

Update on 2014 PNG Women's Forum Recommendations

Since the March 2014 PNG Women's Forum, the U.S. Embassy has met regularly with women's groups, PNG government representatives, donors, and members of the private sector to distill the recommendations put forward at the event into the key areas for action. Over the course of two months, we met in sub-groups by panel discussion topic and discussed all the recommendations that the panel and breakout session had made, and then encouraged the women's groups to rank them in priority order. In the end, each sub-group presented two priority action items to the larger group, for a total of 14 priority action items (full list of priority action items attached).

We then challenged the women to choose the top actions on which they would work together over the next year. The women chose using mentoring to develop the next generation of women leaders, launching a nation-wide campaign against gender based violence (GBV), decreasing barrier to keeping girls in school, and using APEC to increase access to markets for PNG business women as their top issues and worked together to in sub-groups once again to flesh the recommendations out into the priority list below.

Currently, we are working with women's groups and other participants to form working groups on each subject, and develop action plans to accomplish their goals. The U.S. Embassy would welcome support from Development Partners Roundtable participants on these recommendations, both to refine them and to put them into action.

Use Mentoring to Develop the Next Generation of Women Leaders

Priority Recommendation 1: Encourage mentoring and create opportunities for young women to be exposed to role models. Carry forward the Mentoring Initiative developed at the 2014 PNG Women's Forum to match mentor and mentee organizations. Exxon Mobil PNG mentoring The Voice Inc. is the first such pilot partnership. Start a speaker series at schools to expose girls to career paths using volunteer speakers from corporations, government agencies, international donors, the diplomatic corps, etc. Corporations could work with high schools to bring young women in to shadow senior level managers and executives. Focus on male-dominated fields, such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Also consider encouraging big businesses to mentor smaller businesses.

The creation of a mentoring initiative was one of the most salient outcomes from the PNG Women's Forum. Since the Forum, the U.S. Embassy has facilitated five mentoring meetings. The top American executive at ExxonMobil PNG was an enthusiastic participant of the group. Thanks to her commitment, ExxonMobil has already taken the proactive step to "adopt" the youth development organization called The Voice Inc. for mentorship.

Based on this model, the taskforce moved forward with a matchmaking strategy that connects youth organizations with private sector, donor, or civil society organizations. The taskforce mapped out a selected number of organizations with potential young women mentees and plans to start a recruitment campaign to find mentor organizations. The taskforce will facilitate and provide a handbook with ideas and principles to help start the organizational mentor-mentee relationship, but each pair will develop specific activities that work for them. This match-making approach with existing organizations has been

well-received by local stakeholders who frown upon the creation of new women's organizations when the current organizations already have trouble coordinating with each other. It is also unique in that it requires little to no funding to implement, which provides a valuable lesson for women's groups in PNG: just by working together they can achieve change. The main challenge to this recommendation is sustainability of effort by task force participants and delays due to the lack of a clear NGO leader on this initiative. In a recent breakthrough, the President of the PNG Women Doctors Association agreed to take the lead on facilitating the mentoring matchmaking and developing the handbook. The U.S. Embassy will help mentor her in this task, and welcomes any resources or expertise on this topic that the PNG government, diplomatic, international, and corporate partners could offer to help her charge ahead. Volunteer mentors are especially needed. If organizations are interested in volunteering staff as mentors, please contact the U.S. Embassy at PDPortMoresby@state.gov.

Launch a Nation-wide Campaign Against Gender Based Violence

Priority Recommendation 2: Develop and carry out a nation-wide public and media messaging campaign against gender based violence (GBV). Create a practical tool (via SMS or a mobile app) that can improve coordination and service delivery for GBV services. Bring in strategic marketing talent to develop a simple yet powerful message to communicate that violence is not acceptable using sports figures, male champions, and local celebrities. Use the campaign to push out information on services for victims, ensure that all women know their rights and understand the Family Protection Act, and mobilize men as advocates against GBV. An SMS tool or app could help put information on services directly in the hands of women by combining and digitalizing the directories of resources that local NGO Meri Tok Save, the PNG Department of Justice, and the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC) have put together.

