



Violence Against Women in Elections in Papua New Guinea

An IFES Assessment

June 2023

Violence Against Women in Elections in Papua New Guinea

An IFES Assessment

Lead Author

Lauren Sauer



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

Violence Against Women in Elections in Papua New Guinea: An IFES Assessment
Copyright © 2023 International Foundation for Electoral Systems. All rights reserved.

Permission statement: No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without the written permission of IFES.

Requests for permission should include the following information:

- A description of the material for which permission to copy is desired.
- The purpose for which the copied material will be used and the manner in which it will be used.
- Your name, title, company or organization name, telephone number, fax number, email address, and mailing address.

Please send all requests for permission to:
International Foundation for Electoral Systems
2011 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202
Email: editor@ifes.org
Fax: 202.350.6701



About IFES

IFES advances democracy for a better future. We collaborate with civil society, public institutions and the private sector to build resilient democracies that deliver for everyone. As a global leader in the promotion and protection of democracy, our technical assistance and applied research develops trusted electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections; effective and accountable governing institutions; civic and political processes in which all people can safely and equally participate; and innovative ways in which technology and data can positively serve elections and democracy. Since 1987, IFES has worked in more than 145 countries, from developing to mature democracies. IFES is a global, nonpartisan organization based in Arlington, Virginia, USA, and registered as a non-profit organization [501(c)(3)] under the United States tax code.

IFES By The Numbers



Reached 25M+
people with
civic and voter
education in 2021



Supported 30
elections in 2021,
training 300K+
election officials



Worked across 58
countries in 2021

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	6
Summary Findings:.....	8
Status of Women.....	8
Women’s Access to the Electoral Process.....	9
Violence Against Women in Elections.....	10
What is Violence Against Women in Elections?	13
Methodology	14
Assessment Factors.....	14
Primary Data Collection	15
Primary data collection methods	15
Limitations on Data Collection	15
Country Context.....	16
Geography, Demographics, and Cultural Norms.....	16
History and Political Landscape.....	16
National Legal Framework and International Commitments.....	18
National Commitments.....	18
Gender Based Violence Laws.....	19
Firearms Amended Act 2022.....	20
International Commitments	20
Freedom of Expression	20
VAWE in PNG	21
Factor 1: Status of Women	21
Current status of women in PNG society	21
Christianity, masculinity, and GBV	21
Women’s role in decision-making.....	22

Gender-Based Violence in PNG.....	23
Types of Gender Based VI	23
Sexual and intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic	24
Services for survivors	25
Lack of justice for survivors	25
Factor 2. Women’s Access to the Electoral Process	26
Social and cultural gender norms	26
Regional Differences	26
Highlands region	26
Momase, New Guinea Islands, and Southern regions	27
Family and bloc voting.....	29
Separate Lines for Women.....	29
Bribery and intimidation	30
Barriers to women candidates and MPs.....	30
Women speaking out against undemocratic practices	31
Women election officials, state security officials, and scrutineers.....	31
Factor 3. Violence Against Women in Elections	31
Campaign period	31
Private and public violence against women voters.....	32
Private and public violence against women candidates	32
SARV.....	33
Reporting acts of violence against women in elections	33
Recommendations.....	34
Improve civic and voter education to inform women of their rights and promote gender equality in culturally responsive ways.....	34
Pass the amended OLIPPAC to ensure that 10 percent of candidates supported by political parties are women.	35
Create an enabling environment for women to vote and campaign free from intimidation.	36
Provide surge support for GBV service providers during the campaign to post election period.	37
Increase and sustain support for police and GBV providers; improve access to justice.	37
Stem the tide of gun violence in PNG	38

Executive Summary

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) conducted its second Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) Papua New Guinea (PNG) Assessment in 2022 following the national general elections. IFES conducted the first VAWE assessment—the first of its kind in PNG—in 2018, following the 2017 elections (the report was published in 2019). This report assesses VAWE in PNG, drawing on fieldwork, research, and IFES’s experience operating in PNG. It presents recommendations for mitigating and preventing VAWE in the future. These recommendations are not substantially different from those included in the 2019 report. What does this tell us? Patriarchal social norms, gender inequality, gender-based violence (GBV), and patron-client politics continue to be pervasive, resulting in family and bloc voting, bribery, and intimidation that effectively disenfranchise women, people with disabilities and the elderly.

The Papua New Guinea Election Commission (PNGEC) has made progress in combatting VAWE by providing separate polling lines and polling booths at the majority (76.4 percent) of polling locations that Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) observed. This was a significant improvement over the 29.9 percent of such accommodations seen in 2017. Greater gender parity was also observed among electoral officials and security officers at polling and counting centers.

The PNG government, writ large, only started to better resource GBV policies over the last two years, since the establishment of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV. The committee’s hearings and reports, published in 2021 and 2022, brought national attention to the government’s failure to act substantially on GBV since the passage of the Family Protection Act in 2013. The reports also drew attention to PNG’s reliance on donor-funded initiatives to support survivors of GBV. The government acted on some of the committee’s recommendations, including allocating funds to implement the PNG National GBV Strategy and criminalizing sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV is a form of violence that is generally perpetuated against women and girls who are accused of sorcery) in 2022.

Ahead of the 2022 national elections, Prime Minister James Marape proposed amendments to the Firearms Act that were quickly passed on April 21, 2022 and signed into law on May 16¹ (just three days before the nomination period for candidates in the national elections closed), with the hope that new, tougher penalties would help curb electoral violence. Unfortunately, these tougher penalties were unsuccessful at deterring electoral violence. As in the 2017 election, PNGEC funding did not cover sufficient policing at polling and counting centers, making most electoral security reactive rather than proactive. In 2022, around 50 people were killed in election violence,² far fewer than the 204 deaths seen in 2017.³ However, far more people were impacted in 2022 when election violence triggered intercommunal violence on a large scale, displacing up to half the population in three Highland provinces. Internal

¹ Firearms (Amendment) Act 2022, Papua New Guinea

² Kuku, Rebecca. *The Guardian*. 2022. [PNG election violence: 90,000 displaced since May, 25,000 children unable to attend school. September 28, 2022.](#)

³ Chandler, Jo. *The Guardian*. 2018. [Unprecedented violence and fraud ‘hijacked’ 2017 PNG election – report.](#) October 29, 2018.

displacement disproportionately impacted women and children; 70 women and girls were reported as raped, kidnapped, or victims of SARV during the 2022 elections alone.⁴

Law and order during elections is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. For example, in the Highlands region, candidates' and their supporters' stockpiling of illegal high-powered firearms in the lead-up to elections has become the norm. There are concerns that the violence experienced in areas not considered hot spots in the 2022 national elections may become normative as well. The PNGEC and the Inter-Departmental Election Committee will face challenges in addressing these issues. The work of the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform offers an opportunity to reflect on pervasive election issues.

⁴ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

Summary Findings:

Status of Women

Areas of Vulnerability	Recommendations	Stakeholders
PNG ranks 160 of 161 countries on the United Nations 2021 Gender Equality Index.	Explore how the Theology of Gender Equality, a culturally responsive approach, can be used in gender equality and male advocate training at the community level.	Donor, Department of Community Development and Religion
Only 12 percent of women in PNG report being the main decision makers at home	Scale up the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) in civic education that promotes gender equality among youth.	CSOs, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), PNG Government
Patriarchal social norms are pervasive. The cultural bias against women reduces their competitiveness against men in political processes.	Maintain and nurture coalitions for gender equality both during and outside of the electoral cycle.	Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPCC)
Women are historically underrepresented in PNG politics and public administration. Since independence in 1975, only nine women have been elected to the national Parliament. Political will is lacking at the highest level (the Office of the Prime Minister) to advocate for reserved seats for women in Parliament.	Amend the Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates (OLIPPAC) to introduce a requirement that all political parties must nominate at least 10 percent women candidates to be eligible to run in national elections. ⁵ Reduce nomination fees for women candidates; explore how the Central Fund can be used to support women candidates to help level the playing field in a non-partisan way. ⁶	Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPCC)

⁵ Gelu, Alphonse. 2021. Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission Office of the Registrar. [Preparations for the 2022 National Elections, July 2021](#).

⁶ “Funding from other donors for women candidates: ... the Central Fund is able to receive funding from citizens, non-citizens, and international organisations which can be used to support the proposes of the OLIPPAC. The IPPCC strongly encourages supporters of women candidate to contribute funding to the Central Fund which can be used to support women candidates. The Registry has been exploring options for channeling specific funding to women candidates from such donations; this work could be sped up if there is interest amongst donors.” Gelu, Alphonse 2021. *Ibid*.

Women's Access to the Electoral Process

Areas of Vulnerability	Recommendations	Stakeholders
Physical, social, and psychological violence—both private and in public—impacts women's ability to vote for candidates of their choice and to engage as scrutineers (a polling or counting watcher to ensure the fairness of the process) and candidates.	The PNGEC should train the presiding officers of polling places to provide separate entrances, lines, and polling booths for women more consistently and effectively across polling stations to protect the secrecy of the ballot.	PNGEC
Family voting is a serious problem in PNG elections, with men instructing female relatives whom to vote for (or voting for them).	The PNGEC should train the presiding officers of polling places to provide separate entrances, lines, and polling booths for women more consistently and effectively across polling stations to protect the secrecy of the ballot.	PNGEC
In the Highlands region, young men were observed collecting and filling out ballot papers (bloc voting) during the 2022 elections. This practice effectively disenfranchises women, people with disabilities and the elderly.	The IPPCC should be empowered to enforce the code of conduct that candidates and political parties sign; it should be able to sanction parties and candidates for election-related offenses, particularly bribery, undue influence, and defamation, to dispel the culture of impunity in PNG.	Parliament, IPPCC
Even when separate lines are provided, there are opportunities to influence women's votes. More than one in four (26 percent) of IFES interviewees believed polling stations were unsafe for women, and half of those respondents cited intimidation at those sites as the reason.	Peacebuilding activities need to be mainstreamed throughout the electoral cycle and not treated as a defined project with limited funding and timeframes.	PNG Government, Donors, CSOs
The TIPNG 2022 observer report noted sightings of bribery and intimidation of voters during polling in a little over one-fourth of polling places, similar to 2017. In addition, patronage politics during the campaign period results in	Election dispute resolution mechanisms should be more accessible to marginalized populations including women and persons with disabilities to hold candidates or political parties accountable for election offenses. Voter education should	Parliament, PNGEC

family or bloc voting. Money politics disadvantages women candidates because they do not have the same amount of campaign funds as male candidates and cannot distribute money and food to the same extent as male candidates (even if they wish to) to win votes.

raise awareness of election offenses (including examples of how women, persons with disabilities and the elderly are impacted by election offenses) and the type of evidence needed and how to register complaints. The Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform should consider lowering barriers for marginalized groups seeking redress for election offenses.

