

Gender Equality Issues and United Nations Women (UN Women) in Papua New Guinea (PNG)

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ABSTRAK

The issue of gender equality in Papua New Guinea is an important issue and needs attention and proper handling by the government. This country is one of the unsafe countries for women and children. This is due to the high level of violence and the minimal participation of women in various sectors of life. In 2020, data from an academic study showed that there were complaints of sexual violence and 90% of the victims were women, 74% of women were under the age of 18. This study aims to analyze the issue of gender equality in Papua New Guinea by describing gender inequality and the United Nations Women in its efforts to promote gender equality in one of the Pacific countries. UN Women has carried out various programs related to gender issues in the Asia-Pacific region and PNG is one of them

INTRODUCTION

Papua New Guinea is a country located in the Asia Pacific region. Its population is around 9 million people and almost 85% live in rural areas. Then the modern urban areas namely: Port Moresby (capital city), Lae, Madang, Goroka, Wewak, Mount Hagen and Rabaul are inhabited by around 15-20% of the population (Gavrila, 2023). The country's economy comes from mineral and energy production. This country is rich in natural resources such as: gold, copper and petroleum. Then there is the geographical diversity that makes it home to various ecosystems ranging from glaciers, coral reefs, tropical rainforests, peatlands, mangroves, swamps and others. However, Papua New Guinea still faces the challenges of poverty, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate health services, political and security instability and the increasingly worrying issue of gender equality. Stephanie in her article entitled *Women in Papua New Guinea are Suffering an Epidemic of Violence-The Government Must Act* states that women in Papua New Guinea are beaten every 30 seconds, and every year almost 1.5 million people experience gender violence in this country. The government is unable to support and provide financial assistance in handling cases of violence against women and girls every year in PNG. There are 15,444 cases of domestic violence, but only around 250 were prosecuted and less than 100 people were sentenced in 2020 (Stephanie, 2021). The limitations of the government and other related parties in terms of funding and facilities in PNG make this country very dependent on the role and efforts of civil society, churches, human rights volunteers, non-governmental organizations, international institutions in dealing with the problem of violence against women and gender inequality issues. In relation to the above, Papua New Guinea actually has the 2013 Family Law and the Lukautim Pikinini (Child Welfare) Law issued in 2015 (Gavrila, 2023). However, both laws are rarely enforced and used properly.

In 2021, the PNG Parliament issued 71 recommendations to address various domestic violence issues and gender equality issues. These recommendations include, the provision of facilities and infrastructure for handling cases of violence, a budget for consultation services, a Health Department with complete & good services to improve family and reproductive health, In addition, recommendations for improving the justice system by increasing the role of the police and completing its supporting facilities. Then a fair trial process with a focus on victims of violence (Stephanie, 2021).

One of the non-governmental actors who pays great attention and plays a role in efforts to address violence against women and gender equality issues in Papua New Guinea is the United Nations Women (UN Women). UN Women as an International Governmental Organization (IGO) focuses on empowering women and their presence in this country to address gender equality issues. Various preventive and repressive efforts are made to improve gender equality.

UN Women in 2016 conducted a campaign for change with the slogan *Sanap Wantaim: The New Normal*, which is a solidarity campaign to create safe cities for women and children in PNG. Men are also involved in it. There are five (5) messages in this movement: equality, consent, harassment is wrong, stand together and a safe city is a great city. In addition, there are several women's empowerment programs by UN Women including: increasing the role of women in government and participation in public spaces, ending violence against women and children, women's economic empowerment, and women's peace, security and humanitarian actions.

Furthermore, this study aims to examine the issue of gender equality in Papua New Guinea and United Nations Women's efforts in addressing the issue of gender equality.

Gender equality remains one of the most pressing challenges in Papua New Guinea (PNG), a country where traditional norms, cultural practices, and economic constraints significantly impact the roles and rights of women. In PNG, gender-based violence, limited access to education and healthcare, and underrepresentation in leadership positions persist as significant barriers to achieving equality between men and women. Despite various efforts, these issues continue to hinder the social and economic progress of the country, reinforcing stereotypes and inequalities in both public and private spheres.

