injuries. Of these, ten women either had medical professionals make police reports about the violence or encouraged the women to take their medical reports to the police, one service had refused to give a woman a report (her husband worked for medical services) and two women had been encouraged to go to counselling by nurses or doctors. This sample size is small and not very representative of patients as a whole, so a more thorough review of advice given by health service staff would be useful as part of the health sector's data management and reporting under the FPA.

## Refuges & non-government family violence services

Women interviewed for this research had used a range of non-government services including Family Support Centre offices in Western Province, Temotu, Isabel and Guadalcanal, Christian Care Centre/Anglican Church refuges in Malaita and Guadalcanal and Seif Ples in Honiara (or the national referral hotline 132 run by Seif Ples). A few interviewees had also used counselling services supported by their employer GPPOL.

Of the 38 visits to services provided by these organisations during all but two visits women had been given information about options under the Family Protection Act. These women interviewed had only been offered counselling as a service, notably the counselling service at GPPOL where two women were advised to avoid making their husbands angry and one had been told to reconcile.

Seif Ples and Family Support Centre had similar focuses on advice regarding police and justice with 11/15 visits to FSC including this information and 11/12 visits to Seif Ples including this information. As a result, 10 out of 12 visits to Seif Ples resulted directly in either a Police Safety Notice, police report and/or court case. 13 out of 15 visits to Family Support Centre led to the next action being a a Police Safety Notice, police report and/or court case. Christian Care Centre provided consistent information to clients: information about the centre being a space for women and children only to rest and stay safe and women being presented with assistance to either open a police case or reconcile (reconciliations were done with the sisters counselling all parties involved which resulted in behaviour change of perpetrators). Five of eight visits to the Centre ended up with a Police Safety Notice or police report, although not much should be drawn from this as the Centre generally refers clients to Family Support Centre and Seif Ples for detailed information on options and many clients were using Christian Care Centre as a place to stay, and FSC or Seif Ples as a place to pursue legal, police and medical matters.

In Guadalcanal, a woman may go to Seif Ples or Family Support Centre for assistance with a police report or court case, and stay at Christian Care Centre for safety, so will be provided with several sources of information on options under the Family Protection Act. However, a woman in other provinces who seeks support from a refuge may not be given any information about rights, legal or police options and the Family Protection Act. The lack of refuges in some provinces was a problem for women and children who needed a safe place to stay while making police reports and pursuing cases. One woman staying at a provincial-based refuge had been told to close her police case and go back to her violent partner because the manager of the refuge was related to the woman's partner.

## Legal Assistance, Public Solicitors and Courts

Thirteen women in the study had legal advice (through the Public Solicitors Office or dealings with the Prosecutor), eight women had been subject to protection orders and 23 had followed court cases all the

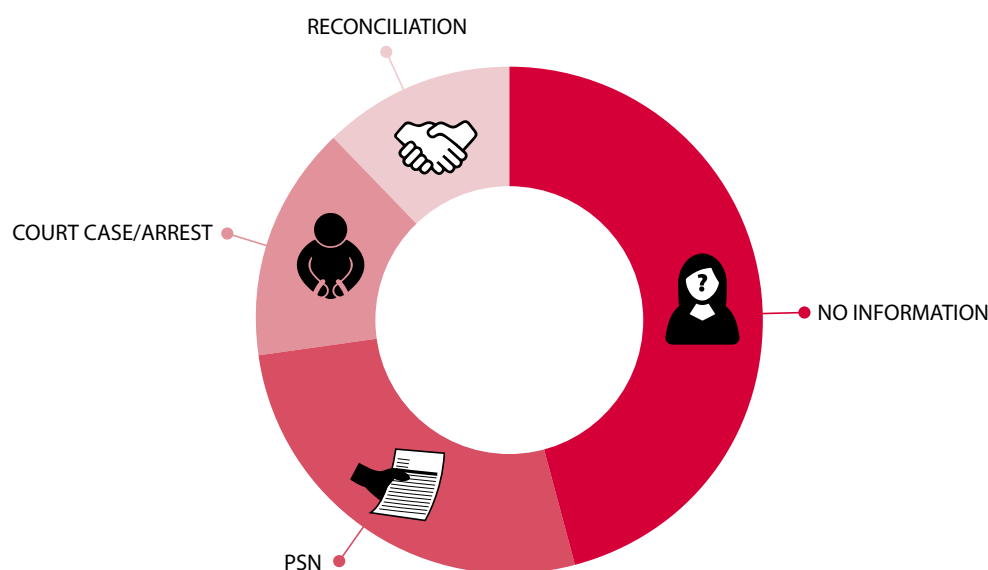
way to settlement or sentencing. Visits to legal services usually resulted in actions related to court cases, and/or referrals to refuges and the police. Two court cases were “washed out”: one was dismissed by the judge and in another the parties signed a letter saying the violence survivor and perpetrator had reconciled and the case was withdrawn. An additional woman said she started the process wanting her partner to go to prison but was rethinking it as she was worried about the effects on her children and was planning to withdraw her case.

It was noted that people who went directly to file court cases through lawyers or the public solicitors’ office generally had some understanding of the justice system. For instance law enforcement officers pursued Protection Orders rather than Police Safety Notices as they felt it was not appropriate to go to their or their husbands’ colleagues at RSIPF, and people working in the civil society sector on women’s issues knew which staff at PSO to approach and what the process would be like. However, the sample of women who pursued court cases in this study is small and further research would be needed to look at who is accessing justice services under the FPA.

## Police

Of all services, there was the most variety of information provided by police staff to women seeking help with family violence matters. The data for this report has 149 visits to the police from 2016 to 2019 in which women requested help for family violence matters. 149 visits to police stations resulted in 180 types of information or actions. Three major types of information were provided to women about options for response to their situations: information about PSNs, information about reconciliation and no information. Figure F below summarises the types of information given and the actions as a result about cases of violence.

**Figure F: Information and actions by RSIPF staff**



## Most common information: no information

The most common information provided to women was no information or explanation of their options under the Family Protection Act (in 70 visits out of 149 visits to police stations) resulting in no further action for 33 women. Interviewer notes from the first interview in Western Province provides an example of this:

Interviewer notes about an interview with a Guale mother of two, aged 30-39 years resident in Western Province: She went to the police for the first in 2014, when her husband hit her hard with a piece of timber that split the skin on her forehead and blood was dripping down her face. She thought that she would die so she run to the station. She went to the police because the police keep the law and order and will protection her. When she went to the police station, the police took her in the hospital and left her there with the nurse, who stitched and dressed the wound on her forehead and told her to go back to the police station. At the police station the police told her to take

her children and go stay away from her husband for a while until they are reconciled and she can go back. But she did not have any place to go so she went back home. She was not satisfied with what the police said to her or the advice given but she was fearful of her husband and feel as she does not know what else to expect from the police she went home.

Similar stories were found in all provinces, indicating the Family Protection Act is still not widely used, as the women explained:

Interviewer: *Wat nao happen fes taem iu visitm oketa police?*

Interviewee: *Mi story waitm wanfala police man. Den hem tek statement finis hem waitm transport for go tek husband blo mi kam lo police station. Taem ya mi happy for police go tek husband blo mi kam lo police station mekm police putm hem lo celler.*

Interviewer: *Wat nao oketa talem fo iu duim moa?*

Interviewee: *Mi wait for police kam tek husband blo mi for tok waitm hem bat nating nomoa. Situation blo mitufala no change hem gohet for hitm mi, shootm head blo mi lo stone cutm hair blo mi and bonem kaleko blo mi. Taem mi lukm police nating kam for tok lo husband blo mi after mi report ya mi ringm oketa back moa but ota nating kam tek husband blo mi nomoa. Mi tired for ringm police excuse lo no eni transport for kam so mi livm go case ya na.*

Interviewer: *So afta evriting ya wat na iu ting fo duim moa? Eniwan helpm iu fo tingm eni tingting?*

Interviewee: *Mi feel osem police no warim domestic violence cases nomoa so mi no like ringm police every time husband blo mi killm mi. Mi stay nomoa.*

Interviewer: *What happened the first time you visited police?*

Interviewee: *I talked with a police man. Then he took statement and waited for transport to go take my husband to the police station. That time I was happy for police to go and take my husband to the police station and put him in the cell.*

Interviewer: *What did the police tell you to do?*

Interviewee: *I waited for police to come take my husband to talk with him but nothing happened. Our situation did not change, he goes ahead and hits me, shots my head with stones, cuts my hair and burns my clothes. When I saw police did not come and talk to my husband after I reported I got tired of ringing them back but they do not take my husband. I was tired of ringing police, excuse they do not have transport to come, so I left the case like that.*

Interviewer: *So after everything what do you think to do? Anyone help you for any ideas?*

Interviewee: *I feel like police do not worry about domestic violence cases so I do not like to ring police every time my husband hurts me. I just stay like this.*

Malaitan mother of two children, 30-39 years, resident in Guadalcanal

Interviewer: *Wat na oketa [police] talem iu?*

Interviewee: *Mi go askm abaot hao na for tek PSN bat by oketa police sei right hem lo oketa man nao. Oketa no tek serious lo hem taem man by kosap die na by oketa tek action lo hem. Mi go kasim police 3 taems den taem mi karakil nogud na oketa ds kam lukm mi.*

Interviewer: *What did they [police] tell you?*

Interviewee: *I went and asked them about how to take a PSN but the police said it is the right of the man. They did not take it seriously, only if someone is almost dead then they will take action about it. I went to police three times then when I was really badly injured they just came to see me.*

Temotu mother of four children, aged 30-39 years (T06)

Interviewer: *What na hem [police] talem for u?*

Interviewee: *Hem say na Oh mifala by, hem askem me, distaem wat na husband blo u duim? Me say distaem hem drunk ia. Tufala pikinini ia na me warim becos tufala wetem hem. If u fala save go tekem kam oketa pikinini ia from hem by me alright by me save go back, stay good lo haus wetem*

*oketa Sherif and metron because hem drunk, hard for keepim gud tufala ia...So, then Polis ia say olsem, "Oh mifala, by mifala act olsem by u hard for take advantage lo mifala ia, becos mifala waka blo mifala mifala olsem nomoa, mifala for wakem peace between iutufala. By mifala hard for take side lo u". Me say: "ma, wat kind peace na by iufala duim samting pikinini blo me nao, hem in danger ia". But hem nay a answer blo oketa so me say OK hem olrite, me say, hem olrite den nomoa me walk away from Polis ia na.*