Violence Against Women in Elections

Areas of Vulnerability	Recommendations	Stakeholders
<p>Violence is not always physical. Public violence in the form of family and bloc voting was widely reported by IFES respondents; however, when asked if women voters experience different types of violence than men, the majority noted instances of private violence such as verbal harassment and threats by male relatives, and physical violence by family members. This may point to a perception that private violence is more prevalent than individual reports suggest, and that women may be unwilling to discuss such treatment.</p>	<p>Similar to the surge in funding for the 1-Tok Kauselin Helpim Lain (PNG GBV hotline) and shelters for women who were subjected to GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic, surge funding for GBV services should be provided from the start of the campaign period until the seating of the new government. Such funding would recognize an uptick in GBV, given the higher rates of intercommunal conflicts during elections, as well as private violence experienced during this period.</p> <p>Family and sexual violence units (FSVUs) should be better resourced with vehicles, fuel, and staff to reach survivors, conduct investigations, make arrests, and achieve convictions.</p> <p>FSVUs also need to network more effectively with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide referrals to shelters and counseling services.</p>	<p>Donors, CSOs PNG Government, GBV service provider (FSVUs and CSOs)</p>

	<p>The PNG government should create new channels for GBV survivors to access justice. This might include creating family courts presided over by judges (a recommendation of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV).</p>	
<p>Intercommunal conflicts and the use of guns played key roles in the electoral violence witnessed during the 2022 elections. Women and children were severely impacted. Three provinces in the Highlands experienced large-scale internal displacement that affected schooling and health care delivery. Women and girls were vulnerable to and experienced rape and SARV.</p>	<p>PNG should consider making it illegal for civilians to carry weapons from the start of the campaign period through the seating of the new government. The PNG police or PNG Defense Force must be properly resourced to enforce such a ban.</p> <p>The Bire Kimisopa guns control report, tabled in Parliament in 2018, should be reviewed to identify politically viable recommendations to curb gun violence in PNG.</p> <p>Tougher penalties for illegal firearms were passed right before the 2022 elections. The PNG police force needs more human resources to enforce this law, as well as a system to track its own firearms to keep them out of the wrong hands.</p>	<p>Parliament, PNG Government, PNG Police</p>
<p>IFES key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that women candidates are more likely to be subjected to private than public violence during the electoral cycle.</p>	<p>The IPPCC could consider using the Central Fund to provide private, non-partisan security to women candidates to level the playing field with male candidates who have funds to hire private security.</p>	<p>Parliament, IPPCC</p>
<p>IFES field research found that the PNG police's lack of efficacy in bringing justice to survivors of GBV has a strong impact on women's willingness to report VAWE; when they do, they do not expect justice. Indeed, women's lack of access to justice undermines their agency and ability to combat VAWE.</p>	<p>Election violence task forces need to be better resourced and connected with GBV service providers to respond appropriately to GBV.</p> <p>Providing further resources to FSVU and CBOs to provide counseling, shelter, and new channels to access justice will help win back the trust of survivors.</p>	<p>Parliament, PNGEC PNG Government, GBV service provider (FSVUs and CSOs)</p>

The new SARV law is in its early days; enforcement must continue so it is clear that these crimes will no longer be tolerated.

The PNG government should provide funding for a joint operations command center (JOCC) to be able to work proactively instead of reactively to election violence. The PNG police and military need to be funded in the pre-election period to deploy personnel from the campaign period through the return of writs (election results) in hot spot areas. The PNGEC should train police and military personnel on electoral offenses, election procedures, and gender considerations during elections.

What is Violence Against Women in Elections?

Political violence occurs in highly distinct patterns (forms, locations, victims and perpetrators, frequency) according to the victim's gender identity.⁷ Gender-motivated political violence is “harm that violates an individual's or group's political rights on the basis of their gender-identity and is motivated by a desire to repress, deter, control or otherwise coerce the political rights of the [survivor] because of the [survivor's] gender.”⁸

These forms of VAWE—which are not always physical in nature—are a threat to the integrity of the electoral process. They affect women's participation as voters, candidates, election officials, activists, and political party leaders, and they undermine free, fair, and inclusive democratic processes. Through increased attention to women's participation and their voices in democracy assistance, examples of VAWE in their homes, political arenas, and public spaces have become more visible. Common understandings of electoral violence originate in definitional frameworks that often emphasize public acts of physical violence as well as violence between public stakeholders.⁹ These definitions reflect male experiences of political violence and tend to overlook personal relationships between perpetrators and survivors, the variation in spaces where violence occurs, and nuances within types of potential violence—all of which are essential to understanding the distinct nature of election violence experienced by women.¹⁰ IFES defines VAWE as:

“Any harm or threat of harm committed against women with the intent and/or impact of interfering with their free and equal participation in the electoral process during the electoral period. It includes harassment, intimidation, physical harm or coercion, threats, and financial pressures, and it may be committed in the home or other private spaces, or in public spaces. These acts may be directed at women in any of their roles as electoral stakeholders (e.g., voters, media, political actors, state actors, community leaders, electoral officials).”¹¹

⁷ Bardall, Gabrielle. IFES. 2011. [Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral Violence](#)

⁸ Bardall, Gabrielle S. 2018. [“Violence, Politics, and Gender”](#) in *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Politics*, Thompson, William R., ed.

⁹ IFES defines electoral violence as: “any harm or threat of harm to persons or property involved in the electoral process, or the process itself.” This includes physical and psychological harm, as well as property damage. In 2009, the United Nations Development Program's *Guide to Elections and Conflict Prevention* defined electoral violence primarily as “acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process, or that arise in the context of electoral competition...” The United States Agency for International Development's 2010 *Electoral Security Framework* concludes that “electoral violence refers to physical violence and coercive intimidation directly tied to an impending electoral contest or to an announced electoral result.” The IFES definition was developed as part of IFES's Electoral Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) programs around the world. Further discussion of the evolution of the definition and the EVER methodology can be found in Kammerud, Lisa. 2009. IFES. *Managing Election Violence: The IFES EVER Program* and online at www.ifes.org.

¹⁰ For information about the development of the VAWE typology, see Internal Foundation for Electoral Systems, (2017, February 8) [Violence against Women in Elections Framework](#), p. 12.

¹¹ Huber, Jessica, and Kammerud, L. 2018. IFES. [Violence Against Women in Elections: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring, and Response](#)

Methodology

To document the nature and impact of VAWE in PNG, this study establishes the historical context for violence and women's political participation and defines the cultural and socio-political norms that impact the status of women in society, as well as their participation in the electoral process. The study also looks at community and institutional responses to the issue. The analysis is organized around three key factors¹² that influence the incidence and impact of VAWE:

Assessment Factors

Status of women	Addresses broad concerns related to the status of women in their local and national communities; helps identify root causes of violence against women in general and in elections specifically.
Women's access to the electoral process	Examines gender and age dynamics related to political and electoral processes, as well as democracy, human rights, and governance issues more broadly. Categories of this analysis explore gender dynamics related to the electoral legal framework, election administration, voter registration, voter education, and women's political participation as voters and activists.
Violence against women in elections	Identifies incidents and trends of violence against women that occur in the context of the electoral cycle (pre-election, election, and post-election periods); examines triggers for gender-based violence against women in elections.

In PNG, IFES' Communications Specialist, Public Relations Officer, Senior Program Officer, and Project Coordinators collected primary data. IFES' Pacific Islands Specialist conducted a literature review. The methodology included collecting and analyzing primary and secondary data.

Literature review: IFES' Pacific Islands Specialist reviewed a collection of relevant reports and research related to GBV and to women in leadership and elections in PNG for this analysis. The report features salient findings from this research to highlight secondary research that supports comments from KIIs and FGDs.

Focus group discussions: IFES conducted 11 FGDs across the Highlands, New Guinea Islands, Momase, and Southern regions. A total of 59 women and three men participated. Most focus groups consisted of women to enable them to speak freely on VAWE.

Key informant interviews: IFES conducted KIIs with 26 women and 11 men—community leaders, former candidates, CSO representatives, leaders of faith-based organizations, media representatives, electoral workers, and

¹² These assessment factors are inspired by CARE's Gender Assessment Framework, IFES's Gender and Elections Analysis tool, and USAID's Electoral Security Framework and Best Practices in Electoral Security.

security sector representatives in the Momase, New Guinea Islands, and Southern regions to gain perspectives on VAWE risks and opportunities to combat VAWE.

IFES' 2022 PNG VAWE assessment aims to build on the PNG VAWE assessment conducted in 2018, following the 2017 elections. IFES will share this report with the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, PNGEC, and the IPPCC to inform electoral reform discussions. The report will also be shared with the donor community and women's advocacy groups to inform programming. Finally, IFES will use this report to inform future programming.