The United Nations Women (UN Women) has been at the forefront of advocating for gender equality in PNG. As the global champion for women's rights, UN Women works in partnership with the government, civil society, and local organizations to address critical issues such as gender-based violence, economic empowerment, political participation, and access to education for women and girls. Through various initiatives and programs, UN Women aims to not only raise awareness of gender inequality but also to create tangible change that will improve the status and well-being of women across PNG.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender issues that occur in PNG are very interesting to study, considering that Papua New Guinea is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman. There have been many previous studies that highlight various gender issues, but this study will look at it from an international relations perspective, especially how international organizational actors play a role in responding to these issues.

Gender Concept

Gender is a form of differentiation in the role, nature, attitude and behavior of an individual. According to Ann Oakley in Rasyidin (2016), gender is a social construction or character that is used in humans and is built by human culture itself. Social gender differences have given rise to differences in the roles of women and men in their society. In addition, gender is also interpreted as differences in roles, functions, status and responsibilities of men and women as a result of socio-cultural formations (constructions) that are embedded through the process of socialization from one generation to the next. According to Fakhri (1999), there is a difference between sex and gender, where sex requires the nature of two biologically determined human sexes, while the understanding of

gender is more directed towards the nature inherent in men and women which is constructed socially and culturally. The existence of gender role and nature differences will not be a problem as long as it does not give rise to gender injustice or gender inequalities. Various forms of gender injustice that lead to gender inequality include: gender and marginalization, gender and subordination, gender and stigmatization/stereotypes, gender and violence, and the double burden of women. This gender concept will be used to identify forms of gender inequality in PNG, which are seen from various forms of gender injustice experienced or occurring in PNG.

The Concept of International Cooperation

K.J. Holsti stated that the concept of international cooperation is a form of view on how two or more interests, values or goals that produce something in the form of a meeting, are promoted and fulfilled by each party involved in it. Then this concept also contains views or hopes that the country wants to achieve, decided in a joint policy with other countries, assisted by other countries according to goals, values, agreements, according to what is faced. To be able to carry out international cooperation, according to Holsti, countries need to pay attention to several factors, namely: first, Increasing economic welfare with minimal costs and production limitations incurred for various products needed by the community; second, Efficient use of costs and joint security threats; third, Minimizing losses from each action of one country which then has an impact on other countries.

According to Keohane, international cooperation can occur when international actors such as countries are in a situation where the policies of the country in fulfilling its interests are considered a form of obstacle to achieving the goals of other countries. Then cooperation has two essential components, namely: first, in cooperation the behavior of each country actor is greatly influenced by various goals of interest that are owned and considered rational; second, the international cooperation that occurs will produce benefits for each country actor that do not have to be the same but are reciprocal.

The Concept of International Organizations

International organizations can be an association or association of sovereign countries throughout the world that work together to fulfill common interests. International organizations help improve cooperation between countries in various fields while maintaining world peace, to realize international relations that can run well and conducive (Hartana & Lestari Ari Yuni Komang, 2021).

According to Archer Clive (1983), the role of international organizations can be divided into three types, the first is as a tool of international organizations used by member countries to achieve certain goals related to their foreign policy (Smith K.M. Rhona & et.al, 2015). The second is as a meeting place, to discuss and resolve various conflicts that occur in a global context. Some countries also sometimes use international organizations to bring their internal issues or problems that occur in other countries to the attention of the international world. Third, as an actor, international organizations are independent, meaning that international organizations can act without significant influence from outside parties. International organizations in the context of current international

relations have been known for their achievements in overcoming a number of challenges faced by a country. Moreover, at this time international organizations are considered to have the ability to indirectly influence state behavior. International organizations are also present and reflect the human need to work together and also as a means to deal with problems that arise through such cooperation.

