

Lack of data a problem

A DATABASE is an area of need in Papua New Guinea to address gender-based violence, Secretary for Community Development Anna Solomon said.

Speaking on a panel discussion on "Combating Sexual Violence Against Children" during the PNG Women's Forum yesterday, Solomon said there was a need for a gender-based council similar to the National AIDS Council.

"This would help handle all the challenges to do with database and data collection on all forms of violence in the country," she said.

The lack of data problem was shared by other panelists who said that it was an impediment to research on violence by agencies and stakeholders.

The problems have always been there but lack of any concrete data and information has hampered any research into the root causes of violence in the country.

Solomon said she wanted to see gender-based violence addressed at the national level, thus she had been pushing for the coordination of all partners who had been working towards child protection.

She said there was a gender-based violence strategy which had not gone to Parliament for deliberation.

"Every household has experienced violence, unlike HIV/AIDS. So this calls for immediate recognition to have the mechanism (gender-based council) which can't be crowded under the department (Community Development)," she said.

She said her department had been pushing for this and hoped to get the nod from the national executive council to address the issue of database and data collection in the country.

"We must get this right otherwise our efforts in addressing violence against children will not be heard or seen, thus get no support from the Government," she said.

Solomon said besides the proposed gender-based council, the Lukautim Pikinini Act called for a council.

The PNG Law Reform Commission said 70 per cent of women in the country said they had been physically abused by their husbands.

That number reaches 100 per cent in some parts of the country or even more than that, she said.

Police warn city vendors

POLICE in Mt Hagen have warned people setting up a new informal market opposite the new National Development Bank building to ensure there is order and their rubbish must be disposed of in proper locations.

Provincial police commander, Chief Supt Martin Lakari said yesterday if police received reports of criminal activities like bag-snatching, pick-pocketing, and others going on at the new informal market then they would move in and close it. Lakari said people looking after the market must make sure that at the end of the day, they collected all the rubbish and disposed of it at the main rubbish dump at Kerbuk.

"I do not want to see rubbish in the main drainage and cause blockage to the rain water and force water back into the main shopping centre along China Town Street and flooding the area," he said.

He said that it was pleasing to see street vendors who used to stand on the footpaths of the city and selling Asian-made products to people now concentrating on sales at the new market.

Lakari said starting this week, the footpaths in the city must be cleared for people to move around freely.

"We respect people engaged in the informal sector to earn their living in the city but must do it in a proper way," he said.

He said there were so many people living in the city and the majority of them were without jobs and the informal sector was the only way they had of making money to survive.

He said police would be monitoring the market on a daily basis and if they saw any wrong doings then they have no option but to close it. Lakari urged the people looking after the market to ensure there was control and peace at the market.

He told vendors to stay away from the road and the footpaths where people walked.

Lakari said people had organised themselves and were doing business in a professional way.

He said he was happy with the way they were conducting their daily businesses and warned them to keep away from petty crimes that may result in closing the market.

"Avoid crimes and control rubbish," he told the vendors.

Magistrate: Compensation Act needs review

THE Criminal Compensation Act should be reviewed to allow magistrates and judges to give specific orders on how monetary compensation should be used and spent on victims of violence, Deputy Chief Magistrate Dessie Magaru says.

Magaru raised concerns that the Criminal Compensation Act only allowed judges and magistrates to award compensation after conviction but it did not give any guidance on how the compensation could be used if the victim was a child or juvenile.

"This is of great concern because without orders from the courts as to how the compensation can be used, the victims do not always benefit from the compensation," she said.

She said compensation was spent on things that were not in the child's welfare or for counselling.

Magaru raised the issue during a panel discussion on ways to combat sexual violence against children during yesterday's Papua New Guinea Women's Forum in Port Moresby.

She said compensation was made to keep peace in communities and tribes if a child or adult was violently abused or killed and not to prevent accused persons from being convicted. Yesterday's discus-



A woman waits to ask a question during the PNG Women's Forum under way in Port Moresby. The forum ended yesterday. – Nationalpic by GEVOKILA ALFRED

sions on combating sexual violence against children looked at the impacts sexual violence was having on the children of PNG and what could be done to reverse the trend.

One of the questions was on the role of the country's compensation culture and how it affected the delivery of justice on accused persons.

Magaru said the compensation

culture not only affected the delivery of justice but prevented the victim from getting medical help in cases of rape and so increased the chances of HIV transmission.

District earmarks K1.2m tuition fees help

GAZELLE district in East New Britain has committed K1.2 million for 620 students attending tertiary institutions in the country this year.

That is an increase of K900,000 from last year, according to district executive officer Joe Meava.

Meava said the district had a fixed allocation of K300,000 annually for the tuition fee assistance pro-

gramme for years. But there had not been much awareness about the programme because funds were limited and it was only to support students who had financial difficulties.

Meava said the district carried out an awareness that resulted in many families and students applying for help.

That resulted in the increase in the

funding to K1.2 million this year. He said the district would maintain K1 million for the programme.

"It is an ambitious programme; the district administration is supporting the human resource in the province and in the district."

Meava said Gazelle MP and chairman of the District Development Authority and Minister for

Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology Malakai Tabar had approved the amount last week.

The increase in funds is aimed at addressing poverty and the shortage of land in the district by way of pushing young people through the formal education system to help their families.

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