Primary Data Collection

Primary data collection methods

Technique	Stakeholders	Purpose	Number of Persons Consulted
FGDs	Women and youth community leaders, leaders of faith-based organizations, and representatives of election management bodies.	Gather data on gender equality, social inclusion, women's empowerment and gaps, challenges, constraints, and opportunities related to VAWE. Identify barriers and opportunities regarding VAWE.	62
KIIs	Women and youth community leaders; women; persons with disabilities; leaders of faith-based organizations; and representatives of CSOs, the media, election management bodies, and the security sector.	Gather data on gender equality, social inclusion, women's empowerment and gaps, challenges, constraints, and opportunities related to violence against women, persons with disabilities and young people in elections. Identify barriers and opportunities regarding VAWE.	37

Limitations on Data Collection

While the assessment obtained significant data from FGDs, KIIs, secondary materials, and desk reviews, the geography of PNG and the logistics and timeline of the assessment limited in-person data collection. PNG's 600 main islands would require a broader research effort to represent the entire country in the FGDs and KIIs. To mitigate this limitation, IFES identified a diverse sample of permanent and temporary election workers from the PNGEC; candidates; youth; persons with disabilities; and representatives of women's CSOs, CBOs, faith-based organizations,

and the media. Selected interviewees represented as diverse a geographical reach as possible from four regions of PNG.

IFES also recognized the sensitivity of the topic material, especially as it related to violence against interviewees and their lived experiences. IFES integrated Do No Harm approaches into questionnaires and the research approach to avoid retraumatizing interviewees and ensure that interviews were safe spaces to discuss difficult issues. IFES minimized the risk to participants by removing personally identifiable data from the report.

Country Context

Geography, Demographics, and Cultural Norms

PNG is the largest Pacific Island country, with population estimated at 10.3 million.¹³ It is extremely diverse, with over 800 language groups. PNG consists of 22 provinces within four major regions—the Highlands, Momase, New Guinea Islands, and Southern regions. Only 13.1 percent of the population lived in urban areas as of 2020;¹⁴ the vast majority live in rural areas. The country has 600 main islands and mountainous terrain, creating strong local tribal/clan-based identities. The country is predominantly Christian; approximately 60 percent of the population identify as Protestant, 26 percent as Catholic, 9 percent as members of other Christian groups, and approximately 3.3 percent as other.¹⁵ Villages across PNG have at least one church. The church is viewed as authoritative; its norms function as social norms in PNG despite the diversity of tribes and languages. Missionaries built on earlier ideas of gender norms in the country. Church leadership is typically assigned to men who occupy the key roles of pastors, priests, ministers, and bishops. The church also reinforces patriarchal norms which maintain that a woman's place is in the home and that men are decision-makers as heads of the family.

History and Political Landscape

PNG became fully independent from Australia in 1975 following nearly a century of oversight by Germany, Britain, and Australia. The new country was established as a parliamentary democracy. PNG's patriarchal society and gender norms, which missionaries and colonial administrations reinforced,¹⁶ limit women's political participation and institutional seniority.

PNG is one of the world's most fragile states due to poor governance, political instability, ineffective leadership, violent elections, corruption, organized crime, and lack of public sector capacity. Members of Parliament (MPs) have discretion over large amounts of development funding that is not well regulated. This results in an intensely patron-

¹³ United Nations Population Fund. n.d. [World Population Dashboard: Papua New Guinea](#)

¹⁴ World Bank. n.d. [Urban population \(% of total population\)](#)

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Papua New Guinea](#)

¹⁶ Fife, Wayne. 1995. "[Models for Masculinity in Colonial and Postcolonial Papua New Guinea](#)". *The Contemporary Pacific* 7 (2): 277–302.

client political system. Candidates, often referred to as “big men,” bargain for support among those who control voting blocs through patronage networks. This system of political authority reinforces the commonly held view¹⁷ that leadership is a masculine trait.¹⁸

Historically, international observer groups have characterized elections in PNG as violent and corrupt, particularly in the volatile Highlands regions. The 2002 election was called “chaotic and violent,” with voting irregularities, manipulation, intimidation and violence between candidates, supporters, and polling officials.¹⁹ The transition from the first past-the-post system to limited preferential voting in 2007 was intended to elect MPs who had received higher percentages of the popular vote, reduce electoral violence, and increase the likelihood of success for female candidates.²⁰ The results of this change have been mixed. While electoral practitioners viewed the 2007 and subsequent national election campaign and polling periods as generally more peaceful than in 2002, electoral violence was heightened during the counting stages of the 2007, 2012, and 2017 national elections.²¹ The Australian National University observation report of the 2017 process noted that 204 deaths occurred over the electoral period, double the number in 2002. In 2022, 50 election-related deaths were recorded.²² While far fewer than in 2017, this statistic alone does not paint the full picture. Violence in the 2022 general election was more widespread, extending beyond the Highlands region to impact coastal areas that were previously considered peaceful.²³ Massive internal displacement of people in the Highlands occurred,²⁴ with almost half the population from three provinces in the Highlands estimated to have been impacted by ongoing conflict and election-related violence. Women and children were disproportionately impacted, with at least 70 women and girls raped, kidnapped, or victims of SARV.²⁵ Social media spread viral videos of election violence, creating an impression that it was worse than in previous contests.

In 2022, some candidates took advantage of gaps in election administration to hijack ballot boxes in some areas, bribing counting officials, heads of villages, communities, or families to vote in blocs for them.²⁶ Rather than reducing

¹⁷ National Democratic Institute. n.d. [“Violence Against Women in Politics in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands”](#)

¹⁸ Yayboke, Erol, Rice, B., Nzuki, C., and Strouboulis, A. Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2022. [Addressing Fragility in Papua New Guinea](#).

¹⁹ The Commonwealth Observer Group. 2017 [Papua New Guinea National Election: June-July 2017](#)

²⁰ Baker, Kerry. 2018. [“Women’s Representation and Electoral System Reform in Papua New Guinea: The Limitations of Limited Preferential Voting.”](#) *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5 (2): 208–19

²¹ [The Commonwealth Observer Group. 2017.](#)

²² Kuku, Rebecca. *The Guardian*. 2022. [PNG election violence: 90,000 displaced since May, 25,000 children unable to attend school. September 28, 2022.](#) Pre-polling was marred by the killings of 28 people, an assassination attempt on a possible candidate, the shooting of an election official and the burning of five vehicle. After polling, 22 were killed, including 18 in a massacre in Poregera, Enga province, leading to massive displacement. Violence prevented counting in at least two electorates. Togiba, L. 2022. [Dozens killed and thousands displaced in election fighting in Papua New Guinea. UN says.](#) July 22, 2022. *The Guardian*.

²³ Transparency International Papua New Guinea Inc. 2022. [TIPNG Domestic Election Observation Report 2022.](#) Lyons, Kate. 2022. *The Guardian*. [Papua New Guinea Election Violence: What Has Caused It and What Can Be Done?](#) July 26, 2022.

²⁴ Kuku, Rebecca. *The Guardian*. 2022. [PNG election violence: 90,000 displaced since May, 25,000 children unable to attend school.](#) September 28, 2022.

²⁵ United Nations. 2022. [Papua New Guinea: Conflict and election-related violence trigger wave of displacement.](#) September 6, 2022.

²⁶ Lyons, Kate. 2022. *The Guardian*. [Papua New Guinea Election Violence: What Has Caused It and What Can Be Done?](#) July 26, 2022.

the impact of money politics and bolstering women's electoral prospects as intended, the limited preferential system increases opportunities for bribery and vote buying, damaging opportunities for women to win seats.²⁷

During elections, legacy issues from disagreements between supporters of different candidates can boil over into violence. While 10,300 security forces were engaged for the 2022 national elections (close to the 10,500 engaged in 2017), a funding shortfall kept security personnel reactive rather than proactive in preventing violence.²⁸ The PNG police force (the main electoral security personnel deployed to polling and counting stations) is extremely small compared to the population, which is why elections are conducted in different locations at different times so that security personnel can move from one polling station to the next. Given that police resources are spread thin it is difficult to respond effectively to larger scale violence that may erupt. Meanwhile, politicians and community leaders often employ private security firms to protect themselves rather than protecting citizens from election violence.

National Legal Framework and International Commitments

National Commitments

The Preamble of the Constitution of PNG states that citizens are guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms regardless of “their race, tribe, places of origin, political opinion, color, creed or sex.” The government of PNG is committed to promoting and advancing equality in all spheres of life and identified gender equality, as a key pillar of the Papua New Guinea Vision 2050. In PNG, women and men have the same legal status and rights to labor, property, inheritance, employment, access to credit, and ownership or management of businesses or property.²⁹ However, women continue to face severe inequalities in all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political life.

PNG national policies provide responses to gender inequality through the National Policy for Women and Gender Equality, National Public Service Gender Equity & Social Inclusion Policy, and National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence 2016–2025.³⁰ Progress on implementing these policies and strategies has been slow. An interim GBV Secretariat was operationalized, with donor funding, five years after the national strategy was published. CSOs have worked with national and local government departments to implement the policies. Following the initial report issued by the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV in August 2021, the PNG government finally allocated funds to implement the National GBV Strategy which, in the words of the committee, “has languished since its launch in 2016.”³¹ However, as of the time of this report, the allocated funds had not been released to fund prevention and response services. Additionally, the calls from the committee to fund and staff a permanent GBV secretariat had not been answered.

²⁷ Haley, Nicole, and Zubrinich, K. 2015. *DevPolicy Blog*. [Assessing the shift to limited preferential voting in Papua New Guinea: money politics](#). *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program*

²⁸ Lyons, Kate. 2022. *The Guardian*. [Papua New Guinea Election Violence: What Has Caused It and What Can Be Done?](#) July 26, 2022.

²⁹ U.S. Department of State. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

³⁰ [Papua New Guinea National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender Based Violence Enabling a Better Future](#). 2016.