1. Gender Equality in Papua New Guinea: Current Status and Challenges

Gender equality in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a deeply rooted issue affected by a combination of socio-cultural, political, and economic factors. PNG is one of the Pacific Island nations with the lowest gender equality rankings globally. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), PNG ranks 151st out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, reflecting severe gender disparities in health, education, economic participation, and political empowerment.

One of the most significant challenges women in PNG face is gender-based violence (GBV), which remains endemic across the country. The UNICEF (2017) report indicates that nearly 70% of women in PNG experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and reports of sexual violence are disturbingly high. Additionally, cultural norms and practices that subordinate women in many areas of life, including marriage, inheritance, and decision-making, exacerbate these issues.

Women's participation in education is also a major barrier to gender equality. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018) found that while primary education enrollment for girls is relatively high, the dropout rate is significant in secondary and tertiary education, primarily due to early marriage, lack of family support, and cultural expectations. Moreover, women face substantial barriers to economic participation, with limited access to employment opportunities, wages, and resources.

2. Role of UN Women in Addressing Gender Equality in PNG

The United Nations Women (UN Women) plays a pivotal role in advancing gender equality in Papua New Guinea. UN Women's engagement in PNG began with addressing the systemic barriers that prevent women from fully participating in society. UN Women collaborates with the Papua New Guinea government, civil society organizations, and development partners to push for policy reforms and offer technical support in the implementation of gender-sensitive programs.

UN Women's Pacific Strategy (2018-2022) outlines a comprehensive approach that focuses on four key areas: ending violence against women and girls, economic empowerment, leadership and political participation, and gender-responsive governance. The program prioritizes improving access to justice, creating safe spaces for women, and ensuring better representation in decision-making processes.

3. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and UN Women's Intervention

Gender-based violence remains a focal point of UN Women's initiatives in PNG. UN Women (2020) reports that their interventions focus on strengthening legal frameworks, improving survivor services, and raising awareness of the harmful impact of violence on communities. For example, the "Ending Violence

Against Women and Girls" program promotes advocacy campaigns, supports the establishment of shelters and hotlines, and builds local capacity to address GBV at the community level.

The UN Women's Safe Cities Program has made significant strides in providing safe environments for women in urban areas, particularly in Port Moresby, where high levels of violence have been recorded. This program focuses on improving public safety, providing accessible services for survivors, and changing societal attitudes toward violence against women.

4. Women's Economic Empowerment

UN Women has also supported PNG's efforts to empower women economically. Economic empowerment remains a critical issue, with women in PNG often restricted to informal sectors of the economy. Through partnerships with various government and non-governmental organizations, UN Women has focused on enhancing women's access to financial resources, entrepreneurship opportunities, and market access.

The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Program has been instrumental in assisting women in rural areas of PNG to access financial literacy programs, engage in small-scale enterprises, and gain better economic independence. Through these programs, UN Women aims to break the cycle of poverty that disproportionately affects women, fostering greater economic inclusion.

5. Political Participation and Leadership

While PNG has seen some progress in the political participation of women, with women's representation in the national parliament at a dismal 3%, UN Women has been crucial in advocating for gender-inclusive policies and increasing women's leadership roles. The 2017 General Elections saw increased advocacy for gender quotas, though progress has been slow.

UN Women's support for women's political participation includes training programs for female politicians, leadership skills development, and advocacy campaigns that encourage more women to engage in the political process. The Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (PWPP) has been an essential platform supported by UN Women to increase women's involvement in governance at the local and national levels.

6. Education and Advocacy

In addition to its focus on violence and economic empowerment, UN Women has been instrumental in raising awareness about gender equality in PNG through educational campaigns. Programs such as "HeForShe" aim to engage men and boys in the fight for gender equality, breaking down the traditional gender norms that often perpetuate discrimination.