Interviewer: *So, how na feeling blo u lo kind experience olsem?*

Interviewee: *Ma, hem na ia, experience blo mi ya olsem me bara no trustem Polis nom na lo part ia. Me say oh so ufala sud abidem law, safety blo mifala but hem end up olsem nomoa. Everytime me problem olsem me lukim Polis me no like waste time nomoa becos me say "ehh by me go lo oketa by wat nomoa oketa duim?" Becos me tingim na first ansa blo first Polis ia.*

Interviewer: *What did they [police] tell you?*

Interviewee: *He said Oh us, he asked me, this time what did your husband do? I said he is drunk. The children I am worried about because they are with him. If you can go take the children from him I will be alright I can go back stay good at the house with the Mr and Mrs because he is drunk, hard for him to keep them safe...So then the police said: Oh us we will act like this, its hard for you to take advantage of us because us, our work is for making peace between you two. We cannot take your side. I said: Well what kind of peace can you do about something with my children, they are in danger. But that was the answer of the police so I said Ok, its alright, I said then I walked aay from the police.*

Interviewer: *So, how do you feel about this experience?*

Interviewee: *Well that's it, my experience is I really do not trust the Police to do their part. I said you should abide by the law, safety for us, but it ended up like that. Every time I have a problem and like to see police I do not waste my time because I say: eh if I go to them, what will they do? Because I think of the first answer police gave.*

Malaitan mother of two children, aged 30-39 years

Interviewer: *Okay time u story wetem police officer ya everytime, hem askim you if you like openim case?*

Interviewee: *Ya*

Interviewer: *And you se nomoa or ya?*

Interviewee: *Mi se hao sas ufala givim, mi ask na if oketa save givim anyting osem for ba hem no duim den osem , givim any rule osem fo a hem no duim, but ota se hem hard fo givim*

Interviewer: *So u tok aboutim nao PSN, tude time inta story you tok aboutim PSN, hao nao you save aboutim PSN?*

Interviewee: *Uh oketa nao talem mi aboutim*

Interviewer: *OK when you talked with police officers everytime they asked you if you wanted to open a case?*

Interviewee: *Yes*

Interviewer: *And you said no or what?*

Interviewee: *I said how if you give, I asked now, if they could give anything to warn him to not do it again, give him any rule for him not to do it, but they said it was hard to give it*

Interviewer: *So you're talking about PSN, today this time your story you talk about PSN, how do you know about PSN?*

Interviewee: *Uh, they did not tell me anything about it.*

Western Province woman, aged 15-29 years

In one case a man who went to prison and returned to his wife, aged 15-29 years and was violent to her, then the woman ran a long distance to the nearest police station in Malaita. However, the police did not issue a PSN or take any action placing her in danger of violence when the man drank and she still lived in fear. In another case in Malaita a pregnant woman was cut with a knife by her partner but given the



following information:

Interviewer: *So, time u kasim lo Polis what na oketa duim for u?*

Interviewee: *Oketa say by me....by me tingting fastaem. By me reportem or nomoa. Then me say nomoa by me reportem.*

Interviewer: *Ahh so hao nao u feel time Polis man say u tingting gud fastaem becos u say hem cuttem u ba?*

Interviewee: *Me say me like for me go nao. Me reportem hem na.*

Interviewer: *So, when you went to Police what did they do for you?*

Interviewee: *They said for me to... for me to think about it. If I will report or not. Then I said no, I will report it.*

Interviewer: *Ah so how do you feel when the police man said to think about it first because you said he cut you yes?*

Interviewee: *I said I want to do it. I reported him.*

Malaitan mother of four children, aged 15-29 years

## Second most common information: Police Safety Notices

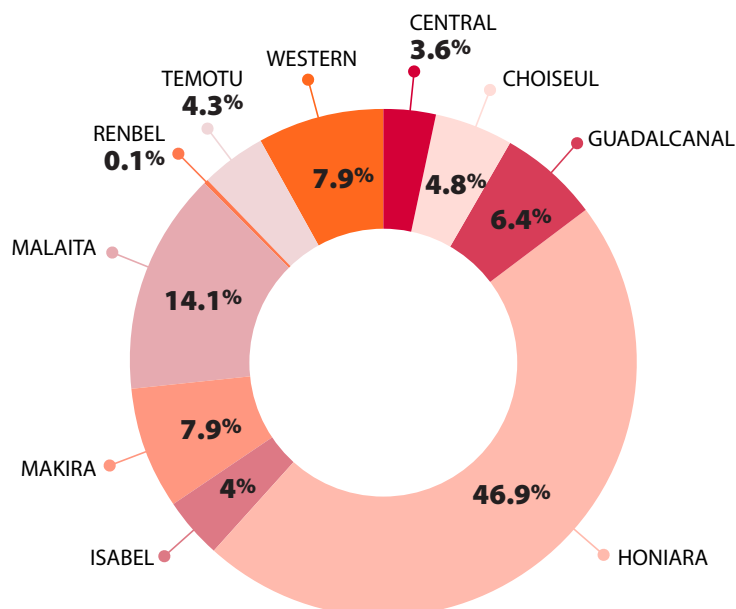
The Family Protection Act intends for Police Safety Notices (PSN) to be issued by police officers in any situation where a person is under pressing threat of violence. A PSN can be issued even without the woman's consent and police are to judge whether a PSN is warranted. Decision making by police officers to issue PSNs may be guided by the SAFENET referral form that has three questions all service providers are to complete when seeing a victim of family violence:

- (i) Does the perpetrator know when the victim is?
- (ii) a. Does the victim think the perpetrator will try and find the victim here?  
b. Will the victim be in immediate danger when leaving here?
- (iii) How safe does the victim feel at home right now (ranked 1 – 4)

These three questions are seen by the Family Violence Unit as useful guides for police officers about whether or not to issue a PSN. Once a police officer makes a decision to issue a PSN to a person, the officer can also suggest an application to the courts for a Protection Order (PO). Police can not make the application for the PO to the courts unless the victim is a "vulnerable person" (for example with a mental impairment, or a child). Figure G shows the use of PSNs across provinces thus far according to police statistics: there were 1034 PSNs issued but use of PSNs varied from averages of 0 per month in Renbel province to 5 in Malaita province. Some provinces where violence is known to be high (such as Temotu and Isabel province) still had relatively low use of PSNs.

**Figure G: Use of PSNs in provinces (n=1034)**

	2017	2018	2019 (Jan-April)	TOTAL (1 Jan 2017 to 1 May 2019)	Average per month
Central	25	8	4	37	1
Choiseul	27	19	4	50	2
Guadalcanal	43	10	13	66	2
Honiara	223	186	76	485	17
Isabel	22	18	1	41	1.5
Makira	44	31	7	82	3
Malaita	80	54	12	146	5
Renbel	0	1	0	1	0
Temotu	18	15	11	44	1.5
Western	30	37	15	82	3



**FIGURE H – What women say – PSNs change violence perpetrator behaviour**

Women who were satisfied with services and safe after services had seen a change in the behaviour of the violent person or been safely separated from that person.

#### ISABEL

Interviewee: Hem [PSN] se.. rul wea osem ota polis searim wea ota talem hem nomoa, ota se o disfala rul ia mifala putim fo hasban blo u ia, bae hem mas no holem naif, holem arx, o wipim u o tritim ota fameli nogud ota kaen osem...Taem ota givim kam dat wan ia na mifala bara, hem ia hem chenjim nem blo hem tu, hem no ius fo duim ota tings wea hem duim ia so mifala distaem bara stei gud...Mi bara hapi osem mi bara osem mi luk fowud fo mifala stei gud so osem taem ota tekem kosen blo mi mi bara hapi...Afta ota givim go a notis ia, taem ia na osem dis taem osem tufala bara stei osem dis taem ia na bara filim na dat ia man,

Interviewer: tru lav?...

Interviewee: tru lav ia na dis wan ia, so osem hem bara hapi fogud

Interviewee: It {PSN} says ... rule [condition] that police has shared where the has only informed him, they said this rule we put for your husband, he must not have a knife [to threaten], not have an axe, or whip you or treat badly the family and so forth ... When they [police] gave that, we really, he was change, he even changed his name. He does not do that things he usually does, so now our living is good. I am so happy because I looked forward for us to stay well together so when they [police] took my concern I was very happy, ...After they gave the notice [PSN], that is the time that we have lived like this, like now but they have felt it how it was before

Interviewer: true love?...

Interviewee: true love, so now we are very happy

Isabel mother of three children, aged 30-39 years

#### MALAITA

Police report hem mekm wanfala big difference lo life blo mitufala husband ,husband blo mi hem change and mitufala stay happy together.

The police report has made a big difference in the lives of my husband and myself. My husband had changed and we live happy together

Malaitan mother of two children, aged 15-29 years, resident of Guadalcanal

#### GUADALCANAL

Time me report hem change lelebet, hem change distaem, but me no save if life hem goes on, distaem hem change moa, everytime hem no save pipikim me ya, morning evening hem no save pikim me ya tufala sister blo me, but dis time nomoa, from house lo morning hem pikim me kam dropem me lo side road, lo evening hem ring kam, mummy you finish waka na, ya, hem kam pikim me, so hem na talem oketa woman, ee distaem mifala change nao. Gogo girl blo me distaem hem funny nao, mummy distaem you no waka baut nao becos mifala used to folowm na hill ya, mifala save short cut go up. Distaem u no climbim hill na, distaem mummy no climbim hill na,

*Daddy distaem pikim me every time na, me go lo waka hem pikim me go down, me kam back hem pikim me kam up too( laughing) So, changes lo dea a me lukim*

*When I report [to the police] he changed a bit, he is changed now but I don't know as life [times] goes on, now he's changed again, every time he does not pick me and my two sisters, but this time from the house in the morning he picks me and drops me off at the side of the road and in the evening he rings me and asks, 'mummy have you finished work?' and he comes pick me up. He tells other women that this time we are changed now. And now my daughter jokes and said mummy now you don't walk because we follow the hill, we walked the short cut to go up. But now you don't climb the hill, now mummy does not climb the hill, daddy picks her up everytime, when I go to work he takes me down and he comes back to pick me up too. So there is a change I see*

Choiseul mother of five children, aged 40-49 years

## TEMOTU

*Before PSN lapse hem go talem police hem realisem wat hem duim hem no right so hem go back lo police den sei by withdrawm PSN den hem kam lo mi talem mi by hem no duim again lo mi so mi talem hem if iu really change den hem oraet umi go back stay together. So mitufala reconcile den stay gud kasim today...Hem learnm lesson. So mi lukm reporting blo mi and PSN na changem hem. Family blo hem supportm PSN ya tu so hem no way na.*

*Before the PSN lapsed, he went to tell the police becuase he realised what he did was not right, so he went to the police and told then to withdrew the PSN and then he came to me and told me he will not do it again, so I told him if that is true and it's alright we can stay together. So we reconciled and have a good life now... He learned his lesson. So my reporting him and the PSN had changed him. His family supported the PSN too so he had no way [around it].*

Temotu mother of three children, aged 30-39

The second most common information provided to women visiting police stations was about Police Safety Notices – however the regularity of this information being provided was low, only 41 of the 149 visits or 28% of all visits in the study. This resulted in the minority of women who sought information from police actually ended up with PSNs. Of the 107 women who contacted police, 38% of them were issued PSNs. While 4 of these cases were related to economic violence, the rest of these women experienced physical violence and went to police seeking safety and protection from physical violence.