³¹ The Special Parliamentary Committee, [Report on GBV to Parliament Part 2](#), 19 April 2022

Gender Based Violence Laws

As early as 1982, the PNG Legal Reform Commission recognized GBV as an issue of public concern.³² However, domestic violence was not criminalized until the passage of the Family Protection Act (FPA) in 2013 and the FPA did not come into full effect until 2017, when regulations for family protection orders were gazetted. Amendments to the FPA, passed in 2022, included expanded definitions of assault, psychological abuse, sexual assault, and aggravated family violence. The amendments also removed court fees for applications for protection orders.³³ Under the FPA, village courts can issue interim protection orders, and district courts can issue both interim and longer-term protection orders. The FPA also led to the creation of police FSVUs. These frontline units provide guidance on how to obtain family protection orders. However, FSVU records show that interim protection orders were recorded as outcomes in approximately 10 percent of cases.³⁴ Additionally, while most women experience rape or sexual assault during their lifetimes, according to Human Rights Watch, in 2020 approximately 15,000 cases of domestic violence were reported but only 300 individuals were prosecuted and 100 convicted³⁵. Police officials admitted in testimony before the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV that police could not keep women and children safe and lacked resources for thorough investigations. As a result, confidence in the police is low, and the vast majority of cases of GBV go unreported; when reported, they are rarely prosecuted. Thus, the laws are ineffective in practice. CSOs and churches are left to provide support services to GBV survivors.

In 2022, the Criminal Code was amended to criminalize the act of making accusations of sorcery against others or claiming to have supernatural powers to identify “sorcerers.”³⁶ The amendment followed a noted rise in this type of violence in recent years and the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV’s recommendation for legal reform to address this issue. The committee also recommended that the government resource the SARV National Action Plan so it could be implemented. As a result, the 2022 national budget allocated some funding to address SARV, and the committee recommended it be used to fund small grants to support CSOs and CBOs to design and roll out locally contextualized activities. The committee further recommended that the SARV National Action Plan be reviewed and updated and that funding be allocated in 2023 for its implementation.

Sexual harassment is legal in PNG and remains a widespread problem. Women frequently experience harassment in public locations and workplaces. Public Service Act General Order No. 20 addresses gender-based discrimination, GBV, and sexual harassment in the workplace; however, implementation of the act is lacking. In Port Moresby, the PNG government and the United Nations worked together to provide women-only public buses to reduce sexual harassment on public transportation.³⁷

³² The Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission reported on the high incidence of domestic violence in Papua New Guinea. After extensive nationwide research and consultations, the Law Reform Commission concluded that domestic violence is a complex social problem that has harmful effects on the victims, as well as on the family, community, and entire society and is, therefore, a public, not a private matter.

³³ Amnesty International. n.d. [Papua New Guinea 2022](#)

³⁴ Putt, Judy, and Kanan, L. 2022. [Family Protection Orders in Papua New Guinea: Summary Report](#). Australian National University.

³⁵ [World Report: Papua New Guinea, Human Rights Watch, 2022](#)

³⁶ Amnesty International. n.d. [Papua New Guinea 2022](#)

³⁷ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

Firearms Amended Act 2022

Just ahead of the 2022 elections on May 16, 2022, an amendment to the Firearms Act³⁸ was passed and certified to increase the maximum penalty to life imprisonment for “manufacturing of homemade guns, Section 7A, illegal ownership and possession of fire-arms Section 6, illegal possession and use of firearms Section 7, illegal possession of prohibited fire-arms Section 5 and ownership and possession of machine guns Section 62,” as outlined by Prime Minister Marape.³⁹ Despite the tougher penalties to curb gun violence, a recognized problem during elections, it was still prevalent during the 2022 election period.

International Commitments

PNG has ratified a number of international treaties and conventions relating to gender equality. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1995); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (2008); International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (2008); Revised Pacific Platform for Action on Advancement of Women and Gender Equality; and Beijing Platform for Action. However, PNG’s implementation of these commitments is questionable. For example, the only CEDAW report the country produced was in 2010.

Freedom of Expression

PNG’s Constitution provides for the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respects these rights. It also has generally respected the constitutional provision for freedom of expression, including for the press and other media, although there have been reports of journalists being harassed by supporters of parliamentarians for reporting on politically contentious issues. This has led journalists to self-censor when reporting on political events.⁴⁰ In August 2022, notices in two daily newspapers stated that the prime minister would no longer accept direct inquiries from the media and that journalists would be required to submit questions in writing. The following month, more restrictive procedures were announced for visa applications by foreign journalists.⁴¹ These developments are troubling signs of a closing civic space. On a positive note, while PNG law allows for investigation and criminal prosecution for the publication of defamatory material, there were no reports in 2022 of the law being used as a political weapon against journalists or opposition political figures—unlike in previous years. Nor did the government restrict or disrupt internet access or censor online content, and there were no credible reports that it had monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.⁴²

³⁸ [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 2022 \(PNG\)](#)

³⁹ Papua New Guinea Today. 2022. [“PNG Parliament Passes Tougher Laws on Firearms Ownership.”](#) April 21, 2022.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

⁴¹ Amnesty International. n.d. [Papua New Guinea 2022](#)

⁴² U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

Women journalists in PNG are at risk of both public and private violence. Prominent examples included the 2014 abduction and sexual assault of three women journalists⁴³ and the death in PNG of a well-known woman journalist in 2017 that was investigated for a possible connection to domestic violence.⁴⁴ In 2020, the Melanesian Media Freedom Forum convened a session on the unique challenges that women journalists face in gaining representation in the media workforce, having their voices heard in the media, and experiencing threats to their personal safety.⁴⁵ In 2022, a woman journalist in PNG was attacked in public during the election period.⁴⁶

VAWE in PNG

Factor 1: Status of Women

Current status of women in PNG society

PNG ranked 160th of 161 countries in the 2021 United Nations Gender Inequality Index (it was not included in the 2022 Gender Equality Index)⁴⁷. The Human Rights Watch World Report 2021 noted that PNG is the most dangerous place in the region for women and girls⁴⁸. “The Asian Development Bank in 2021 estimated that 37.5 percent of Papua New Guineans live below the poverty line, many of them in rural areas. Rural women, children, and people living with disabilities are the groups most vulnerable to poverty, insecurity, and violence.”⁴⁹

A 2022 report on fragility in PNG noted, “Papua New Guinean women are marginalized and excluded from the formal economy because of cultural customs and colonial legacies, which are reinforced by weak institutions, poor public service delivery, and the lack of gender-sensitive policy implementation.”⁵⁰ Although women traditionally have access to customary land, this does not translate into ownership or decision-making power over its use. Only 12 percent of women in PNG reported being the main decision-makers at home, according to a 2020 assessment.⁵¹ Additionally, PNG has the highest gender gap in financial inclusion in the Pacific region, with women 29 percent less likely than men to have access to formal financial services.⁵² Young people, particularly young women, rarely participate in community decision-making processes and have limited access to educational and vocation opportunities.⁵³

Christianity, masculinity, and GBV

Christianity in Papua New Guinea has historically maintained that a man is the head of the family and has ultimate decision-making authority. Some men see their role of a head of household as conferring the right to expect

⁴³ IFEX. 2014. [Three women journalists abducted, sexually assaulted in PNG](#). October 17, 2014.

⁴⁴ International Federation of Journalists. 2017. [Prominent PNG journalist die: sparks Pacific domestic violence debate](#). November 3, 2017.

⁴⁵ Valencia-Forrester, Faith., Backhaus, B, and Stewart, H. 2020. [In her own words: Melanesian women in media](#) *Pacific Journalism Review*, 26(1).

⁴⁶ *The National*. 2022. [“Journalists Attacked—the National.”](#) September 30, 2022.

⁴⁷ [Gender Inequality Index](#). (2021). United Nations

⁴⁸ [World Report 2021](#). Human Rights Watch.

⁴⁹ UN Women. n.d. [Papua New Guinea Country Page](#)

⁵⁰ Yayboke, Erol, Rice, B., Nzuki, C., and Strouboulis, A. 2022. Center for Strategic and International Studies. [Addressing Fragility in Papua New Guinea](#).

⁵¹ Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme. 2020. [PoWER Women’s and Girls’ Access and Agency Assessment: Papua New Guinea](#). June 8, 2020.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ McPhee, Lachlan, and McLachlan, S. 2017. [The Youth Bulge in Papua New Guinea: Challenges and Opportunities: An Oaktree Research Report](#). Oaktree.

obedience, discipline family members, and bring them in line with their concept of Christianity. Some women accept this idea, pray for domestic violence to end, and consider ways that they can “be a better Christian and wife” instead of seeking external support.⁵⁴

While churches promote patriarchal leadership and authority, they do not condone domestic violence and frequently take the lead in providing support and shelter for survivors of GBV. For example, in one of the most dangerous areas of PNG, the Catholic Diocese of Wabag included in its 2021–2025 pastoral plan instructions to pastors to raise awareness and aid victims of SARV.

Through the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)-funded Church Partnership Program, PNG churches have important roles in promoting biblical views of women’s rights and ending gender violence.⁵⁵ Discussions about gender equality and human rights are interpreted through Christian concepts of “women and men’s common humanity.”⁵⁶ For example, the Seventh Day Adventist church, Baptist Union PNG, United Church of Christ PNG, and Catholic church teach the Theology of Gender Equality in their theological colleges or church leader training. Additionally, the Anglican and Catholic churches conduct training in gender equality and male advocacy at the community level. Given the moral authority and wide reach of the church throughout PNG society, this approach is culturally responsive to the country context.

Women’s role in decision-making

Women are historically underrepresented in Papua New Guinean politics and public administration. Since independence in 1975, only nine women have been elected to the National Parliament. Two women were elected in 2022, an improvement over 2017 when no women were elected, but a decrease from the three women elected in 2012 (the highest number of women elected to the National Parliament to date). In the 2022 national election, 10 other women placed among the top five candidates for the seats they contested. Additionally, more political parties endorsed women candidates than in the past. Of the 159 women nominated in 2022 (a slight decrease from 2017), political parties endorsed 64 (40.3 percent).⁵⁷ Of the 167 women who ran in 2017, political parties endorsed only 38 (22.8 percent). Women candidates told the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) that, even with party endorsement, they had to pay nomination fees, print campaign materials, and organize campaign supporters and scrutineers; however, some women endorsed by political parties did receive key support from prominent male party leaders.

Although women have comprised no more than 2 percent of MPs in the 47 years since PNG’s independence, and despite numerous reports urging PNG to adopt temporary special measures (TSM) to increase their representation in Parliament, their political will is still lacking at the highest levels for TSM to reserve seats for women. Prime Minister

⁵⁴ Eves, Richard. 2012. [Christianity, Masculinity and Gender Violence in Papua New Guinea](#). Australian National University.