Collaborating with local partners, UN Women's education programs have also focused on improving access to education for girls, addressing the barriers that prevent them from attending school, and advocating for gender-responsive curricula. The "Every Girl Counts" initiative, for example, promotes the education of young girls and women in rural areas by providing scholarships, infrastructure, and resources to enhance their learning opportunities.

7. Barriers to Progress and Future Directions

Despite the positive impact of UN Women's initiatives, significant barriers to gender equality persist. Cultural resistance, insufficient funding, inadequate enforcement of laws, and the lack of political will often limit the scope of change. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities, with increased rates of domestic violence and economic instability for women.

Looking forward, UN Women's continued efforts in PNG will need to focus on scaling up interventions, particularly in rural and remote areas, while fostering deeper partnerships with local communities, governments, and the private sector. Investing in men and boys' education around gender equality will also be crucial for long-term change.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is the Qualitative Research Method. David William in Moleong's book states that qualitative research is the process of collecting data in a natural setting, using natural methods and carried out by a person or researcher naturally. Another definition according to Kirk and Miller is that Qualitative research is a certain habit in social science that fundamentally looks at human observations both in its area and in its terminology. So the qualitative research method is a description of the results of observations in scientific writing based on the results of data collection by a researcher.

Qualitative Research Methods are used to explain the issue of gender equality in Papua New Guinea and the role of United Women in dealing with the problem. This method will also be used to elaborate on the development of Cooperation between the Papua New Guinea Government and UN Women in dealing with gender equality issues.

The technique used in collecting data is through library research by collecting secondary data through various mass media and online, using the internet. Data obtained through documentation from various sources will be processed, interpreted and described in the form of words or narratives and elaborated through data verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gender Equality Issues in Papua New Guinea

Gender issues refer to various problems and challenges related to differences and inequalities between genders, especially between men and women. Physical, emotional and sexual violence are examples of gender-based violence that often occur. Gender issues are very complex issues because they are influenced by various social, economic, cultural and political factors. Patriarchy is a social system in which men have more dominant power over women, this can be seen significantly in family, political and economic structures. In a patriarchal system, cultural norms and values tend to prioritize the role and rights of men, while on the other hand women are more likely to experience restrictions in several matters and freedom rights.

When we discuss gender issues, we indirectly also discuss the patriarchal system because gender equality and the patriarchal system are very closely related and influence each other. Patriarchy is a social system that requires men

to be more dominant, which creates inequality that hinders and even prevents women from getting equal rights and opportunities. The presence of gender equality aims to dismantle this structure so that equal rights and access can be received by all genders.

As a country that adheres to a patriarchal system, the differences in duties and responsibilities are very clear between women and men, belittling or weakening women often occurs and this has even been normalized. The lives of women in Papua New Guinea are often marked by many very significant challenges. Many women and girls experience gender-based violence and lack of access to education and health services, then limitations in economic participation. In some areas, traditional roles and cultural norms are still the reasons for every woman to choose (Hayon, 2024). The issue of gender equality in Papua New Guinea is an important problem that needs immediate attention and proper handling by the government. This country is one of the unsafe countries for women and children. This is due to the high level of violence and the minimal participation of women in various sectors of life. In 2020, data from an academic study showed that there were complaints of sexual violence and 90% of the victims were women, 74% of women were under the age of 18. The case occurred in Boroko, Port Moresby and on average there were 27 reports of such violence every month (Gavrila, 2023).

