



"Working Together to Inspire Change"

Papua New Guinea Women's Forum

March 6 - 7, 2014

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Port Moresby

Crosscutting Themes/Recommendations

- Create the Right Environment for Change: Women's groups should band together and advocate for change; need for more networking between groups and with others (other NGOs, the church, police, donors, etc.). To quote Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, "when you speak with one voice, you have no idea how loud you can be."
- Provide Role Models and Hands-On Opportunities: Need for mentoring and bringing the next generation of women to the table. Young women should ask for help and older women should reach out to young people. Establish internship and apprenticeship opportunities so that young women can see first-hand what they might be interested in and gain job experience.
- Give Women the Skills They Need to Succeed: Review education curriculum with eye toward gender; incorporate entrepreneurship and financial literacy. The foundation to empowerment is education and financial capacity. Create more opportunities for young women who drop out of school to finish their education.
- Raise the Profile of Women's Issues; Ensure Resources are Adequate: Consider elevating the role of the Office for the Development of Women (ODW), adjusting its reporting structure (to either the Minister for Community Development, or directly to the Prime Minister), and ensure it has the funding it needs to advocate for and empower women. Ensure the government's Gender Policy is fully funded and implemented.

Thematic Recommendations

1. Developing the Next Generation of Women Leaders

- Encourage mentoring. Leadership is a progressive thing, does not happen overnight. Young women need to be mentored so that they can develop leadership capabilities. Older, more experienced, women can do this formally or informally. Don't let cultural obstacles prevent this type of interaction and exchange.

- Young women want to step up to help lead PNG, but do not feel that information is always very clear on how they can get involved. Young leaders want tangible steps put in place now.
 - Older women: Reaching out to younger women. Finding the space and time for mentorship. You can be a mentor to others without even realizing it. Be open to this, and look for opportunities to help bring young women along.
 - Younger women: Seek out mentoring opportunities. You can't expect opportunities to be handed to you, sometimes you have to create openings.
 - A mentoring group was formed as a result of the forum to connect mentors and mentees. They will create peer-to-peer mentoring groups to set an agenda, and then will invite leaders of women groups and call upon those leaders to mentor them and to place them in internship positions in their organizations.
- Create a National Network of Young Women Leaders and/or a National Foundation for Youth Leadership to provide a way for organizations and individuals to come together for mentoring and leadership opportunities.
 - Engage the media to profile successful women who can be role models for and inspire young women. Focus especially on women that have overcome challenges and how they did so.
 - Consider bringing young women onto boards. Both private sector and NGO boards should consider having young women represented on their boards, perhaps in a shadow capacity.
 - Encourage women in public service, NGOs, and the private sector to bring young women onto their teams as interns and as legislative aids. They should also create ongoing training programs to give young women opportunities and skills to be at the table as policy makers, to draft laws, budgets.
 - Bring more youth to forums such as this. Aim to have one third of the participants under 30.

2. Women's Groups as Agents of Change for Peace and Security

- Follow best practices. The three key steps to peace-building are:
 - Consult with traditional leaders;
 - Conduct training and mediation for mediation officers; and
 - Focus on reconciliation.
- Provide capacity building and life skills training to affected young women, who are often displaced by conflict. Literacy training also provides an entry point to raise awareness on human rights and allows women in rural areas to document their stories as evidence.
- Develop a national policy and action plan on women in peace and security.

- Use the plan from Bougainville as a model and be sure to include broader gender equality issues, such as equal participation in politics, which affect all realms.
 - Build a strong human rights network to support peace and security for women. There should be a stronger, more integrated dialogue between the government and civil society. In particular, NGOs and church groups filling the gaps deserve more support. Female leaders in peace and security must be creative and step out of their comfort zones to build a strong support network and bring about change.
 - Address the root causes of conflict and focus on recovery through economically empowering women.
 - The PNG government should recognize the plight of internally displaced persons and address it as a serious national issue.
 - Women want training on peace building, conflict resolution, and trauma counseling so they can provide counseling to internally displaced persons in their communities.
 - Increase the role of churches in the tribal peace process.
 - Increase networking efforts between police, health workers, and women's groups to support peace processes between tribes.
- Establish/Bolster desks for women and children, in addition to female police officers, in every police station so that victims can feel safe. Community policing is also a best practice so that community leaders and police officers build a relationship and support each other. Police shortages and community non-involvement empowers perpetrators.