⁵⁵ Hermkens, Anna-Karina., Kenneth, R., and McKenna, K. 2022. [“Gender Equality Theology and Essentialism: Catholic Responses to Gender-Based Violence and Inequality in Papua New Guinea”](#). *Oceania*, 92(3), 310–328.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Different reports vary slightly in reporting the number of women candidates and women endorsed by political parties. This report uses the numbers provided in the [United Nations Development Program Post-Election Diagnostic Workshop review of women’s participation](#).

Marape has rejected reserved seats for women, using the example of Governor of Central Province Ruffina Peters to say women can win on their own merits.

The prime minister blamed a flawed electoral process that makes it much more difficult for women to be elected and promised to improve the electoral process to make elections free and fair. However, he did not comment on proposed amendments to the OLIPPAC that would require each political party to nominate at least 10 percent women candidates in order for the party to be eligible to run in national elections.⁵⁸ A post on the DevPolicy blog noted, “Political party quotas for women candidates are used successfully by many countries around the world and could, if implemented, increase the number of women candidates in PNG. This form of TSM still allows voters to decide which candidate, based on their merits, they want to represent them.”⁵⁹

Reserved seats for women are established at the subnational level in local-level governments and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Parliament and community governments. The PNG Organic Law on Provincial and Local Level Governments calls for one representative of women’s organizations in every urban local-level government and two in every rural local-level government. However, since the last local level government election in 2019 of the 6,190 ward seats and 319 local-level government seats, only 120 were held by women.⁶⁰ The Autonomous Bougainville Government Parliament governs the province of Bougainville, which gained autonomous status in 2001 following a decade-long civil war and has reserved three seats for women since then. The creation of these seats has been credited to women’s role in the peace process during the conflict, as well as the traditional matrilineal nature of Bougainville society.⁶¹ In the 2020 Autonomous Bougainville Government election, one woman was elected to a non-reserved seat, similar to the last election in 2015.

Women hold only 24 percent of administrative positions in national public service. At the executive level, the proportion of women decreases to 7 percent. A 2015 report noted, “At the provincial and subnational levels, women’s representation in public service is marginal, accounting for zero executive-level appointments, 6 percent of senior management, and only 10 percent of middle management.”⁶²

Gender-Based Violence in PNG

Types of Gender Based Violence

Physical, social, and psychological violence: PNG’s last demographic and health survey (2016–2018) found that 56 percent of women aged 15–49 years had experienced physical violence, and 28 percent had experienced sexual violence. Two-thirds of married women between the ages of 15 and 49 had experienced spousal physical, sexual, or

⁵⁸ Gelu, Alphonse. 2021. Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission Office of the Registrar. [Preparations for the 2022 National Elections, July 2021](#), p. 17.

⁵⁹ Sepoe, Orovu, Clark, L., and Winn, T. *DevPolicy Blog*. 2022. [Women in the 2022 PNG elections](#). Development Policy Centre. August 22, 2022.

⁶⁰ UN Women. n.d. [About UN Women Papua New Guinea](#)

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Haley, Nicole. 2015. [State of the Service: Women’s Participation in the PNG Public Sector](#). Australian National University. Note that more recent data is not available.

emotional violence at some point in their lives. Among women who reported any form of physical and/or sexual violence and who sought help from anyone, only 5 percent sought help from the police, 5 percent from medical services, and 3 percent from social services. The data indicated that 28 percent of adolescent girls aged 15–19 years had experienced sexual violence. Physical, social, and psychological violence, whether it occurs in private or in public, impacts women's ability to vote for a candidate of their choosing and to engage as scrutineers and candidates. This issue is described under Factor 2, Women's Access to the Electoral Process, and Factor 3, Violence Against Women in Elections.

Intercommunal conflicts: Intercommunal conflicts once occurred primarily between men but now increasingly target women and children.⁶³ Women are also sometimes given as a form of compensation to settle disputes between clans.⁶⁴ Intercommunal conflicts played a key role in electoral violence during the 2022 elections. This issue is discussed under Factor 3, Violence Against Women in Elections.

Sorcery: In 2022, civil society representatives and religious leaders noted a rise in GBV, including the killing of women accused of sorcery, along with their daughters. Many of those responsible were not prosecuted because they had highly placed connections in the police or with political figures.⁶⁵ The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV estimated that, between 2000 and 2021, violent incidents related to SARV nationwide numbered over 6,000, resulting in an estimated 3,000 deaths. The committee determined that approximately 388 people were accused of sorcery each year in the Highlands region. One-third of the allegations led to physical violence or property damage. Victims suffered death, permanent injury, or serious harm from torture. The committee observed that cases may have been underreported, as victims feared further stigmatization⁶⁶. Election violence in 2022 triggered intercommunal violence, which resulted in SARV as one type of violence that women experienced during the elections.

Sexual and intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic

In line with global trends, data reported through PNG's National Department of Health showed that sexual violence and intimate partner violence escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The national helpline for those experiencing family violence or sexual violence saw a 75 percent increase in demand during the period March 2020 to April 2021.⁶⁷ The helpline received additional funding that supported expanded hours of operation from November 2020 to March 2022. DFAT provided further support for 23 safe houses during the pandemic.⁶⁸

⁶³ Pedneault, Jonathan. "[Bring Highland Killers in Papua New Guinea to Justice.](#)" 2021. Human Rights Watch. March 7, 2021.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea.](#)

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV August 2021 Report. 9 [Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report Part 1](#)

⁶⁷ Loop PNG. 2021. "[Spike in Lifeline Services.](#)" September 29, 2021.

⁶⁸ Pacific Women. 2022. [Pacific Women in Papua New Guinea Final Performance Report 2021–2022](#)

Services for survivors

Police FSVUs comprise 150 staff in 26 units across PNG. Twenty family violence desks in 18 of 22 provincial police headquarters provide survivors with protection, assistance through the judicial process, and medical care.⁶⁹ The U.S. State Department Human Rights Report 2022 notes, “Police leadership in some provinces improved services for survivors of gender-based violence, but this was largely a matter of the local leadership’s personal interest in addressing these abuses.” Nine shelters for female domestic abuse survivors operate in the National Capital District.⁷⁰ Outside the capital area there are at least 17 other shelters.⁷¹ The need for shelters far outweighs availability. The Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV noted severe under resourcing of protection services for women, including those related to health, policing, counseling, safe houses, and prosecution.⁷²

Lack of justice for survivors

Given that two-thirds of Papua New Guinean women experience GBV in their lifetimes⁷³ and that 15,444 cases of domestic violence were reported in 2020, it is clear that most women do not report rape or domestic violence to authorities⁷⁴. Communities view intimate partner violence as a private matter and discourage reporting⁷⁵. In rural areas, GBV is not often reported; when it is, the remoteness of villages and lack of resources, including staffing, vehicles, and fuel, limits responses⁷⁶. Even when GBV is reported, there are few arrests and fewer convictions. Individual protection orders are rarely enforced when they are breached.⁷⁷ This creates a lack of trust in the police. PNG Police Commissioner David Manning told the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV that the police lack the resources to investigate GBV⁷⁸. Additionally, the PNG legal system allows village chiefs to negotiate compensation payments for survivors in lieu of trials for rapists. Anecdotal evidence suggests that survivors and their families prefer to pursue tribal remedies, including compensation, instead of official court procedures. As reported in the 2022 U.S. Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices for PNG, “Village courts regularly order payment of compensation to an abused spouse’s family in cases of domestic abuse rather than issuing an order to detain and potentially charge the alleged offender.”⁷⁹

⁶⁹ Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence. 2021. [Report to Parliament: Part 1, Inquiry Into Gender-Based Violence in Papua New Guinea](#). August 9, 2021.

⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#).

⁷¹ The [Report to Parliament: Part 1, Inquiry Into Gender-Based Violence in Papua New Guinea](#) of August 9, 2021, mentions at least 26 known shelters across the country.

⁷² The Special Parliamentary Committee on Gender-Based Violence, established in 2020, published its final report in April 2022.

⁷³ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#).

⁷⁴ Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report. 9 August 2021 [Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report Part 1](#)

⁷⁵ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#).

⁷⁶ Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report. 9 August 2021 [Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report Part 1](#)

⁷⁷ Putt, Judy, Kanan, L., and Dinnen, S. 2021. [Submission to the Special Committee on Gender Based Violence](#). UnitedForEqualityPNG. June 30, 2021.

⁷⁸ McLennan, Stephanie “[Women in Papua New Guinea are Suffering an Epidemic of Violence – The Government Must Act](#)”: The Guardian 30, September 2021

⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

Interestingly, when women commit violence against other women, many are arrested. Independent observers noted that approximately 90 percent of women in prison were serving sentences for attacking or killing their husbands or other women (often another of their husband's wives).⁸⁰

Factor 2. Women's Access to the Electoral Process

Social and cultural gender norms

When asked if women are expected to perform certain types of roles, 85 percent of respondents to IFES KIIs and FGDs mentioned home-based roles. The idea of women as caregivers and homemakers continues to be a pervasive social norm in PNG. When asked what women are not supposed to do, respondents stated that they should not make decisions or participate in politics. When asked what happens when women do not comply with these cultural norms, respondents noted that they are most likely to endure verbal, emotional, and physical abuse, threats, and violence in the private sphere. They added that women are likely to be subjected to public criticism and harassment. Such pervasive patriarchal norms dissuade women from participating in the political process. Women who ignore typical caregiving and homemaking roles to exercise decision-making agency (e.g., by voting) or participate in politics (e.g., by running for office) may experience private and public violence. This creates a chilling effect. It is therefore no surprise that TIPNG, in its 2022 election observation report, noted that women's right to participate equally in the democratic election process was not fully respected in more than one-third of polling places observed. Overall, this is similar to the number of polling stations where women's rights to participate in the democratic were not respected per TIPNG's election observation report in 2017⁸¹. However, in the Highlands respect for women's democratic rights seem to have worsened from TIPNG's observations in 2022 compared with 2017⁸².