Women who had PSNs issued against the perpetrator in a timely manner were satisfied with the police – 70% of all women receiving PSNs. Positive outcomes from PSNs included changes in perpetrator behaviour (see Figure H) and safety allowing women to resume normal activities (see Figure I). Overall, of all 107 interviewees who went to the police, 46% felt safe after the police had done their work: mostly because PSNs had led perpetrators to change their behaviour or a warning had the same effect (14% of all satisfied women had police give perpetrators a verbal warning) or the perpetrators had been arrested and charged.

There were some women who seemed to have not remembered what the conditions of PSNs were or reported not having a copy of the document. It was possible to identify which women had received a PSN by asking if the police had given them any document about 21 days, the PSN was sometimes called a “the 21 days” “protection order” “restraining order” or by other names by the women. However, those that had PSNs issued about their situations, generally reported adequate understanding of the terms and conditions:

Interviewer: *Iu think dat information police hem givim for iu about PSN ia iu clear lo hem? Iu understandim?*

Interviewee: *Ya, mi meanim, mi understandim.*

Interviewer: *Den iu hapi?*

Interviewee: *Mi understandim, mi happy. Because taem oketa tok kam lo mi osem nomoa, mi say, oh ma hem na wanem mi likem. Everytaem mi fright, fright, distaem nomoa. Mi say osem, long taem tumas so mi say lo mind blo mi, mi say, anything hem happen moa ma mi hard for coward na ia. Mi must reportim na. Hem na ia, nara day mi tok mi say, iu doim kam anything lo mi, mi no coward bae mi go na ia.*

Interviewer: *You think that information police gave you about PSN was clear? You understood it?*

Interviewee: *Yes I know it, I understand it.*

Interviewer: *Then you are happy?*

Interviewee: *I understand it, I am happy. Because when they talked to me like that, I said, oh that is what I want. Every time I am frightened, frightened, but now its stopped. I said like this, its been a long time now, so I said my thinking is, I said, if anything happens I will not be a coward. I must report it. That's it, another day I talked, I said, if you do anything to me, I am not a coward, I will go now.*

Temotu mother of five children, aged 50+ years

Interviewee: *Oketa say, hem nomoa oketa putim kam, putim kam nomoa disfala report for hem bound over 21 days ya den anything hem doim moa bae mi save kam back moa, for anything hem doim bae mi save kam reportim hem back. Hem must fine na ia. Hem fine or 3 years prison or....*

Interviewer: *So iu na ask for disfala 21 days ia or police na talem iu?*

Interviewee: *Mi na mi likem.*

Interviewer: *So wat na oketa say aboutim 21 days' notice ia?*

Interviewee: *21 days ia, hem bae hem no drink, hem hard for doim anything in front lo oketa pikinini blo mi den mi too.*

Interviewee: *They said that is all they put it in this report so he is bound over for 21 days then anything he does I can come back again, for anything he does I can report him back. He must be fined. He is fined or has 3 years prison or...*

Interviewer: *So you asked for this 21 days or police told you about it?*

Interviewee: *Me, I want it.*

Interviewer: *So what did they say about this 21 days notice?*

Interviewee: *21 days is like this, he will not drink, hard for him to do anything in front of my children, or to me too.*

Western mother of five children, aged 30-39 years

In some cases, women themselves asked for PSNs:

Interviewee: *Olsem safety notice na me likem*

Interviewer: *But u no tekem?*

Interviewee: *Ya me no tekem, oketa Polis no givim for me.*

Interviewer: *U ask for hem too?*

Interviewee: *Me ask for hem last night me say "officer me bara tired lo kind man ya na. Olsem me likem nomoa safety notice for ufala givim for me, me stay away from man ya. For hem stay seleva me stay seleva".*

Interviewer: *But oketa no duim?*

Interviewee: *Oketa no duim.*

Interviewer: *So wat na u like for duim distaem?*

Interviewee: *Hem na olsem full tingting blo me, me like stay away nao from hem.*

Interviewee: *Like the safety notice is what I want.*

Interviewer: *But you didn't take it?*

Interviewee: *Yes I didn't take it, the Police did not give it to me.*

Interviewer: *Did you ask for it too?*

Interviewee: *I asked for it last night I said "officer I am really tired of this sort of man. Like I just want a safety notice, for you to give it for me, so I can stay away from this man. For him to stay*



*separate, and me stay separate”.*

Interviewer: *But they didn't do it?*

Interviewee: *They did not do it.*

Interviewer: *So what do you want to do now?*

Interviewee: *That's my main thought, I want to stay away from him.*

Malaitan woman, mother of four children, aged 30-39, resident in Guadalcanal

Interviewer: *Wat taem na police givm iu PSN?*

Interviewee: *Ota police givem after 5 times mi kasim oketa. Why na oketa no givem lo first ples.*

Interviewer: *Iu ask for hem tu?*

Interviewee: *Ya mi na mi ask after 5 times eniting for police duim for keepm hem and stopm hem for no killm mi and swearm oketa pikinini and mi.*

Interviewer: *What time did police give you PSN?*

Interviewee: *The police gave it after I had been there 5 times. Why didn't they give it in the first place.*

Interviewer: *You asked for it too?*

Interviewee: *Yes me I asked after five times whether there was anything for police to do keep him and stop him from hurting me and swearim at the children and me.*

Malaitan mother of four children, aged 40-49 years, resident in Temotu (T04)

Interviewer: *So after iu tekem statement wat na happen next.*

Interviewee: *After mi kasim police mi askm abaot PSN bcos mi fraet nogud husband blo mi save mi kasim police nogud hem kam destroy lo haos or tekem samfala samting.*

Interviewer: *So taem iu askm PSN ya eni option police talem iu?*

Interviewee: *Police askm mi if mi serious for tekem man ya lo courst cos samfala women askm den later ask for withdrawm back moa case ya.*

Interviewer: *Wat na experience blo iu taem iu ask for PSN*

Interviewee: *Mi garem confidence for go thru waitm nomoa. Becos mi save sapos mi zip up waitm case blo mi by things go worst.*

Interviewer: *So after you did your statement what happened next?*

Interviewee: *After I went to the police I asked about PSN because I was frightened that my husband would know I went to the police and destroy the house or take things.*

Interviewer: *So when you asked for PSN police told you any option?*

Interviewee: *Police asked me if I was serious to take the man to court because some women ask for it then later ask to withdraw their case.*

Interviewer: *What was your experience like when you asked for PSN?*

Interviewee: *I have confidence to go through with it. Because I know suppose I zip up with my case things will become worse.*

Malaitan mother of one child, aged 40-49

## Figure 1: What women say – PSNs make them safe to resume normal activities after violence

Women said one of the key benefits of PSNs were feeling safe to resume normal activities like work, market or schooling of children.

### MALAITA

Interviewer: *Time u go hed for duim case blo u ya, Hao nao u feel?*

Interviewee: *Olsem me feel, free olsem me save duim marketing blo me, olsem lo market na me save free... Before nomoa, hem save kam swear lo me*

Interviewer: *When you went ahead to conduct your case, how did you feel?*

Interviewee: *It's like I felt, free, like to do my market, like in the market place I am free...Before I don't because he used to swear at me*

Malaita mother of three children, aged 30-39 years

*After hem no kam thretenem me, nomoa, kam dsiturbem me lo haus nomoa, everything where me reportem go lo hem ya nomoa nao. Hem stop, since dat time and kasim where nao hem no anything then after all me live happy...Lo first ples time me report lo, oketa really helpem tu ya, oketa polis save helpem iumi oketa woman. Oketa save totok lo umi oketa woman. Oketa really helpful. Experience blo me hem gud ya.*

*After he did not come threaten me, nor come disturb me at home. Everything that I had reported about him, it's no more. He stopped, since then until he did not do anything, we have lived happy. In the first instance when I reported, they really helped, the police can help us women. They can talk to us women. They were really helpful. My experience was good.*

Malaita mother of three children, aged 30-39 years

### WESTERN PROVINCE

Interviewer: *And taem after iu doim 21 days' notice, and after iu report, iu go back lo house and husband blo iu still lo dea or hem stay away?*

Interviewee: *Hem stay. Mi mekem na agreement, bae hem stay lo house but hem must no holem beer after 21 days. Hem na oketa putim kam lo hem.*

Interviewer: *So how na iu feel after iu getim oketa police for givim iu notice and den utufala go back stay lo house.*

Interviewee: *Mi feel happy. Mi free. Osem mi no fright nomoa. Everything lo hand blo police... Mi feel safe wetem oketa pikinini blo mi.*

Interviewer: *Den relationship blo utufala olo?*

Interviewee: *Hem gud. Hem but fright too. Hem nomoa only taem mi save hem fright. Since mitala stay together, no matter mi run go lo oketa wantok blo mi or family blo mi but mi still no feel safe. Only thing nomoa mi kam storim straight den oketa putim up na notice 21 days ia. Hem nomoa osem only taem mi free. Mi no fright nomoa. Osem mi feel safe tumas wetem pikinini blo mi.*

Interviewer: *And after you applied for the 21 days' notice and after you gave your report, and you went home, your husband was at home or he stayed away?*

Interviewee: *He was at home. I made an agreement that he can stay in the house but he must not indulge in alcohol after 21 days. It's the condition they put for him.*

Interviewer: *So how do you fee after you got the police to give him the notice and going back together to your home?*