3. Investing in Women through Education

- Invest in Education! The school system is not turning out graduates who are competitive in the marketplace. Review the national education system through the gender lens.
 - There are not enough schools to support the growing number of students. Educational infrastructure and the quality of education is poor.
 - The school curriculum is out of date and it needs urgent review and update.
 - Participants perceive the education boards in the provinces as dysfunctional.
 - The school fee education subsidy should be extended to private institutions as well so that students can receive a voucher and apply it to private schools of their choice
 - Gender budgeting is urgently needed; the implementation of existing policies around gender equity is still missing
 - Increase agricultural training and better integration of women into the agricultural economic value chain critical. Use the land to create individual and small group opportunities, then scale it up
 - Develop a database of young professionals at the local level to form advisory committees to LLGs (best practice from Enga province)
- Incorporate entrepreneurship in the education curriculum
 - Educating young women to be employers – not employees – would support the government's agenda to increase local SMEs in the country.

- NGOs and other organizations should create competitions for young people to present business plans and spur innovation. This can encourage young women to think seriously about entrepreneurship.
- Create more opportunities to keep young women in school, and to educate those who leave the formal school system
 - Improve coordination between universities, government, and civil society organizations should be encouraged to identify gaps and areas of collaboration to increase scholarships and increase the number of slots in tertiary education.
 - Mobilize public-private partnerships to create more tertiary scholarships for young women.
 - Civil society and the private sector should collaborate to host career fairs and other activities that help young people find jobs and encourage those who should go back to school.
 - Open ten more TVET schools in all provinces to provide job skills to students who had to leave formal education
 - Policymakers and private sector need to prioritize the skills needed in order to align the professional and vocational training that should be provided and ensure women have access to those vocational and job opportunities; for example, tourism has a high potential
 - Create a safety net for school-leavers whose scores do not allow them to continue their education and women who drop out to take care of children. Discarded by the system, these students end up in unhealthy environments and paths of crime, gambling, alcohol, drugs, and prostitution.
 - Establish public-private partnerships to subsidize day care costs for young mothers so they can continue their education and do not have to leave school.
- Redefine and promote healthy gender roles; more mentors and role models are needed
 - Need to address gender stereotypes at home. Parents need to provide an environment that encourages young girls to take up fields traditionally dominated by men, such as information technology, engineering, and science.
 - Get together with young girls and celebrate successful professional women from PNG; show girls new academic fields to pursue (PNG Women in Engineering offered to do awareness on career paths at schools); host meetings at schools to discuss; establish a monthly speaking circuit to the schools to emphasize mentorship by sharing women's experiences.
- Provide young girls and women first-hand exposure to economically viable fields to help them explore their talents and interests to select jobs they enjoy
 - Citizens and civil society leaders need to be more proactive in identifying educational, scholarship, and business employment opportunities. Groups are often vocal in complaining but slow to take greater ownership of their own successes and failures. Groups need to collaborate rather than working independently to support young women through education opportunities.

- Create opportunities for internships and apprenticeships to provide work experience opportunities to young people. Internships would increase the likelihood of permanent job offers for young people who perform well. Find solutions to the cost of living concerns to make it possible. Orient young people who move to urban areas on how to sustain themselves when they move into cities to look for jobs.
- Engage the private sector in developing human capital, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Private sector institutions should establish mentorship programs for their interns, give preference to young women, and involve men and women in mentoring.
- Celebrate successes of women in STEM fields and encourage them to offer internships to more young women