Regional Differences

Highlands region

TIPNG's 2022 election observation report noted that women's right to vote was least respected in the Highlands region. Interference in their right to vote was observed at 23.5 percent of polling places in the region in 2017, rising to 35.8 percent of polling places in 2022⁸³.

The Highlands is a patrilineal region. Women are rarely able to vote for their preferred candidates, as male heads of families and tribal leaders make such decisions. Voters' main criterion for choosing candidates is which one will provide the most money and resources in exchange for their votes. Candidates are opportunistic and exploit longstanding animosities among isolated communities, a persistent cultural tradition of seeking revenge for perceived wrongs, and the absence of law enforcement.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ [Transparency International. Papua New Guinea Observation Report 10th National Parliamentary Elections 2017](#)

⁸² *Ibid.* [Transparency International PNG Domestic Election Observation Report 2022.](#)

⁸³ *Ibid.*

In 2022, candidates collected weapons to ensure the safety of their supporters. According to the Enga PNG police commissioner, it was common for a village to have at least 10 weapons—most of them high-powered firearms and home-made guns. Amassing firearms has been a normal practice since the 2002 election. The Enga commissioner observed that some weapons were likely stolen from the PNG Defense Force and the Police Armory in Port Moresby. Candidates also smuggle weapons from other provinces, such as Bougainville. The weapons are used in election-related violence, which tends to occur around voting and declaration periods. In Enga, majority candidates attacked opposition candidates and their supporters to influence the outcome, according to the commissioner⁸⁴. Supporters of opposition candidates display firearms as a form of intimidation before elections. The increased availability of high-powered weapons has caused large-scale intercommunal conflicts. A resulting increase in the number of internally displaced persons disproportionately impacts women and children.⁸⁵

Momase, New Guinea Islands, and Southern regions

The TIPNG observer report for Momase region noted that respect for women’s right to vote improved from about 50 percent always voting without interference in 2017 to more than two-thirds (68.2 percent) doing so in 2022—fairly close to the rates in the New Guinea Islands and Southern regions. The Momase region, which was previously viewed as peaceful, experienced some election violence in the form of destruction of property in 2022⁸⁶. Many observers were concerned by this uptick in violence in previously peaceful areas, wondering whether violence in elections could become more widespread and impact voters. Some respondents in the Momase, New Guinea Islands, and Southern regions felt that attitudes toward women in leadership were changing. Although those respondents were not in the majority, some noticed changes in attitudes toward women in public life, highlighting their increased leadership positions:

“I believe Bougainville giving the equal opportunity to women, Bougainville is up there because there is no other nation within the Pacific that has legalized women having the opportunity to stand for politics, so the Community Government Act enables women to have equal opportunity to come up as a candidate and politician at that level. People are now shifting their mindset and starting to realize that women have the potential, the intellect, and they have the leadership to become a politician or any other role. In the past, only men can be a mechanic but right now women can be mechanics, and when they move out from this expectations and I haven’t come to any situation for women where they perform roles like men. I haven’t come across the community complaining about them and/or not agreeing to it. The mindset of Bougainville is gradually shifting

⁸⁴ Ligaiula, P. (2022, 18 July) [Hunt for PNG election candidates in Enga: PNG Police Commissioner](#) *Pacific News Service*

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State. 2022. [2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Papua New Guinea](#). March 20, 2022.

⁸⁶ [Transparency International PNG. 2022 Election Observation Report](#)

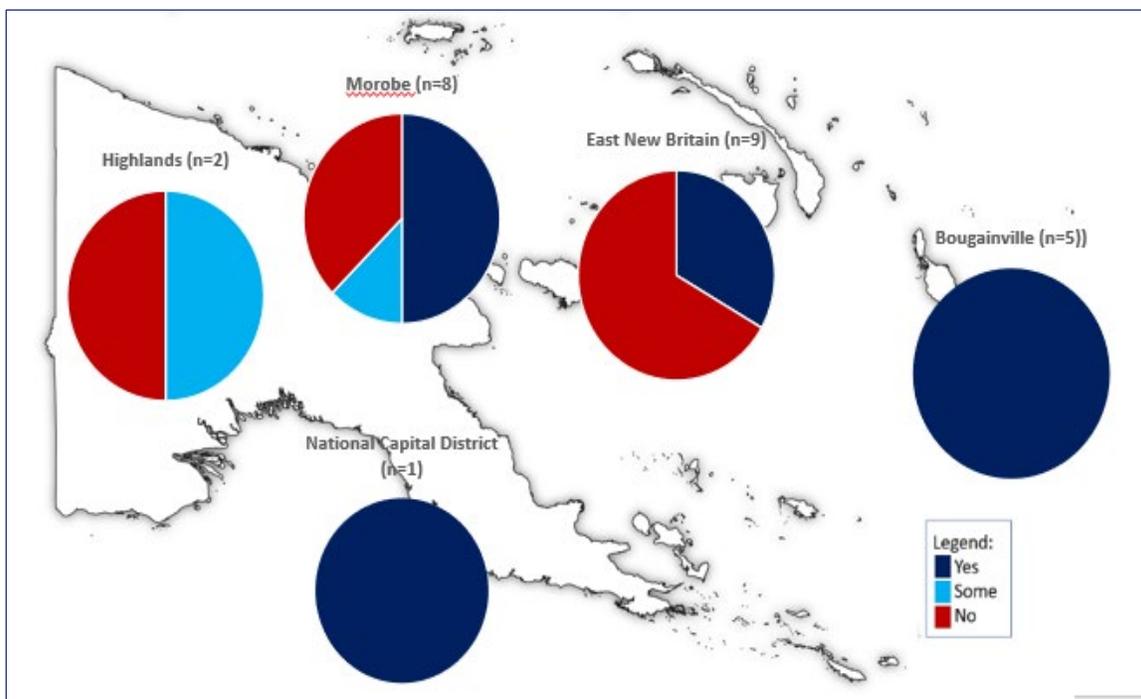
from the traditional beliefs to accepting women in various roles in our society. — KII respondent, New Guinea Islands (Buka, Bougainville)

“Yes, we have the right to do anything in our own capacity. Women sometimes have the right to make decisions.” — FGD Respondent, Islands (Kokopo, East New Britain)

“Women leaders who are vocal, who have strong network and access to business houses and have a strong network, can play a leadership role. This is again due to education and exposure, building women’s confidence.” — FGD Respondent, Momase (Lae, Morobe)

“More awareness on women candidates than ever before. Communities are well informed than ever before.” — KII Respondent, Southern (Port Moresby, National Capital District)

FIGURE 1: Do you think that in your region or Papua New Guinea in general, people’s attitudes towards women have changed in recent years? (N=25)



Family and bloc voting

Women in PNG face obstacles in voting as they choose. Family voting is a serious impediment to their full participation in PNG elections, with men instructing female relatives whom to vote for. The European Union Observer report on the 2017 national elections noted that “a large number of women in the country does [sic] not exercise control of their own vote.”⁸⁷ In 2022, the TIPNG Election Observation Report noted that it had become the norm in several electorates for the male heads of families to make decisions, including on behalf of their wives and daughters. The 2022 Melanesian Spearhead Group Observer Group (MSGOG) reported incidents of men voting for family members or voters using other people’s names to vote⁸⁸. In 2022, IFES interlocutors cited family voting as the primary obstacle that women voters face and that patriarchal social and cultural norms are the reason why husbands, as the heads of households, along with other family members, do not want women to vote.

Transparency International Papua New Guinea noted that most voters in the Highlands were men. Bloc voting was accepted as normal, and young men would collect and fill out 200 to 300 ballot papers. In this way, women and other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and elderly people, were effectively disenfranchised.

Separate Lines for Women

PNGEC instructed the presiding officers of polling stations to provide separate entrances and polling booths for men and women to enable women to vote without the influence of men.⁸⁹ TIPNG noted that 76.4 percent of locations observed did provide separate voting booths for women⁹⁰. This was a significant improvement since 2017, when only 29.9 percent of polling places were observed to provide separate voting booths for each sex⁹¹. In 2022, separate polling areas for men and women were used in 60 percent of polling stations in the Highlands, 76 percent in the New Guinea Islands, 79 percent in Momase, and 86 percent in the Southern region⁹².

TIPNG observers found that separate polling booths or entrances to polling places increased the likelihood of women voting mostly without interference by 71 percent, demonstrating that this practice is effective⁹³. However, in some cases TIPNG observed crowds around women’s lines, suggesting that intimidation and influence were still likely. The MSGOG noted the overwhelming presence of scrutineers at some polling stations, such as the Sir Ignatius Kilage Indoor Stadium in Lae, and that some of those scrutineers tried to influence and interfere in the voting process⁹⁴. While some presiding officers at polling stations provided separate lines and polling booth instructions, the COG noted that lines for women and men at some polling stations were close together, creating opportunities and potential to intimidate women voters⁹⁵. At other polling stations queues were separate, but women and men used the same check-in desks and polling booths. And at some polling stations, voting booths were positioned back-to-back, and voters could watch those using the adjacent booths. The COG observed other opportunities for the coercion of women

⁸⁷ European Union *Election Expert Mission Report on 2017 PNG National Elections*.

⁸⁸ [Melanesia Spearhead Observer Group Press Statement \(1 August 2022\)](#)

⁸⁹ PNGEC Polling Manual: A guide for polling officials (May 2022)

⁹⁰ [TIPNG 2022 Election Report \(Compress\) \(transparencypng.org.pg\)](#)

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ [TIPNG 2022 Election Report \(Compress\) \(transparencypng.org.pg\)](#) p32

⁹⁴ [Melanesia Spearhead Observer Group Press Statement \(1 August 2022\)](#)

⁹⁵ [PNG COG 2022 - Preliminary Statement.pdf \(production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)

voters even when separate lines and polling booths were provided. For example, women voters were assisted to vote more frequently than men (and were assisted by men); men wrote the names of candidates on the hands of women voters; and women carried cards with instructions on how to vote⁹⁶. The MSGOG observed instances, close to the end of voting, of more than one voter using a polling booth at the same time⁹⁷. More than one in four (26 percent) of KII and FGD respondents felt that polling stations were still unsafe for women; half of those respondents cited intimidation as the reason.