Interviewee: *I feel happy. I am free. I am no longer frightened. Everything is in the police's hands... I feel safe with my children.*

Interviewer: *What about your relationship with your husband?*

Interviewee: *Its good. He is scared too. That was the only time I have seen him scared. Since we stayed together, no matter I runaway to my relatives or my family but I still do not feel safe. The only thing was I came to straight to report him and they issues the 21 days' notice. That was the only time I felt free. I am no longer frighten. I feel safe with my children*

Western mother of five children, aged 30-39 years

### GUADALCANAL

*Fest tutfala days partner kam stand lo distance and still shaot and disturbm mifala family. Den family members blo hem tok lo hem lo consequences blo breakm police safety notice so hem stop from that time... PSN mekm big difference lo laef blo mi en oketa pikinini during datfala taem. Ating sapos no eni police safety notice by mi die stret nao becos by man ya killm mi olowe nomoa.*

Interviewer: *If eni fren blo iu lo sem situation hao by iu talem hem go tek PSN or hao?*

Interviewee: *Bae mi talem eniwan experiencem sem problem osem mi for go tek PSN. Mi believem by hem helpm oketa woman tumas lo times osem.*

*The first two-three days, partner stood in a distance and continue to shout and disturb the family. Then his family members went to talk to him about the consequences of breaching the police safety notice and so he stopped from that time... PSN has made a big difference in my life and that of my children during that time. I think if there was not PSN, I would have died because he would have continuously beat me*

Interviewer: *If you had a friend in the same situation, would you advise her to get a PSN?*

Interviewee: *I will tell everyone who experience same problems like mine to go get a PSN. I believe it will help the women very much in such situation like that.*

Guale mother of one child, aged 30-39 years

In other cases, other service providers also actively encouraged women to use PSNs, particularly Seif Ples and Family Support Centre. One woman described making police reports three times at Central Police Station before she finally asked for and was given a PSN after encouragement from Seif Ples which advised:

*"You must tekem nay a [PSN]. Yu no can sorry lo oketa husband. You must givim hard time nay a, step na ya by yu followm yu tekem diswan by mekem oketa by tingting nay a diswan". So, lo dea oketa encoragim me na, "yu mas strong yu no can let go now yu mas tekem na dis wan ya". Becos everytime hem duim diswan lo yu ya so yu mas tekem na. lumi givim time for oketa but oketa no save turn nao.*

*"You must take a PSN. Don't be sorry for husbands. You must give them a hard time now, steps if you follow them will make him think about what he has done". So there they encouraged me "you must be strong, you can't let go now, you must take this one. Because all the time he [husband] does it to you, you have to take it [PSN]. We have given him to to change but he doesn't change".*

Choiseul mother of five children, aged 40-49 years, resident in Guadalcanal

A common misunderstanding was what to do if PSNs were breached. Four women reported breaches of PSNs or Protection Orders to police, in one case the officers facilitated a reconciliation and in the other three no action was taken by police.

While the FPA sometimes has critics who allege the system "breaks up families", most of the women who reported their partners to police and had positive experiences ended up staying with their partner or other family member: 57% of all women who were satisfied with their safety after using police reports or PSNs. 31% ended up separating from their husbands or other family members and feeling safe after use of services and the remainder had family members in prison or custody.

58 of 107 (53%) women had negative experiences with the police and felt unsafe as a result. 50% of these women ended up staying with their abusive partner or family member and 45% separated from their partner or family member involved in violence but still felt unsafe.

Women whose PSNs had been effective in stopping violence were thankful to the services that intervened and reported positive impacts on their lives, including increased safety, feelings of control and being able to return to normal activities such as marketing goods, and sending children to school. The two most often mentioned benefits of PSNs were a stop to violence and change in perpetrator behaviour, and safety to allow women and children to resume normal activities.

In some cases PSNs prescribed the violence survivor, rather than the perpetrator's actions. In one case a father took out a PSN against his daughter, despite the fact he had physically abused his daughter. The PSN instructed his daughter to not go out dancing and forbid her to drink alcohol. In another case a police officer took out a PSN against a woman who was having an affair with her husband to stay away from the husband. A man took out a PSN against his wife because he wanted a break from her and stipulated that she not act jealous. In yet another case, two PSNs were issued, one to a wife and one to her husband with different conditions about how they should act, but these were not related to safety, more akin to a reconciliation or rules for domestic life together. These PSNs appear to be issued outside

of the scope of the Family Protection Act and indicate the need for greater understanding about the Act among officers and people applying for PSNs.

For a minority of women – 32% of all women who had PSNs for family members - the PSN did not change the perpetrator's behaviour and there was no follow up action from services so violence continued:

Interviewee: *Hem folom bat taem hem cross hem no folom hem disobey nomoa order ya so me sore lo hem mi no reportm lo police nomoa. Mi no go reportm gogo 21 days ya finish. Bat mifala stap hem continue nomoa.*

Interviewer: *Hao PSN ya helpm iu or nomoa?*

Interviewee: *Nomoa hem osem ds cross and laek killm mi moa hem go worst moa. Hem nating helpm mi.*

Interviewer: *So taem iu kasim police eni option oketa talem iu moa?*

Interviewee: *Yea oketa talem mi for go back reconcile waitm husband den stay nomoa. So mi go back and stay waitm husband lo haos nomoa bat hem no changem oketa way blo hem nomoa. Team hem cross hem go worst no warim mifala folom tingting blo hem.*

Interviewee: *He followed it but when he was cross he did not follow it [PSN] he disobeyed the order, so I was sorry for him and did not report him to the police again. I did not go report him and the 21 days finished. But we stayed and it continued again.*

Interviewer: *Did the PSN help you or not?*

Interviewee: *No, it is like he is cross and wants to hit me more, its got worse. It did not help me at all.*

Interviewer: *So, when you went to police did they tell you any options?*

Interviewee: *Yes they told me to go back and reconcile with husband then stay together. So I went back and stayed with my husband at the house but he did not change his ways. When he is cross it was worse, don't worry about us, follow his own thinking.*

Malaitan mother of four children, 40-49 years, resident in Temotu

Interviewer: *Hao man ya obeym PSN ya tu?*

Interviewee: *Nating nomoa. Hem no kasim 21 days yet hem killm mi lo public nmoa hem shoutm mi. No eni changes nomoa.*

Interviewer: *So what na iu duim next?*

Interviewee: *Mi walk out from haos and go stay different na. so dstaem hem 3 months na mi out from hem.*

Interviewer: *So disfala PSN ya nating protectm iu?*

Interviewee: *Nating na, hem save killm mi infront lo police bat by ota polis no duim enting nomoa.*

Interviewer: *How was it, did the man obey the PSN?*

Interviewee: *Not at all. It did not reach 21 days yet and he hit me in public, shouted at me. No changes at all.*

Interviewer: *So, what did you do next?*

Interviewee: *I walked out from the house and stayed in a different place. So now its been three months out from him.*

Interviewer: *So this PSN did nothing to protect you?*

Interviewee: *Nothing, he can hit me in front of the police station but police do not do anything.*

Temotu mother of one child, aged 30-39 years

One woman described how it had taken her five visits to get a PSN issued, with various reasons being offered for the delay (no transport, police officers busy [but seen playing ludo and chewing betel nut] and



not allowing the woman to sign the statement on the day it was taken). As result she had given up with her case:

Interviewee: *Osem how mi luk luk osem oketa police lo hia ia take action nomoa lo osem man kosap die na before bae oketa just take action. Oketa no save tek action quick taem, taem iu go report samting osem. Bae after how days, taem situation hem worst osem den bae oketa just go go for. Den osem bae iu force forcim oketa na oh ia. But if iu leavim osem, iu go talem den iu no save go talem, oh quick taem, umi go osem okay bae hard for oketa like go too ia unless iu forcim oketa or oketa just folom na.*

Interviewer: *So after 21 days ia hem samting, den no iu no herem back anything?*

Interviewee: *No anything.*

Interviewee: *Like how I see the police here take action only when someone is about to die then they will just take action. They do not take action quickly when you go and report something like this. After how many days, when the situation is worse, then they will just go for it. Then, like you have to force, force them to do it. But if you leave it, you go tell them then you don't tell them "oh be quick", "let's go", like that, its hard for them to like go too, unless you force them or they just follow you.*

Interviewer: *So after 21 days then something, then you do not hear back anything?*

Interviewee: *No, nothing.*

Temotu mother of one child, aged 15-29 years

Another woman also had visited the police multiple times before being issued a PSN which was broken and no further action was taken:

Interviewee: *me nomoa oketa tired for lukim me lo Polis station, me save go report, time me go report, wat na oketa no takle action lo hem me say, time hem kilim me, me tekem go na case ya, why na oketa Polis olsem, ating oketa likem for me die fastaem den, by oketa just findem na statement blo case ya me say...*

*So, olsem nao me bara no give up stret lo court ya, ME LIKE HEM MAS GO.*

Interviewer: *Hem mas go?*

Interviewee: *Yah...Me go me say me needim help, me nao me tok, me needim help, ufala helpem me, what? hem say, me likem for u go tekem na disfala man ya, olsem every time mifala tired for lukim lo here ya, hem say, hao mi save kam olowe lo here ya, ating time u no waka u no kam post lo here, no any time ufala tekem daddy blo mifala for kam lo here, for kam stay... [bae mifela go] for go arrestem hem ya, olsem, den by me openem case, hao by u no regret? ya, hao by u no regeret, by u no ...ehh hard lo me, me say, 12 years, mek 12 years na dis ya, me count folom, me no stay gud, me say so hard for me sore back moa...so, me say hem hard, ufala no feelim what me feelim ya. Everytime me kam lo here me needim oketa for holem, go inside lo prison nao but hem no take action dis taem nao me, kam, den hem say Ok so by u openem case, hem ask olsem ya me say.*

Interviewee: *Me, they were tired to see me at the Police station, I went and report, when I went to report, they no take action about it, I said when he hits me I should take a case, why are the police like this? I think they want me to die first, then they will just find my statement on my case I said. So, like I really do not give up on court, I WANT HIM TO GO*

Interviewer: *He must go?*

Interviewee: *Yeah....I went I said I need help, I talked, I need help, you guys help me. What? He said. I want you to go and take this man, like every time we are tired to see this place, how I come all the time, yeah, I think before you came to work and was posted here, but none of these times you took my husband to come here, to come stay... [they said] if we go arrest him, then I open a case, will you regret it? Yeah won't you regret it, won't you...Eh hard for me, I said, 12 years, this makes 12 years this year, I have counted them, I have not been good, I said so hard for me to regret it back...so I said its hard, you do not feel what I feel. Every time I come here I need them to arrest, go inside prison, but they do not ake action, this time I am here then he says*