4. Helping Women Lead Healthy Lives

- Prevention is important. Educate women on how to stay healthy, especially on combatting preventable lifestyle diseases and maternal health.
 - Lifestyle diseases are now the number two or three cause of death in Papua New Guinea. Women need to understand how to eat healthy, the importance of exercise, and the hazards of alcohol and tobacco.
 - Since health services are not reaching the rural areas, the public does not know or does not practice the necessary preventative screenings.
 - Implement the healthy island concept, which is already successful in the central province. Recommend that MPs contribute a set share of their national incentive funds to implement the concept nationwide.
 - Maternal death rates can be reduced through increased emphasis on family planning.
 - Engage men. They are the decision makers and gatekeepers to health and family planning. Men need to support and encourage women to seek preventive health care services.
 - Need better obstetrics care in rural areas. Community health posts need delivery and child immunization equipment. Community health posts lack midwives and women are dying as a result. Consider following Central Province’s model and training villages on how to give village births to act as a stop gap while more midwives are trained and deployed.
- Fund and train more public health professionals
 - The costs to meet the National Health Plan 2011-2020 and the National Health Service Standards were determined and budgeted; but the accompanying Human Resource Plans have not been.
 - Community Health Workers were trained years ago, but their training is outdated and they do not receive refresher trainings or other training opportunities.
 - Recruit retired medical figures to help educate and train the new generation.
 - Partner with universities to encourage more young students to choose the medical field and provide scholarships; offer more practical training opportunities and continuing education opportunities

- Create a platform for continued dialogue on women’s health.
 - Health is everyone’s business, it does not just involve doctors, and there must be partnerships between the government, the private sector, and the community.
 - Start a dialogue with the National Health Association; have a town hall with the government so that people can learn what the government is doing.
 - Government and NGOs need to map out who does what so programs and activities do not step on each other’s toes. Stop compartmentalizing and start coordinating.
 - Reduce waste in the health care system and streamline expenditures. The community must demand better from the government and hold their leaders and public service professionals accountable.
 - There will never be enough support from the government, so it is important to create innovative public-private partnerships for long-term sustainability. There needs to be a plan to continue the service after sponsors leave.
 - We need better coordination between health, law and order, and education. This is the people’s responsibility not only the governments. Some organizations are trying to provide health centers but people are demanding compensation for putting for putting a health facility on their land. There must be a community driven demand for the role of the government. Communities should not expect handouts because it creates dependency.

5. The Role of Men and Youth in Combating Gender Based Violence

- Address perceptions of gender roles and the issues of power as root causes
 - Violence occurs at all levels of society and communities often accept it and in turn, condone it. Youth in PNG are engaging in violence much earlier than in the past. Half of 10,000 men reported committing rape as teenagers.
 - The definition of gender roles start at home and parents instill stereotypes through expectations and the way they treat their sons and daughters.
 - Redefine a man’s role from being the “big man” to a more modern, “equal partner” definition. The current system teaches men that they have power over women and their bodies, so they perform policing to keep women in their place. Men who are jobless, who do not achieve the “big man” status feel disenfranchised and engage in behaviors that reinforce violence such as alcohol or drug addiction. Men listen to other men. To support men who want to change their attitudes and behavior while maintaining their community’s respect, media and society have to highlight positive examples of fathers and male leaders.
 - Use sports to change conceptions of masculinity and eliminate gender based violence. Let young boys, girls play sports together and they learn to respect each other based on sportsmanship and character not gender.
 - Need role models at the national level. Ask the Prime Minister to be a champion for women’s rights.

- Focus on prevention. Men should be taking the lead, taking ownership of the collective effort of projects against violence.
 - Address gaps in women’s education to ensure that they are taught their rights in school.
 - Strengthen referral system; and consider organizing a national forum for men against violence.

- Improve coordination
 - Need a coordinating body to coordinate what is happening, a map of who is doing what and where, etc.
 - This body could act as a clearing-house for information and data on gender based violence, and recommend best practices for duplication.
 - Create a national plan to ensure proper and sustainable funding. Ideally, it would have an annual budget based on what the NGO coordinating body identifies. This will also allow everyone to plan programs.