Bribery and intimidation

Several parties alleged that MPs used government resources for campaigning, although the lack of transparency in accounting for funds made this hard to verify.⁹⁸ The Ombudsman Commission issued a directive to freeze public funds controlled by Parliamentarians starting at the official opening of the campaign period in April 2022. After the election, the commission reported that unusually large amounts of money were withdrawn from parliamentary accounts in the 30 days before the freeze went into effect⁹⁹.

The TIPNG 2022 Observer Report noted that, in a little over one-fourth of polling places, bribery and intimidation of voters was reported, similar to 2017¹⁰⁰. Such incidents were observed to occur up to three times more often in the Highlands than in other regions. COG also reported observing bribery and candidates' agents distributing money and food to voters during voting¹⁰¹.

Women leaders and candidates told IFES they were concerned about “money politics” (e.g., vote buying) and wanted to resist this practice. While women candidates were hopeful that voters would recognize the importance of a clean campaign, some reported that voters requested money prior to Election Day in return for their votes. Money politics disadvantages women because they do not have the same amount of campaign funds as male candidates and cannot distribute as much money and as men candidates to win votes—even if they wish to. Changing the culture of patronage politics will be an uphill battle that requires changing incentives for politicians, including candidates. This can be approached in a number of ways; one is for CSOs to promote civic and voter education to build demand for leadership that benefits everyone. Demand should exist for district funding to be used accountably and transparently to benefit communities throughout representatives' time in office. The DFAT-funded Building Community Engagement in PNG Program is built around this theory of change.

Barriers to women candidates and MPs

The PNG Constitution guarantees equal rights for women, and there are no legal barriers to their standing for election. However, the country's deeply rooted patriarchal culture impedes their full participation in political life. The majority

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ [MSG Secretariat - MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD OBSERVER GROUP... | Facebook](#)

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ [Papua New Guinea - United States Department of State](#)

¹⁰⁰ [TIPNG 2022 Election Report \(Compress\) \(transparencypng.org.pg\)](#)

¹⁰¹ [PNG COG 2022 - Preliminary Statement.pdf \(production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](#)

of IFES respondents stated that women face different challenges than their male counterparts—most often saying that the family does not support women’s candidacy. Respondents added that women do not support candidates of their own sex. Thus, men demean women candidates and women gossip about them. Unlike men, they must contend with a public focus on their private lives. Additionally, women have less money for campaigning than men, do not receive the same degree of community support, and are less competitive due to cultural biases. Threats to physical security also affect women differently—most notably, due to high, credible threats of sexual violence. Traditional social relations and expectations also may increase restrictions on women, such as not traveling at night, the need to hire drivers, and the cultural expectation to travel with family members.

Women speaking out against undemocratic practices

Women not only passively experienced electoral violations that disadvantaged them; female candidates publicly in 2022 condemned undemocratic practices during polling and counting in Enga and Jiwaka provinces.¹⁰² They were joined by former MP for Eastern Highlands Province Julie Soso, NGOs, and more than 100 women leaders who protested their deprivation of the right to vote due to corruption, violence, and intimidation by male candidates and their supporters. Some women candidates in Port Moresby used their social media platforms to call corrupt electoral officials, candidates and their supporters to account.¹⁰³

Women election officials, state security officials, and scrutineers

In 2022, COG and MSGOG observers noted that, in many polling places, women played important roles as polling and counting officials and as state security agency officers¹⁰⁴. Party scrutineers were more likely to be men. Women scrutineers told COG observers that they distanced themselves from male scrutineers to avoid intimidation.

Factor 3. Violence Against Women in Elections

Campaign period

Gun violence during elections is a persistent and growing problem. During the 2022 campaign period, election-related violence claimed the lives of 30 people,¹⁰⁵ less than half of the 70 deaths during the 2017 campaign period but still a significant number.¹⁰⁶ The first election death in 2022, the shooting of an election officer, was in early May in Western Highlands province. Gun culture has grown in PNG in recent years. Weapons used include shotguns and illegal military-grade weapons.¹⁰⁷ Ph.D. candidate Michael Kabuni noted that most election-related deaths in 2017 were due to gun violence¹⁰⁸. Even when gun violence does not provoke severe wider-scale conflict (as discussed below), it

¹⁰² Nangoi, Donald. 2022. *Post Courier*. “[Female Candidates Unhappy](#)”. August 4, 2022.

¹⁰³ Sepoe, Orovu, Clark, L., and Winn, T. *DevPolicy Blog*. 2022. [Women in the 2022 PNG elections](#). Development Policy Centre. August 22, 2022.

¹⁰⁴ [PNG COG 2022 - Preliminary Statement.pdf \(production-new-commonwealth-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\) MSG Secretariat - MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD OBSERVER GROUP... | Facebook](#)

¹⁰⁵ Harriman, Bethanie. 2022. [PNG’s election campaign marred by extreme violence and bloodshed](#). Australian Broadcasting Corporation. June 22, 2022.

¹⁰⁶ Laveil, Maholopa. 2022. *The Interpreter*. “[PNG’s election a violent event.](#)” July 27, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ There is an estimate of more than 50,000 illegal firearms in PNG; see Laveil, Maholopa, *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ [Harriman, B. \(2022\) Concern over gun violence as national election looms in PNG. ABC Pacific.](#)

deters women from exercising their political rights due to concerns over public safety. Women and children were disproportionately impacted by campaign violence in East Sepik province when an entire settlement was burned to the ground after a fight broke out at a candidates' volleyball game.

Private and public violence against women voters

IFES asked interlocutors if women voters face different obstacles than men and, if so, what kind. In their responses, 90 percent commented on barriers to voting, such as family and bloc voting, and that polling stations were unsafe for women. Only 10 percent mentioned private issues such as emotional and economic violence from a spouse or other family members. When IFES asked if women voters experience different types of violence than men voters, the majority noted instances of private violence such as verbal harassment and threats by men in their family, and physical violence by family members. This may imply a perception that private violence is more prevalent than individual reports may point to, and that women may be unwilling to discuss private violence. Few respondents to this question mentioned public violence. Examples of public violence included houses set on fire, sexual harassment, and physical attacks.

During voting in Enga province in 2022, gunmen killed 18 people.¹⁰⁹ Spillover effects of gun violence in the province included the destruction of schools, homes, vegetable gardens, livestock, and medical facilities, forcing internal displacement (largely of women and children), according to the United Nations¹¹⁰. Deliberate damage to roads and bridges impeded entrance to the affected areas by police, military, and relief workers. During this wider-scale violence, the United Nations received reports of GBV against women and girls¹¹¹. In Enga, GBV was instigated by known candidates who attacked opposition candidates and their supporters to influence a favorable outcome, according to PNG Police Commissioner Manning¹¹². In other parts of the Highlands, village women left their homes early to vote without intimidation, but a group of armed young men chased them away.¹¹³ The lack of law and order during the elections in the Highlands threatens not only women and children, but democracy writ large in PNG.

Private and public violence against women candidates

IFES asked interlocutors whether women face different challenges than men and whether women candidates experience different types of violence, including threats of violence, than men do. The answers to both questions were similar; most respondents cited private violence more frequently than public violence. Private violence included emotional abuse, threats, and harassment by family members. Public violence included verbal abuse and

¹⁰⁹ Forsyth, Miranda, and Peake, G. 2022. *The Guardian*. [Violence in the PNG elections is the result of broken systems that Australia cannot ignore](#). July 28, 2022.

¹¹⁰ [United Nations. \(2022\) Papua New Guinea: Conflict and election-related violence trigger wave of displacement](#).

¹¹¹ [Kuku, R. \(2022\) PNG election violence: 90,000 displaced since May, 25,000 children unable to attend school. The Guardian](#).

¹¹² [Ligaiula, P. \(2022\) PNG Police hunt for suspects in election -related violence. Pacific News Service](#).

¹¹³ As reported by Paul Barker, Executive Director of the Institute for National Affairs.

defamation.¹¹⁴ This suggests that women candidates are more likely to experience private violence than public violence during the electoral cycle.

SARV

Diviners or seers (*glasman* or *glasmeri*) have accused villages or groups of sorcery for voting contrary to the wishes of politicians who had a claim on their loyalty through clan affiliation or vote buying. This can result in election violence. In recognition of the problem, an amendment to the Criminal Act outlawed *glasman* or *glasmeri*, creating greater accountability for SARV.¹¹⁵

Reporting acts of violence against women in elections

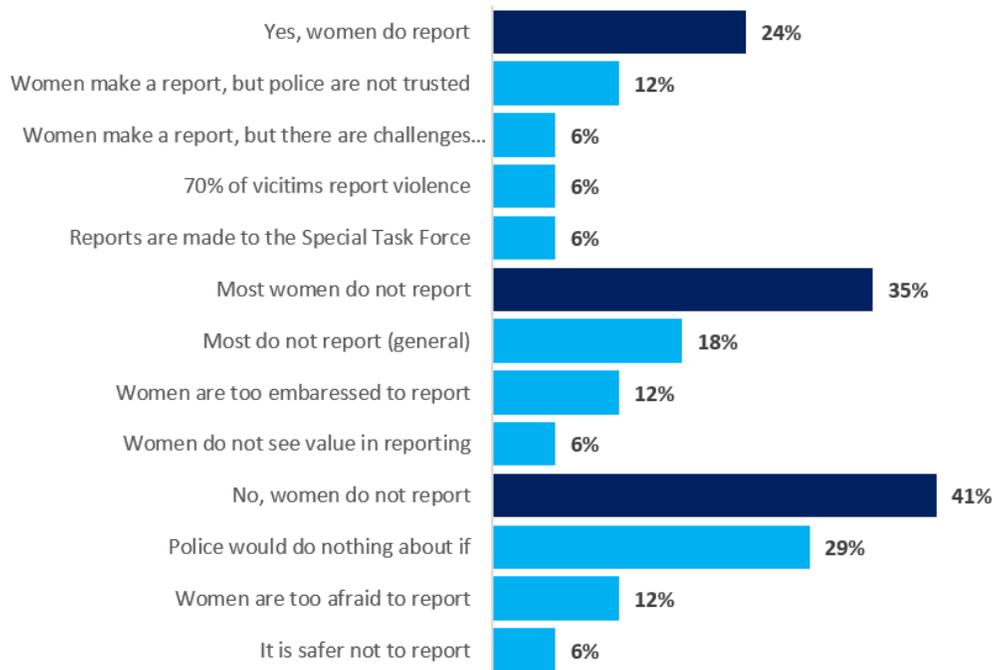
IFES field research found that the police force's lack of efficacy in bringing justice to survivors of GBV has a significant impact on women's willingness to report VAWE. Even when they do, they do not expect to receive justice. About one in four IFES interlocutors noted that women voters would report VAWE, but some added that neither the police nor the courts would take action. A FGD respondent described reporting VAWE to a special task force: "The police in East New Britain set up a special investigation task force to address election-related matters. I had a discussion/meeting with a female candidate who raised a complaint about a male candidate belittling her by saying negative things about her."