*“Will you open a case?” he asks like that. “Yes” I say.*

Western mother of four children, aged 30-39 years

Another woman with a disability was dissatisfied that police had never followed up, as her family member had broken the terms of the PSN and she felt like the PSN “did not work at all”:

Interviewee: *Police safety notice hem no helpem me. Hem no helpem me.*

Interviewer: *Why now ya?*

Interviewee: *After boy ya hem signim, hem passim message for me say, by me kilim man ya die ya. Hem no meanim and understandim nao, what now hem signim ya, hem shud oketa shud sidaonim hem then hem readim through how many paper olketa givim hem, because oketa callem hem, iu kam sign, hem no understandim what na hem signim.*

Interviewer: *So, time Seif Ples helpem iu for tekem safety notice, you ting by hem helpem iu for talem for man hem save ya, for man no kam closap lo me. Hem nao what happen ya?*

Interviewee: *Hem still threatenim me yet. Question olsem na hem askem me kam, why now iu tekem me lo court. Hem no understandim nao, PSN ya*

Interviewee: *Police safety notice did not help me. It did not help me.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Interviewee: *After the boy signed it, he passed a message for me saying: I will kill you, you will die. He did not know and understand what he had signed, he should, they should sit him down then he should read through how many pieces of paper they give him, because they called him, you come sign, but he did not understand what he was signing.*

Interviewer: *So, when Seif Ples helped you to take a safety notice, you think it will help you to tell this man, he knows, to not come close to you. That's what happened?*

Interviewee: *He still threatens me this time. The question that he asks me is: why are you taking me to court? He doesn't understand it now, PSN.*

Malaitan woman with disability, aged 30-39 years

### Third most common information: arrests and court cases

The third most common information provided to women was that the man would be arrested or about how to pursue court cases. Satisfaction of women whose reports had resulted in arrests or court cases was generally high: two thirds of those whose family members were in prison felt safe and satisfied with the sentence (although only nine cases had resulted in prison sentences). In eleven cases an arrest was made as a result of the police report. Police reports that resulted in arrests generally meant the woman was satisfied with the police response.

### Fourth most common information: reconciliation

The fourth most common information given to women contacting the police was encouragement to reconcile with the family member who was violent. Encouragement to reconcile was provided to 25 women with police actively facilitating reconciliation in four cases (including managing schedules for compensation payments) and in one case even though information was provided about reconciliation the police ended up issuing a PSN (which had rules for the woman and the man involved, so the PSN was used as a form of documenting the reconciliation). All women were not satisfied they were safe after police reconciliations (as opposed to those facilitated by Christian Care Centre which had high rates of satisfaction, generally because the perpetrator underwent counselling). While reconciliation is a part of traditional dispute resolution in Solomon Islands, the power discrepancy between men and women and women's feelings that male police mediators will side with male violence perpetrators are contributing factors to women's dissatisfaction with police reconciliations.

When reconciliation was proposed by police officers it was always as the *only* option for women and other services were not mentioned as an option. One woman living in Guadalcanal explained the pressure police put women under to reconcile with their husbands:

*Taem mi arrive lo clinic oketa nurse askm mi about wat na happen den mi say husband blo mi na*

*killm mi ya den oketa talem mi dat mi shud reportm husband lo police becos hem big cut fogud. Woman nurse ya talem mi dat by hem reportm case ya lo police. Semtaem mi agree waitm nurse too for reportm husband lo police. Hem rabis experience fogud mi sore mi cry nomoa fultaem oketa nurse waka lo mi.*

*After mi admit lo clinic ya oketa nurse tekm report go lo police den mi waitm for go lukm police about case ya. Before mi go lo police dsfala woman nurse ya tekm mi go lo sustainability for counselling. After mi counselling mi go lo police station for openm case for husband blo mi na "You shud forgivem husband and go back stay together how wans husband blo u go lo prison who na by waka for kaikai for oketa pikinini blo utufala" ota police ya osem discouragem mi from openm case for husband moa ...*

*After oketa police man ya tok osem lo mi nomoa mi change mind and no openm case for husband na. Den mitufala husband go back stay together lo haos nomoa. Interviewer: So wat na situation blo iutufala olo lo haos afta?*

*Interviewee: Situation ya hem semsem nomoa taem husband cross hem killm mi nomoa taem hem no cross mifala stap gud.*

*Interviewer: Hao iu fil safe or nomoa afta?*

*Interviewee: Inside lo heart blo mi,mi save mi no stay safe nomoa ya bcos enitaem nomoa by husband blo mi cross and by mi die or life tufala samting ya nomoa lo mind blo mi evriday. Mi osem stay lo fear nomoa.*

*When I arrived at the clinic the nurses asked me about what had happened then I said my husband beat me, yeah then they told me that I should report my husband to the police because it was a really big cut. The woman nurse told me that she would report the case to the police. I agreed with her at the time, for reporting my husband to police. It was a really horrible experience, I was sad, and crying the whole time the nurses were working on me.*

*After I was admitted to the clinic the nurse took me to report to the police and then I waited on the police to see about my case. Before I went to police the nurse had take me to Sustainability for counselling. After the counselling I went to the police station to open a case against my husband. When I got to the police station instead of them helping me to open a case they said "you should forgive your husband and go back and stay together, what will happen if your husband goes to prison who will work to provide food for your children?" The police were like discouraging me from opening a case against my husband.*

*After the police man talked like that for me, I changed my mind and did not open a case against my husband. Then me and my husband went back and stayed together at the house.*

*Interviewer: So what was your situation like at the house after that?*

*Interviewee: Situation was the same, when my husband is cross he'd hit me, when he's not cross we stay OK.*

*Interviewer: So you feel safe after or not?*

*Interviewee: Inside my heart, I know I am not safe yeah because anytime my husband can be cross and I could die or live, two things, in my mind everyday. Its like I stay in fear.*

*Temotu mother of one child, aged 30-39 year, residing in Guadalcanal*

Another woman said she was confused why police officers kept asking her if she wanted to reconcile rather than pursue her case about her partner's physical violence, which included chasing her with an axe:

*Interviewer notes about an interview with a Guadalcanal mother of two children, aged 30-39, resident in Western Province: Twice a police officer and also once her husband has approached her and asked her if she wanted to write a letter to the police to request a reconciliation between her and her husband. The police woman officer who approached her said that she has time to request a reconciliation by writing a letter to the police. She feels a bit pressured but does not what to do anything about. She thinks that maybe her parents in law know about the police has asked her for the letter but she wants to wait and hear what her parents in law might say about the matter. She does not know what this letter might result in if she writes it. She thinks the letter might be to wash the case out but she does not want that to happen.*

Some women were told that the police would warn the perpetrator not to be violent, and for seven women that resolved the problem to their satisfaction. Two women explained their thinking following a failed or unfulfilled warning:

*Oketa callm hem and tok lo hem den afta mi no lukm eni changes husband blo mi semsem nomoa den mi report back lo police but oketa police nating folo up nomoa so mi give up nomoa mi livm go nao.*

*They called him and talked to him then after I didn't see any changes, my husband was the same then I report back to police but police did not follow up, so I gave up, just let it go.*

Guadalcanal mother of four children, aged 40-49 years (G24)

Interviewee: *Taem mi herem policeman ya say by hem go lukm olo blo mi ,mi happy becos mi save by policeman ya solvem problem blo mi.*

Interviewer : *Wat nao happen afta datfala fest visit?*

Interviewee: *No eniting na happen afta fest visit blo mi lo police. Policeman ya nating callm olo blo mi or kam lukm hem lo haos...En evritaem mi suffer lo wat olo blo mi hem duim lo mi...Afta mi no save wat for duim nao becos pipol mi trustm for helpm mi na police bat oketa no laek for helpm mi,mi ringm oketa for follow up lo case blo olo blo mi bat oketa nating duim enithing nomoa gogo me say how by mi pem ufala before you fala ds duim waka blo ufala for helpm me? Mi fil under pressure nao lo way olo blo mi treatm mi so mi givem slen for police man ya for hem helpm mi for tok lo olo blo mi en tekm hem lo cella mekm hem change lelbet.*

Mother of six children, aged 30-39, resident in Guadalcanal.

Interviewee: *When I heard the policeman say he will go and see my husband, I am happy because I know that will solve my problem.*

Interviewer: *What happened after that first visit?.*

Interviewee: *Nothing happened after my first visit to police. Policeman did not call my husband or come see him at the house...And every time I suffer with what my husband does to me...After I do not know what to do now because people I trusted to help me are the police but they do not want to help me, I ring them to follow up my case but they do nothing, anything, so then I say how if I pay you will you just do your work to help me? I feel under pressure now, the way husband treats me, so I gave some money to the police man to help me to talk to my husband and take him to the prison cell, make him change a bit.*

## Other issues

Incorrect information was given in some the police visits, one woman whose daughter was raped was told the police could not act unless they had a birth certificate for the daughter (which was difficult as she was in the province), two women in Temotu were told there was no paper to write their report or PSN, and one woman was told her case could not proceed because of the lack of the medical report (her husband was an employee of the local medical service and refused to release her report).