- Help perpetrators change
 - Violence does not happen in a vacuum. Perpetrators likely experienced violence throughout their lives as children.
 - Provide services for the perpetrator in parallel to the victim so that he gets needed therapy and behavior change lasts longer. If he does change, he can become an influential advocate against violence.
 - Government should collaborate with churches and schools to help bring about behavioral change.

6. Getting Women into Business

- Promote SMEs by improving women’s access to finance, financial literacy, and business training
 - Access to Finance
 - Look at alternate ways to provide collateral to secure loans since women are not able to use land as collateral and many times assets are in the husband’s name.
 - Consider innovation grants and venture capital mechanisms.
 - Ensure that rules are applied transparently, and proper processes are followed with regard to disbursing public funds. There is a tendency not to repay debts to government, and this renders government credit schemes ineffective. People need to be educated on how loans work, and what the penalties are if they do not repay them.

 - Financial Literacy
 - Start with access to finance at the grassroots level: promote bank accounts and make it easier for women to formalize their businesses.

- Include financial literacy in the school curriculum and promote it at regional and local levels.
 - Business Training/Entrepreneurship
 - Include entrepreneurship in the school/university curriculum.
 - Educate women on business training available through in technical and vocational institutions. Use radio/video/SMS channels, rather than purely written materials, for reaching out to local communities.
 - Women's groups should improve information sharing [e.g. develop and share a 'toolkit' or 'notebook' on how to start a business] and work more closely together through networking and joint initiatives.
- There should be a wider consultation with women and awareness campaigns regarding the government's SME policy to ensure women's interests are considered.
- Lower the costs of doing business and make it less complicated for women to open and run businesses by implementing regulatory reforms and investing in infrastructure
 - Improve access to technology by lowering the costs of internet and online banking
 - Increase access to market information and surveillance
 - Invest in infrastructure to improve access to markets
 - Support the growth of small locally owned businesses through enabling policies and tax incentives.
 - Support for the supply chain: we need to create subsidies for copra, cocoa, and fresh vegetables. Mothers want to increase their production, including fish products. We need to eliminate monopolies.

7. Harnessing the Power of Technology to Empower Women

- Increase awareness of innovative ways in which technology is helping women's wellbeing
 - Digital and mobile technologies and the internet have enormous potential for women's empowerment, providing women with opportunities to find and share information, access educational and health services, generate income, interact, collaborate, network, and have their voices heard.
 - A lack of access to technology and technical training, autonomy and adequate infrastructure (often coupled with the high costs of connectivity) prevent many women from fully benefiting from the use of digital and mobile technologies and the Internet. Therefore, those living in urban areas are at an advantage.
 - Mobile phones and SMS technology is advancing health: People are using Front-line SMS in Madang to remind AIDS Victims to take their AVR treatments and disseminate health information. Phones are saving lives during childbirth by connecting nurses with more experienced health workers in provincial hospitals. Women often use the SMS feature in times of domestic violence or accusations of sorcery call a friend or women's network to contact police.

- The private sector is using technology to help communities. For example, “Peace Maker” offers lower fees to NGOs. Another other example is Digicel’s free Meri Seif Line for intervention in domestic violence cases
- Use technology to share information
 - Create a central database for women to access policies.
 - Use SMS campaigns and the internet to get information out to women.
- Address diverging views on technology as it relates to cultural identity
 - Women are now not only recipients, but are also communicators. Some view technology as threatening cultural identity but more awareness and education can show people how technology can be used for positive professional and human development.
 - Participants raised concerns over the issue of pornography. Ability to access pornography potentially leads to greater incidents of violence and sexual abuse.
 - Participants reported some marriage breakdown due to technology. Parenting is vital. Limit child’s access.
 - There may need to be a review of legislation to understand the guidelines for the use of technology.
- Make better use of mobile technology
 - Mobile technology is more available in remote and rural areas now that the use of solar chargers is expanding and cell phones are more affordable. Radio broadcasting remains the main medium for information and communication for remote populations.
 - Mobile banking has huge potential in the country. Several services are now available to send money to relatives in different locations, to save money, and store money on their phones.