GBV is clearly the women's top interest. The GBV campaign, however, will require the most donor support. The U.S. Embassy would welcome resources from the PNG government, diplomatic, international, and corporate partners to help the women's groups make the nation-wide campaign a reality. The GBV campaign concept they developed has three pillars:

- (1) Increasing access to services for survivors of GBV by launching an SMS strategy/mobile app to give women information on services available in their area;
- (2) A "know your rights" campaign to teach women, law enforcement officers, and judicial representatives about the new Family Protection Act (which was approved with little consultation and there is very little public knowledge about it) and other protections under the law; and
- (3) Working with men to grow the network of male advocates against GBV in the country and gradually change men's mindsets regarding the proper way to treat women.

The SMS/mobile app concept is particularly appealing. Mobile technology has rarely before been used to spread information in this way in Papua New Guinea. This strategy/app will use information on GBV-focused resources that the government and NGOs have gathered and published in paper directories as a starting point (which only happened in the last year and was the first of its kind) and push it out to anyone with a mobile phone. Currently, those directories are only printed in limited quantities, and there is no real distribution network in place to get them into women's hands.

Unfortunately, no single PNG women's group has the capacity to implement this campaign and to network women's groups to help them build home-grown solutions. U.S.-based, and locally represented,

NGO Population Services International (PSI) has shown an interest in working on this initiative and is developing approaches to implement the three goals using a “Not In My Village” model. The goal is to get leadership from the provincial level down to the village level to commit to not tolerating GBV in their communities and provide them with the resources to address GBV using both a preventative and response tactics. Having an umbrella organization with the capacity and expertise to professionally manage this campaign and to play a coordinating role with local NGO sub-grantees would be vital to driving the campaign forward and keeping it on track. Local NGO Papua Hahine Social Action Forum is already working with PSI on developing its concept, and has volunteered to play a coordinating role with other NGOs to implement this model should funding become available.

UNDP, with support from the Australian High Commission, is working with PNG’s Office for the Development of Women to develop a GBV strategy and related initiatives that mirrors several of the recommendation by the women’s groups on combatting GBV. This campaign could help to connect the dots between this high-level donor support and the practical impact that those programs and policies have on everyday women.

Decrease Barriers to Keeping Girls in School

Priority Recommendation 3: Work with headmasters to review enrollment statistics, identify common reasons girls leave school, and develop localized strategies at the provincial and district levels to keep girls in school. Strategies could include initiatives such as establishing mentoring/role model opportunities, installing showers and bathrooms in all schools (so women are comfortable attending school when menstruating), providing day care to encourage women to return to school after giving birth, or working with communities to address bride price pressures that prevent girls from staying in school. Look for public-private partnerships to develop solutions. Find ways to motivate students that are not obligation-based. Show the positive role that school plays in advancing girls’ futures.

Identifying the most common barriers and collecting proposed solutions would require a mapping/surveying exercise of all the provincial school administrators to find out what is keeping girls out of school. The working group wanted to identify the most common barriers and best proposed solutions, and then look for PNG government, donor partner, and private sector support to develop solutions. However, the challenges to implementing this recommendation are that the mapping/survey approach requires a long term effort and keeping the women’s groups and the government engaged on this data collection and collation task will be a challenge.

In subsequent follow-up meetings, the working group has decided to re-craft this recommendation into a series of complementary short-term actions that they are each capable of undertaking to help inspire girls to stay in school. The President of local NGO Business and Professional Women, which focuses on education of and scholarships for women, has put up her hand to lead this working group and to organize such “quick win” opportunities.

Use APEC to Increase Access to Markets for PNG Business Women

Priority Recommendation 4: Use PNG’s APEC membership to increase access to international markets for PNG business women and look for ways to use APEC events to create opportunities for women to sell their products domestically. PNG business women should meet with PNG’s APEC Secretariat to explore using

PNG's APEC membership to create opportunities for PNG women to put on or participate in trade fairs. Feed information on APEC-related opportunities to women business owners on a regular basis. Organize women business owners to attend the annual APEC Women and the Economy Forum (none went in 2014). Display products from women-owned business on the margins of PNG-hosted APEC events. Establish a permanent location to display women-produced products for purchase by international visitors.

The PNG Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PNGWCCI) has volunteered to take the lead on this working group in close coordination with the PNG government's APEC Secretariat and private sector lead representatives. Improved information flow and coordination with women-owned businesses on opportunities to improve their businesses and market reach using APEC resources could be transformational for some women-owned businesses, especially in the run-up to the 2018 APEC Summit. Some possible outcomes are increased participation by PNG business women in APEC activities and helping the PNG government find ways to help its business women tap into the sales and marketing opportunities that PNG-hosted APEC events offer.