Two women whose partners worked in the law and order sector were told PSNs would be issued but they were not, and the feeling of the women is their husbands colleagues wanted not to act on the violence. One woman described her situation where she had reported violence (to keep her anonymity province is not named):

Interviewer: *Wat na oketa police duim?*

Interviewee: *Oketa sei by givm hem PSN bat oketa no duim nomoa. Mi go lo police 2 times but ota no duim nomoa. Evri taem mi go lo dea by hem folom mi go tu.*

Interviewer: *Iu satisfy waitm waka blo police*

Interviewee: *Nothing tu ya. Ota nating duim wat mi laekm nomoa. Evri taem mi go lo police ya osem hem no eniting lo oketa nomoa.*

Interviewer: *What did the police do?*

Interviewee: *They said they will give him PSN but they did not do it. I went to police two times but they did not do it. Every time I go there, he [husband] follows me too.*



*Interviewer: You satisfy with the work of the police?*

*Interviewee: Not at all. They did not do what I wanted. Every time I go to police, its like, nothing to them.*

Mother of three children, aged 30-39

In another case where the woman's partner worked at the police, although she had reported violence multiple times her reports had been "thrown away", she had been forced to reconcile at the police station by her husband's colleagues and the police remained unresponsive. She went back:

*Interviewee: Same group of police, becos evriwan seh, "Oh ya, mifa remember iu na kam last taem noma ya." So, mi seh ya mi kam baek moa ya, man ya gohet moa. You know, hittim mi and the physical violence ya na bara big fogud... Ota first few PSNs ya, were never served. Hem na issue blo mi.*

*Interviewer: Hao meni taems na iu tekem notice ya?*

*Interviewee: Hem nao me say...mi no savve ating, notice ya if me countim kam ya, bae hem shud kasim a total of almost ten fala ya, like hao meni taems mi go requestim ya.*

*Interviewer: So, the second time, is the first time iu tekem PSN?*

*Interviewee: Mi requestim, mi request fo PSN but whether ota servim or noma mi never savve.*

*Interviewee: Same group of police because everyone said "Oh yeah we remember you, you came last time." So, I said yeah I come back more, man goes ahead and does it. You know hitting me and the physical violence was really very big...The first few PSNs yeah, they were never served. That is my issue.*

*Interviewer: How many times did you take out a notice?*

*Interviewee: Well like I said... I do not know, notice, if I count it, it should be a total of almost 10 times, like how many times I went and requested it.*

*Interviewer: So the second time is the first time you took a PSN?*

*Interviewee: I requested it, I request for a PSN but whether it was served or not, I never knew.*

Mother of five children, aged 30-39 years

One woman whose husband was in law enforcement had a Protection Order issued which he broke but was never arrested for, the woman supposing it was because of his job role.

Another woman described her feeling as she was afforded no privacy to report her husband who was in law enforcement, making her statement at the counter with her face bleeding and her husband's colleagues making comments about her.

One interview was prematurely terminated because the woman was crying too much to continue talking. It was a case of a Solomon woman who was forced to marry a Bangladeshi citizen so he could get a work visa, and the woman had been unable to get help from services to divorce the man or seek reparations as the man had run away. She felt that womens services and legal services did not know what to do or did not act on her case. This may be an issue to examine and develop specific tools to improve the effectiveness of the FPA system to respond to trafficking and forced marriage.

While the researchers contacted disability advocates and organisations to try and find people with disability who had used the FPA, it was found use of the system is low. The UNDP/MJLA Access to Justice study also indicates people with disability are less likely to go to police with a family violence issue than people without disability<sup>14</sup>. There were only two cases of people with disability in this study, one woman who acted on behalf of her sister with an intellectual disability who had been sexually abused and one woman with a disability that had faced physical violence from a family member. The latter said that she was mocked for the physical signs of her disability by policemen and told by them that she should not marry or have children and cause problems (she nevertheless succeeded in getting a PSN with the support of colleagues and Seif Ples). These experiences, while small in number, suggest police officers may benefit from further training and awareness on their responsibilities and rights regarding people with disabilities.

Finally, the focus of this research is on women's experiences but it was observed that the police responses

14 Solomon Islands Government, Australian Aid, UNDP (2019) *Solomon Islands Access to Justice Study* Honiara:UNDP.

rarely considered safety of children. Police did not question cases where children were forced to stay with violent fathers when a woman ran away for help. In one case of a gang rape of a small child, the child had been kept in close proximity to the perpetrators at the police compound resulting in the perpetrators putting the child under pressure to change her testimony. In another case a young girl had been raped but police did not act because they believed the relationship to be consensual and had no proof of the girl's age. Police routinely questioned children without their parents or guardians present, in one case four male police officers were in a room with a young child alone to take a statement about sexual abuse. Further attention is needed to the situation of cases involving children to protect their rights and safety. A recent regional report highlighted the need for family protection systems to provide funding, training and other support for responses that meet the needs of children, and case studies in this research indicate this recommendation is very relevant to Solomon Islands<sup>15</sup>.

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15 (2019) *Unseen, Unsafe: The underinvestment in ending violence against children in the Pacific and Timor Leste*. Save the Children/ChildFund/PLAN International/World Vision.



## CONCLUSION

### Changing a “family thing” into a “serious crime”

*The police woman wanted to come and arrest – but the police man wanted to treat this as a family thing. Everyone agreed but I was not satisfied, so me lukim [how I see it] there was a kind of bias, no effective, other friends too say that they did not get safety notice most of the time, they [the police] just want to put it aside.*

Malaitan mother of six children, aged 40-49, resident in Guadalcanal

As indicated in the above comment from one of the interviewees, in the majority of visits to service providers violence is considered a “family matter” rather than dealt with as a serious crime. As such it is rarely acted on with a sense of urgency or priority, and women are often told by service providers to solve the problem within the family (discouraged to report violence, told to reconcile or that they will face financial hardship if they separate from partners).

This research suggests whether or not information about the option a PSN is presented to women, or whether or not a PSN is issued depends very much on the willingness and attitudes of the police officer or officers dealing with people who present at police stations. While it is commendable that so many PSNs are being issued, they are not reflective of the number of people presenting at police stations or other services who need intervention, such as PSNs to stop the violence.

There needs to be more research done on information and action of health provider staff, courts and the PSO and provincial level counselling and refuge services, as there are not enough cases in this study to draw many conclusions. Women who received services from Christian Care Centre, Seif Ples and Family Support Centre were generally satisfied with the service, but not always safe from further harm because of their situations and responses from police.

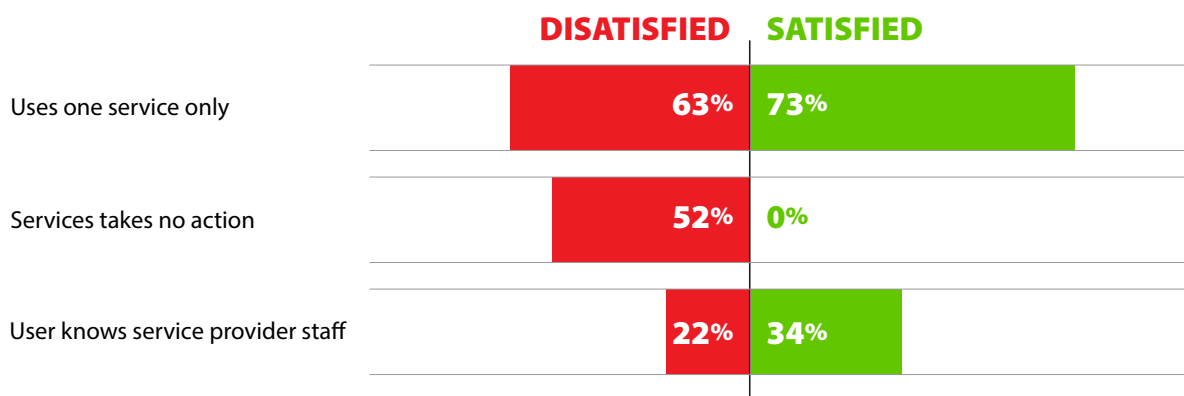
Of all the 126 interviewees, 62 people felt satisfied that services had improved their safety and 64 felt dissatisfied that services had not improved their personal safety (or that of their children). However this roughly equal portion should be more weighted towards dissatisfaction as in the satisfied group were women who tried to get services again and again before finally resolving the issue (such as visiting police stations 3-10 times before being issued a PSN or waiting several years before resolving a custody or divorce matter). Their satisfaction was based on their assessment after a range of services had been provided (sometimes as many as five different types of services, and sometimes just one service).

Common features of the satisfied service users were that all their visits resulted in referrals or action, that the perpetrator changed behaviour or the women was removed from the perpetrator and one third of these satisfied users knew personally a service staff member. Services were responsive to their problem, even though in some cases it took several visits before the issue was resolved to their satisfaction (such as multiple visits to the police to get a PSN, or to legal services to get a divorce or custody settlement).

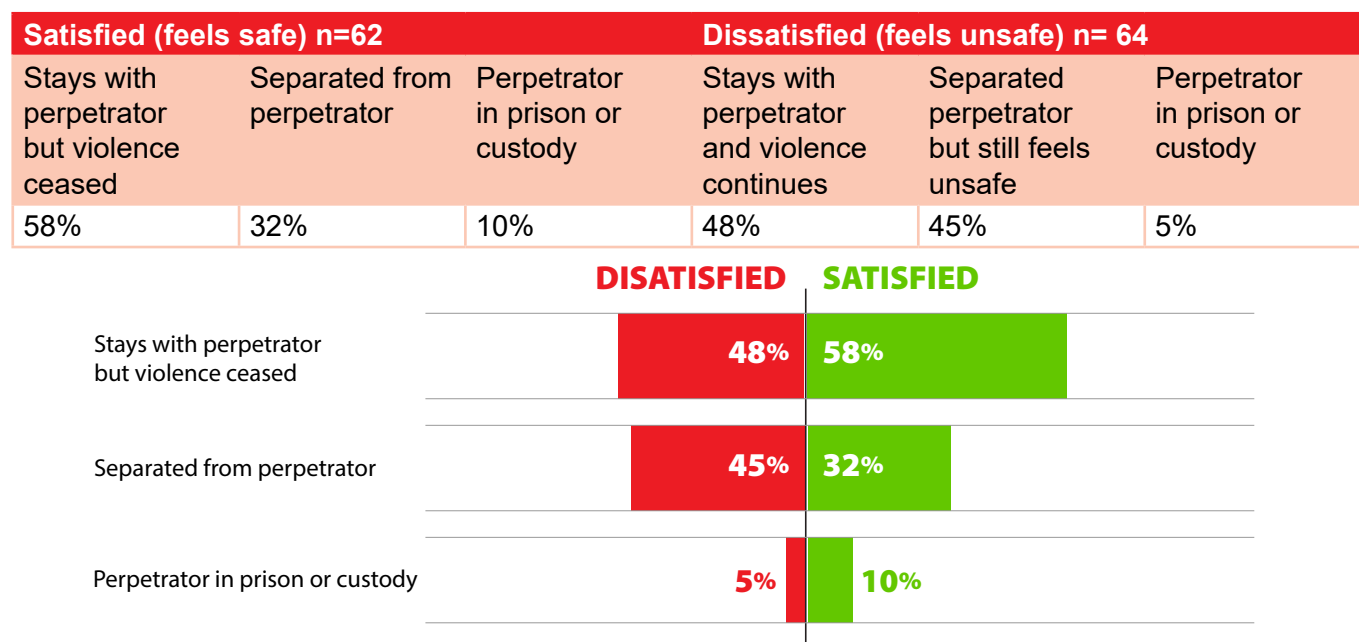
People who were dissatisfied with services had some common characteristics as well: they had no action or referral result from their request for help and still experienced violence or felt threatened by the perpetrator. Services were not responsive to their problem and as a result many gave up, felt angry or sad, and felt like there was no option but to endure the violence, in 48% cases, or (in 45% of cases) stay separated from their partner or other family member. 25% of dissatisfied service users reported the service staff knew the violent person and this impacted bias in services towards the perpetrator (compared to 5% of satisfied users). Figure J and Figure K detail these trends.