The majority of respondents stated that women voters would be very unlikely to (35 percent) or definitely would not report VAWE (41 percent) because the police would do nothing (29 percent); they were afraid to report VAWE or felt it was safer not to do so (18 percent); or they were too embarrassed to report VAWE (12 percent). When asked if women candidates would report VAWE, 90 percent said they would be very unlikely to do so or definitely would not, because the police do nothing and the reporting system is broken. Women's lack of access to justice undermines their agency and ability to combat VAWE.

¹¹⁴ This echoes what women candidates and activists said to the National Democratic Institute: "While physical assault is less common, many politically active women are victims of character assassination and libelous accusations, which tend to be intensely personal and often sexual in nature." <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Violence%20Against%20Women%20in%20Politics%20Report%20%28v.3%29.pdf>

¹¹⁵ [Criminal Code \(Amendment\) Act 2022, No. 14 of 2022 \(PNG\)](#)

FIGURE 2: Do women tend to report this kind of violence? Why or why not? (n=20)



Recommendations

Dealing with the challenges that women face in the electoral process in PNG will involve addressing the many barriers noted above at their root causes and promoting women’s leadership in PNG. In light of the findings, and in consultation with the interviewees who took part in this assessment, the following recommendations are offered to stakeholders engaged in supporting women’s political participation and ending VAWE.

Improve civic and voter education to inform women of their rights and promote gender equality in culturally responsive ways.

Recommendations	Stakeholders
The good work of several organizations that operate in this area should be scaled up. Mainline churches in PNG promote the Theology of Gender Equality, and the Anglican and Catholic churches have conducted training in gender equality and trained male advocates at the community level. Given the moral authority and wide reach of the church throughout PNG	Donors to support CSOs and INGOs to scale up civic and voter education to inform women of their rights and promote gender equality.

society, this culturally responsive approach to the country context should be scaled up at the community level.

The Voice Inc, Equal Playing Field, and TIPNG have all conducted civic education among youth to promote gender equality; these materials should be reviewed, updated as needed and brought to scale. The PNG Department for Community Development and Religion, in partnership with UN Women, supported the establishment of four regional coalitions for gender equality during the 2022 elections by bringing together male advocates; women leaders; and women-led networks and organizations from business, politics, civil society, and churches to advocate for women’s political participation. These coalitions should be maintained and nurtured both during and outside of the electoral cycle.

Donors to support CSOs and INGOs to scale up civic and voter education to inform women of their rights and promote gender equality.

Pass the amended OLIPPAC to ensure that 10 percent of candidates supported by political parties are women.

Recommendations

Stakeholders

IFES supports TSMs for women in PNG. Political will is lacking at the highest level—the Office of the Prime Minister—for reserved seats for women in Parliament. However, there is a much greater likelihood of mustering political will to pass an amendment to the OLIPPAC that would require all political parties to nominate at least 10 percent women candidates to run in the national elections.¹¹⁶ Upon passage of the amendment, the IPPCC must have funding to conduct outreach and raise awareness in the provinces among political parties and potential women candidates.

Parliament to amend OLIPPAC; IPPCC to implement changes.

IFES supports the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV’s recommendation to further develop the idea of using the OLIPPAC Central Fund to collect monies that could be dedicated to women candidates in a non-partisan way.¹¹⁷ The IPPCC has expressed interest in this initiative. In accordance with the OLIPPAC Section 77, the Central Fund can be a repository for funds provided by the national government, citizens (see Section 79), international organizations (see Section 80),

Parliament to amend OLIPPAC; IPPCC to implement changes.

¹¹⁶ Gelu, Alphonse. 2021. Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission Office of the Registrar. [Preparations for the 2022 National Elections, July 2021](#).

¹¹⁷ [Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report. 19 April 2022 Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV Report Part 2 Final](#)

and non-citizen.¹¹⁸ The funding would help address the ongoing challenge for women candidates to fund their election campaigns. The IPPCC could also explore reducing the candidate nomination fee for women, since candidates stated in interviews that political parties do not cover this fee.

Create an enabling environment for women to vote and campaign free from intimidation.

Recommendations	Stakeholders
<p>The PNGEC should train the presiding officers of polling stations to provide separate entrances, lines and polling booths more consistently and effectively to protect the secrecy of the ballot. Training should include lessons learned from the PNGEC and observer groups. This would improve on past practices, when polling stations may have followed the general guidelines of separate polling lines and polling booths but did not ensure confidentiality (for example, by placing booths in such a way that enabled voters at adjacent stations to see how women were voting). The training should include clear examples of effective separate entrances, lines, and polling booths for women.</p>	<p>PNGEC to train presiding officers at polling stations.</p>
<p>The IPPCC should be empowered to enforce the code of conduct that candidates and political parties sign and to sanction them for election-related offenses—particularly bribery, undue influence, and defamation—to dispel the culture of impunity.</p>	<p>Parliament to amend OLIPPAC; IPPCC to implement.</p>
<p>Election dispute resolution mechanisms should be more accessible to marginalized populations, including women and persons with disabilities, so they can bring candidates or political parties to account for election offenses. PNGEC voter education should raise awareness of election offenses (including how they affect marginalized populations), types of evidence needed, and how to register complaints. Additionally, the Special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform should consider lowering barriers for marginalized groups seeking redress for election offenses.</p>	<p>Parliament to amend OLIPPAC; IPPCC to implement.</p>
<p>Peacebuilding activities need to be mainstreamed throughout the electoral cycle and not treated as a defined project with limited funding and timeframes.</p>	<p>Donors to fund INGOs and CSOs.</p>

¹¹⁸ [Organic Law on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates No. 908 of 9998.](#)

<p>The PNG government should provide funding for a joint operations command center (JOCC) to be able to work proactively instead of reactively to election violence. In order for a JOCC to be successful, the PNG government should provide funding to the PNG police and military ahead of the campaign period to deploy personnel from the campaign period through the return of writs (election results) in hot spot areas. The PNGEC should train police and military personnel on electoral offenses, election procedures, and gender considerations during elections.</p>	<p>PNG government to fund increased security around elections; PNGEC, with INGO support, to train the PNG police; the military to provide security.</p>
--	---

<p>The IPPCC could consider using the Central Fund to provide private security for women candidates on a non-partisan basis to ensure protection on par with that of male candidates who hire private security.</p>	<p>PNGEC to amend OLIPPAC; IPPCC to implement.</p>
---	--

Provide surge support for GBV service providers during the campaign to post election period.

Recommendations

Stakeholders

The PNG government or donor community should provide surge funding for GBV services to address anticipated upticks in private and public GBV from the start of the campaign period through the post-election period. This would be similar to the surge funding provided for the 1-Tok Kauselin Helpim Lain and shelters for women who experienced GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic. Election violence task forces should be better resourced and connected with GBV service providers so they can respond appropriately to incidences of GBV.

PNG government to provide resources or donors to fund surge support for GBV service providers.

Increase and sustain support for police and GBV providers; improve access to justice.

Recommendations

Stakeholders

PNG has one of the world’s lowest proportions of police compared to the total population. Its police force needs more personnel. The FSVU should be better resourced with vehicles, fuel, and staff to be able to reach survivors, conduct investigations, serve arrest warrants, press for convictions, and enforce protection orders. The FSVU also needs to better network with CBOs to provide referrals to shelters and counseling services. The PNG government should create new channels for GBV survivors to access justice. This might include creating family courts

PNG government to provide resources to implement recommendations.

presided over by judges (a recommendation of the Special Parliamentary Committee on GBV). Providing further resources to FSVU and CBOs to provide counseling, shelter, and new channels to access justice will help win back the trust of survivors. More survivors may report GBV knowing they will receive support and justice. The new SARV law is in its early days of implementation; enforcement should continue, including through arrests and jail time for perpetrators, to demonstrate that these crimes will no longer be tolerated.

Stem the tide of gun violence in PNG

Recommendations	Stakeholders
<p>Tougher laws to curb the use of illegal firearms and firearms outside their intended purpose were passed ahead of the 2022 elections. The PNG police force needs additional staffing to enforce these laws, along with a system to track its firearms (including those taken out of service) to keep weapons out of the wrong hands.</p>	<p>PNG government provide resources to implement recommendations and amend laws.</p>
<p>The PNG government could consider making it illegal for civilians to carry weapons from the start of the campaign period through the seating of the new government. The PNG police force or Defense Force should be properly resourced to enforce such a ban.</p>	<p>PNG government provide resources to implement recommendations and amend laws.</p>
<p>Review the Bire Kimisopa guns control report that was tabled in Parliament in 2018 to identify politically viable recommendations for curbing gun violence in PNG.</p>	<p>CSO to advocate for gun control.</p>



HQ | 2011 Crystal Drive | Arlington, VA 22202 | USA

 www.IFES.org