**Figure J: Satisfaction and service characteristics**

Satisfied (feels safe) n=62			Dissatisfied (feels unsafe) n=64		
Uses one service only	Services takes no action	User knows service provider staff	Uses one service only	Services takes no action	User knows service provider staff
45	0	21	40	33	14
73%	0%	34%	63%	52%	22%



**Figure K: Outcomes from services**



While there has been significant progress in the implementation of the Family Protection Act, increasing numbers of court cases and PSNs being used, and increased awareness about the Act, there is much that can be done to increase access to and effectiveness of the system. When the system was responsive to women and guardians' concerns, it was highly valued. When services failed to respond to service users' concerns about safety, it caused anxiety, distrust and sadness and violence continued.

Attitudes of service providers, training and understanding of the law and procedures, awareness of women about what the system can and cannot do and options available and increasing capacity of the system to respond to increased demand are all elements that can boost satisfaction of service users. Recommendations to advance these systemic changes are offered in the next section. These are drafted based on the thoughts of service users and providers as well as trends seen through analysis of the stories of people experiencing violence and needing help and discussions at a stakeholder workshop in October 2019.



## POLICE NEED TRAINING – SOME EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN

*“Definitely ota police still need a lot of training. How to respond to victims wea arrive lo police station. Uhm because samfala ya ota savve joke lo mi tu ya, “Sista ma wat na iu duim wrong?” “Ma hem naya.” Iu minim? It’s like, mi have to justifyem or mi have to explainim why na violence happen lo mi. “Wat na iu sa duim, man ya osem moa lo iu?” So, a lot of training how they respond especially really tekem survivor centred approach. Iu minim approaches blo oketa no respectful? Hem no respectful it’s not a survivor centred approach. Because ota ya, iu still get the sense of blaming, you deserve it.”*

*Definitely the police still need a lot of training. How to respond to victims who arrive at the police station. Umm because some of them just joke about me too like “Sister what did you do wrong?” “Well look at this”. You understand? It’s like I have to justify myself or I have to explain why violence happened to me. “What did you do, to make a man act like this to you?” So, a lot of training about how they respond, especially to take a survivor centred approach. You understand their approaches are not respectful. It is not respectful, not a survivor centred approach. Because they are, you just get a sense of blaming, you deserve it.*

Mother of five children, aged 30-39 years, resident in Honiara

*If man hem train and hem save hao person hem react, ba hem had fo torowem iu olbaot olsem ia den ringim iu kam afta awas moa. Ia? Hem save wat taem to dil wetem your issue, wen to ring, wat taem noma and hem had fo torowem olbaot. If hem ringim hasban and hasban hem talem samting, hem save hao fo ansarem baek, hem no kam baek lo me moa den go baek lo hem olsem, wan ting wea me lukim lo polis naia.*

*If someone is trained and knows how a person is supposed to react, it is hard for them to dismiss you then ring you hours after its happened. Yes? They would know what time to deal with your issue, when to ring, what time to respond and hard for them to dismiss you. If they ring my husband and he tells them something, they know what to answer back, not come back to me again then go back to my husband, this is what I’ve seen with the police.*

Malaita mother of five children, aged 40-49 years

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Suggestions for implementation of the Family Protection Act in Solomon Islands

*Wat iu fala witem ia and say hem fo protectim mefala oketa women, iu fala mas duim nao! Som! Hao nao iu fala protectim mefala!? Ia? Mekem mefala fil dat mefala seif? Becos fo me, me save as nao ba hem kam in yias tu kam disfala problem ba hem wost moa... So rili gavman iu mas som nao rili wewa nao protection act wea iu promisem and iu witem and iu putim, iu tok aboutem, iu putim aot fo iu niusim lo media, iu som lo television, iu putim eni kaen wea me save talem bat wea nao hem? Mefala no filim! Mefala no lukim! Mefala no insaet! So iu mas duim samting about!*

*What you write and say to protect us women, you must do it now. Show us! How will you protect us? Yes? Make us feel that we are safe? Because for government must show really this protection act which you promised, and you wrote about, and you put together, you talked about, you put it out in the news and media, you showed it on television, you put it everywhere but I can ask you: where is it? We do not feel it! We do not see it! We are not inside it! So, you must do something about it.*

*Malaitan mother of five children, aged 40-49 years*

As evidenced from the quote above, women have expressed a need for the Family Protection Act to be more effective, and for responsible agencies to be more active in dealing with family violence. Much has also been learnt by service providers in the last three years of using the act about what works well and what needs further clarity, consistency and resources across the system. Recommendations for this report are presented as either cross-sectoral (SAFENET), applying to all agencies responsible for functions in the Family Protection Act system, or by sector, with specific recommendations for the justice, policing, health and women's services sectors. Many of these recommendations have been identified in other documents and some are partially underway at the time of writing this report in November 2019. Other recommendations also require added resources in terms of funding from donors and Solomon Islands Government, and it is noted that services are not funded at an adequate level compared to needs to improve effectiveness of services, and the breadth and scope of services provided.

### SAFENET

- 1.1 Develop a standard educational tool in the format of a "Decision Tree" (a visual representation of referral pathways and services under the FPA) with branches presenting options of actions services can take for family violence survivors. This visual representation would include Police Safety Notices, Protection Orders and other options to stop violence under the FPA and be distributed to all women presenting family violence issues at clinics, police stations, legal offices, counselling and women's services.
- 1.2 Develop and distribute cross sectoral guide to educate service providers on needs and rights of children. This tool would clearly state safe and unsafe ways for all services to provide help to children for families presenting violence issues at clinics, police stations, legal offices, counselling and women's services.
- 1.3 Develop tools to help individual agencies to record service use and outcomes by children, to facilitate better understanding of children's experience of FPA services
- 1.4 Develop and distribute one-page follow up sheet to record outcomes of service provision and violence survivor satisfaction or dissatisfaction to distribute via SAFENET.

## Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs

- 2.1 Establish mandatory reporting of province, age, disability, employment status and type of violence (physical, sexual, economic and emotional) in Justice Information Management Systems (JIMS) data from all agencies.
- 2.2 Adapt the forms and/or JIMS database data field match to enable easier data management
- 2.2 Improve reporting of Police Safety Notice and Protection Orders and Interim Protection Orders in JIMS and identify status of PSN, IPOs and IPOs to include whether these are issued, temporary or final and monitor content of each document.
- 2.3 Work with FPA agencies, government and the Solomon Islands Bar Association to establish training for legal staff including authorised justices about gender based violence service responses to ensure services provided by government and private lawyers are responsive to needs of violence survivors.
- 2.4 Facilitate distribution of cross-sectoral tools to community paralegals and inclusion of paralegals in SAFENET.
- 2.5 Train legal staff on client rights and duties to inform clients about court processes, documents, timing and outcomes to better inform clients about their cases and court rulings.
- 2.6 Review court practice directions to require clients that withdraw cases to provide information to the magistrate on reasons for withdrawal.
- 2.7 Establish a quota for female authorised justices, and regular update list of appointed authorised justices to access gender equity in recruitment and promote women leadership in the justice sector.
- 2.8 Provide guidelines about options for friends of the court, such as SAFENET service providers, to act on behalf of clients in court to facilitate greater access to court for those unable to appear such as children, women in remote areas and in other cases under the FPA.
- 2.9 Facilitate greater use of filing protection orders via email by medical, social welfare, authorised justices, medical practitioners and police, as is permissible under the FPA
- 2.10 Establish NGO services for children involved in court cases to receive counselling and have their statements assessed by child psychologists and social welfare professionals, and have access to child psychologist during court proceedings
- 2.11 Establish practice directions for court during proceedings for safety and protection rights of children
- 2.12 Consider amendment of FPA to include immigration and customs in the definition of law enforcement and establish a domestic violence visa

## Ministry of Health and Medical Services

- 3.1 Review level of reporting by medical staff to police about women and children presenting to medical services and recommend any necessary changes to information, training and staff codes of conduct
- 3.2 Review current exchange of reports from medical staff to police with the view on increasing exchange of information in a timely manner
- 3.3 Identify remote clinics and target them for training for staff to file medical reports under FPA, including SANE for proper documentation and reporting of sexual assault cases



## Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs and women's services

- 4.1 Facilitate inclusion of all counselling providers into SAFENET and registration of all counselling providers to improve consistency of information and service response across different non-government agencies
- 4.2 Support needs analysis, funding and establishment of refuges and counselling for women and children subject to violence in proximity to areas where families currently come for police and legal services
- 4.3 Develop visual educational materials for children to understand how service provide a safe environment under the FPA
- 4.4 Coordinate implementation of the recommendations of the report *Stretim: Social attitudes and communications on violence against women and girls* (see Appendix A)
- 4.5 Include FPA training in any other current training modules to chiefs (i.e traditional governance)
- 4.6 Support establishment of behaviour change programs for male perpetrators that link with referrals from women's organisations and services, RSIPF and courts
- 4.7 Support women's livelihood and economic advancement programs to reduce financial dependency of spouses on violent partners
- 4.8 Link livelihood and employment programs with family violence services so women who experience violence and/or leave partners and are without an income have services to assist them to make an income following experiences of violence
- 4.9 Encourage service providers to regularly collect information on women's perceptions of outcomes of services and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with services and collate this information for continuous learning and system improvement
- 4.10 Encourage all international NGOs in Solomon Islands to distribute information about PSNs as part of their family violence projects and report back on distribution

## Royal Solomon Islands Police Force

### Family Protection Act

- 5.1 Increase and improve training and data management by provincial staff so content of all PSNs are inputted into JIMs
- 5.2 Family Violence Unit regularly analyse content of PSNs to improve compliance with the FPA and SAFENET guidelines
- 5.3 Issue memo to all staff reminding staff of permissible content in PSNs and process for PSNs to be served
- 5.4 Provide more staff and funding for Family Violence Unit in-house training program on PSNs and Protection Orders to provide staff training at the local and provincial police stations, followed by on-the-job monitoring and feedback to observe how officers use the FPA system
- 5.5 Provide resources for Family Violence Unit to establish a formal assessment to assess police officers knowledge of correct procedures regarding PSNs and POs and to certify officers as fulfilling obligations under the FPA
- 5.6 Conduct inventory of available resources and knowledge of IT with recommendation for increase for use FPA
- 5.7 Develop training specific for RSIPF for senior management effectively oversee use of FPA implementation

### Transparency and standards of services

- 5.8 Increase public awareness of options to report dissatisfaction with police responses to family violence reports
- 5.9 Require new recruits to undergo police checks and working with children checks to expedite searches prior to commencing employment
- 5.10 Train new recruits at the police academy about how to recognise and respond to gender-based violence
- 5.11 Train new recruits at the police academy on rights and responsibilities regarding children in family violence situations
- 5.12 Train new recruits at the police academy on rights and responsibilities regarding people with disabilities and how to provide services in a non-discriminatory manner
- 5.13 Link with external training providers to provide professional training to current RSIPF staff on gender based violence, service provision for children, and service provision for people with disabilities
- 5.14 Introduce into staff regulations penalties for officers reported to have facilitated reconciliation on GBV cases
- 5.15 Improve RSIPF data management so previous reports of violence can easily be accessed at police stations and provide consolidated evidence for police and court actions against perpetrators of violence
- 5.16 Assess needs for transport in each station with the view to increasing transport available to RSIPF to respond to family violence

### RSIPF staff conduct

- 5.17 Review RSIPF policies and procedure in order to establish a new Family Protection Policy which would address violence experienced by members of the force and their families
- 5.18 Establish hotline staffed by female welfare officer tasked with responding to requests from RSIPF staff or spouses of RSIPF staff for referrals to family violence services and advice about options for action under the FPA
- 5.19 Discipline RSIPF staff found responsible for bias or subverting services to favour perpetrators who are members of their family, colleagues or friends

## Appendix A:

### Findings from Stretim: Attitudes and Communication about Violence Against Women and Girls

- 1) **LOCAL KNOWLEDGE: Communities and people experiencing violence have valuable contributions to communications about the topic.** The 200 research participants in the focus groups came up with 324 messages that they perceived could prevent, stop or reduce violence. Testing of communication materials before they are finalised is suggested to increase use of local knowledge in IEC.
- 2) **RESEARCH LIMITATIONS: *The scope of this study is limited and more research is needed.*** Focus groups in other provinces, using the same or similar techniques, would be desirable to build up more nationally representative data and inform local and provincial level efforts to reduce violence. Also, tracking the experience of survivors and perpetrators through the system to see what role information plays in change would be useful.
- 3) **INTERVENORS ARE MOST LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE CHANGE, BUT INTERVENORS ARE NOT THE SAME: *Who will communicate to stop violence is culturally specific.*** In Malaita, fathers of husbands are the primary actors, in Guadalcanal parents of the couple are intervenors and in Temotu young people are more likely to act. Intervenors outside the family vary, with Malaita and Guadalcanal sites visited placing importance on chiefs to act in a variety of ways (including teachings, warnings, compensation and dispute settlement). In Temotu sites, there was more pressure on Police to intervene in the absence of intervention by local actors.
- 4) **SIMILAR MESSAGES OF CHANGE: *There are three messages across all sites that were seen as effective in reducing violence.***
  - A) *Solve the problem by talking not fighting.* This was a primary message in Malaita (28%) and Guadalcanal (29%). Although 18% in Temotu, the high levels of violence in Temotu could benefit from more attention around solving family problems non-violently
  - B) *Violence is against the law.* This was a particularly important message in Temotu sites visited - given the lack of intervention by local actors, the idea that law would stop violence was critical for change. In Guadalcanal, this message was already being used by women (as a threat to husbands) and by male leaders, both church and chiefs, as a warning to make men stop violence. In Malaita, cultural norms about the legitimate use of violence, means that the message proposed by one women leader “do not take the law into your own hands” was seen as needed to encourage people to use the law, rather than violence to settle disputes between individuals and families.
  - C) *Violence creates more problems than it solves.* In each site, participants drafted messages emphasising negative consequences of violence. In Guadalcanal, it was emphasised a man hitting his wife would mean problems between the two families (including disputes and compensation). In Temotu, there was a gravity attached to the consequences of violence for the children of the couple. In Malaita, there was a sense of “shame” from violent incidents and a feeling the action of the couple was linked to the man’s family’s status and reputation. Another commonly cited problem across all sites was that of imprisonment and subsequent separation of fathers from families.
- 5) **COMMON INFORMATION GAPS. *Topics communities request information about most are services, the law and behavioural change tips:***

*Services – what is available and how to access them.* Female participants in focus groups across sites were most interested in practical information about what to do in situations of violence.

Female violence survivors had two particular suggestions for IEC about services – 1) they should give advice about what to do in practical terms (e.g. how to “run away” or what decisions services would allow them to make and what their options were if they went to a service) and

2) they should present services as friendly, non-judgemental and safe for women. One female survivors focus groups suggested specific images such as smiling service staff, people hugging women, explaining one of the greatest fears was whether they would be judged or viewed negatively by staff running the service.

*Penalties under the Family Protection Act.* Spreading information about penalties under the Family Protection Act, including consequences of prison sentences was seen to have a useful role in deterring men from violence. Men in all focus groups in the community and male prison inmates particularly thought information on penalties and the law should be spread widely to reduce violence. However, in Temotu and Guadalcanal, women too nominated the use of threatening imprisonment and court as useful in changing men's thinking and behaviour around violence against their wives.

*Anger management and alcohol abuse.* Men and male prison inmates had useful suggestions on strategies for men to manage anger "cool down" and not act in anger and enact violence that would later be regretted. This information could help promote male behaviour change in communities. Also, several focus groups, particularly youth, men and male prison inmates said campaigns and information to reduce alcohol consumption was needed in order to reduce violence.

- 6) **VISUAL INFORMATION SHORTAGE: *There is a need for more visual information about violence.*** Particularly among rural women, there is a likelihood that many will not be able to read and understand written communication. It was observed that many female survivors of violence accessing services had low literacy levels, and data from Family Support Centre confirms most women hear about services through word of mouth. Posters and other materials that can present information in pictures are needed to get the message across. Films, particularly those that can help explain what services do for women and what are the negative consequences of violence for men would be useful additions to currently available materials. Drama and film can be used to dramatically express some more complex ideas – e.g. the impact of violence on children or how to encourage a man to stop violence.
- 7) **RADIO CAN HELP INCREASE KNOWLEDGE OF INFLUENCERS: *Radio is useful as a source of information for local leaders.*** While use of radio was low, local leaders are more likely than others in the community to own and listen to the radio. In Guadalcanal, there was a higher use of radio than the other provinces, perhaps reflecting better access and choice of services. So, engagements targeted at chiefs, for example, could usefully employ radio, while communications targeted at the general populace or women would more effectively use social networks.
- 8) **SOCIAL NETWORKS MORE EFFECTIVE THAN TRADITIONAL MEDIA *Social networks remain the best distribution channel for information.*** As with intervenors, social networks are culturally diverse, networks which are prominent in one province (e.g. a particular church denomination) may be less influential in another province. Nevertheless, social networks through churches or locally based services (schools and clinics) are most used for information, compared to mainstream media.
- 9) **WORK WITH CHIEFS: *In many locations chiefs are arbiters of whether violence is considered "cultural" and outcomes for women in conflict resolution.*** In Malaita primarily, but also Guadalcanal, networks of chiefs can promote cultures of intervention and prevention of violence. They do this in two ways 1) chiefs are keen to point out that violence against women and traditional culture in both locales are not associated, in fact in many traditional societies it was "tambu" (forbidden) to hit women, and 2) chiefs are called in to mediate "serious" disputes including serious cases of violence against women. Councils of chiefs provide useful forums for chiefs to discuss messages, using culture, to discourage violence against women. Chiefs have rarely been engaged by agencies working on violence against women.
- 10) **CHURCHES HAVE EDUCATIONAL ROLE: *Churches typically promote information about marriage, healthy relationships and potentially could spread information about services.*** In none of the focus groups was the church seen as a forceful intervenor in violent disputes,



but they were seen to have two important roles 1) an educational role, to teach people what is marriage, roles of men and women and healthy relationships and 2) to spread information, particularly amongst women's church networks. However, to date churches have rarely been used to spread about the information most desired by women – information about services. There seems to be potential for collaboration, particularly with churches running refuges in several provinces and so being service providers themselves.

- 11) **YOUTH INFORMATION NEEDS ARE DIFFERENT: *Information that targets married couples are not appropriate for youth.*** Youth need information specifically targeted at them and their situations – for example youth across all sites when looking at information on violence said it would be perceived as less relevant to them because of visual and informational focus on married couples. Sources of disputes amongst young couples prior to marriage are also different and commonly about jealousy, gender roles, contact with others through phones and social media and alcohol abuse. Youth requested more information on “dealing with jealousy” or healthy relationships and alcohol abuse and for other relevant information (services and the law) to be described in situations they could relate to.
- 12) **INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION NEEDED: *Together agencies stand to increase knowledge and social change, or divided they fail.*** In informal discussions with national and provincial government, international NGOs, women's refuges and services and church run support services, there was often frustration between the lack of coordination and cooperation amongst organisations. The researchers also found it was difficult to ascertain which organisation had done awareness or communications where and to what effect. Meanwhile, the reach of all these organisations suffers from “urban bias”, largely focused on easy to get to places around capital centres, and need for information outstrips supply.
- 13) **DON'T PREACH, HELP: *More promotion of help-seeking behaviour is needed in communication efforts.*** While many agencies are working on prevention of violence through awareness there is a lack of information on how men and women in violent relationships can seek help. For instance, many IEC materials do not mention the 132 referral service number or other contact for people who need support from outside the community. It may be that this lack of promotion is related to the scarcity of services, or it may be that the conceptualisation of projects on “prevention” considers use of services an “intervention” or something for a later stage. However, information about services has a preventative function (by making people aware of outside supports as an option) and use of services at early stages of family problems or violence, may prevent more serious injuries and lethal violence. Simple measures, such as including 5 words about the 132 referral service or an appropriate number to call the Police, in all information materials (whether prevention materials or not) could help stop violence.







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