In a year, more than 1.5 million women and children experience gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea with inter-communal conflict, political intimidation, domestic violence and other factors. The facts on the ground prove that the situation in the residential environment is far different from what is expected. Men become the ones who hold the authoritarianism and women become objects, and there is a view that men are stronger and women are very weak. UN Women stated that the highest violence against women in the world occurs in Papua New Guinea with a presentation of 58% of women experiencing violence. Human Rights Watch (2021) stated that Papua New Guinea is a dangerous place for women and girls. The high rate of rape, sexual harassment, forced marriage, customs, poor public services are reinforced by weak institutions and other dangerous practices. These conditions are quite concerning for the lives of women and girls there (Hayon, 2024). When experiencing violence by men, women there cannot act or protect themselves, if they take equal action they will receive more severe violence than before. Violence against women and girls in Papua New Guinea still often occurs, this is supported by the customary system there that ignores gender equality. In marriage ceremonies carried out in Papua New Guinea, there is a traditional procession, namely a dowry or bride price, and many marriages are postponed, because if the man's family does not pay the dowry, the marriage procession cannot be included in the agreement for the marriage ceremony. The dowry will be determined by the woman's family, the dowry can also be given in the form of money or other objects. Indirectly, this culture has built a stigma that degrading women is normal because the marriage that takes place is more transactional. So, after marriage, men are allowed to do women because they assume that women have been bought and have legally separated and are not even part of their family. In fact, the purpose of giving a

dowry in marriage is a form of appreciation from the man to the woman who has cared for and raised him and is one of the signs of binding for the families of both parties (Gabriella, Chiara, Mhairi-Louise, & Sofia, 2021). The level of gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea is very difficult to ascertain due to the difficulty of using official data. The 2016-2018 Papua New Guinea Demographic and Health Survey revealed that 56% of women aged 15-49 years had been victims of physical violence since the age of 15, 28% had experienced sexual violence and 38% had been victims of physical violence (Gabriella, Chiara, Mhairi-Louise, & Sofia, 2021).

Gender-based violence that occurs in Papua New Guinea must be viewed as a serious problem, not only as a law and order problem, but also as a health and economic problem, which requires support from various parties and all levels of society. The increasing gender-based violence greatly affects the population of women and girls, and the Papua New Guinea National Statistics Office stated that the demographic and health survey in 2016 - 2018, there were 56% of women aged 15 - 49 years who experienced physical violence in Papua New Guinea since entering the age of 15, and there were 28% of women who had experienced sexual violence and 18% of women had experienced violence during pregnancy. These problems paralyze the role and participation of women in social and economic life. This problem also shows that Papua New Guinea needs to strengthen the implementation mechanism in discussing gender-related issues (Awayang, 2022) In 2017, cases of gender-based violence have become a hot topic of discussion, Most of the reports received were reports of harassment and physical violence against women and girls. Based on the stories of the victims, they admitted that they suffered serious injuries and in some cases, some victims lost their lives. Based on several cases that occurred, the Papua New Guinea National Research Institute (PNG NRI) conducted a survey to find out the views of the community regarding cases of gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea (Awayang, 2022).

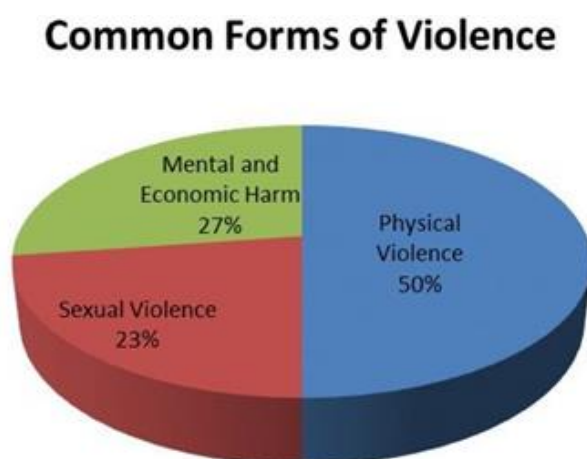


Figure 1. Common Forms of Violence
Sumber: The National Research Institute, 2022

Based on the data above, it can be seen that physical violence is the most common form of violence in Papua New Guinea. The survey reflects reports of

gender-based violence that have occurred for years in PNG, 50% experienced physical violence and from several stories reported only a few reports were followed up to the legal route, the rest were ignored. In 2020 - 2021 there were three cases that were in the spotlight, including; The Murder of Imelda Tupi, The Murder of Jennelyn Kennedy, The Beating of Debbie Kaore.

The three cases were successfully exposed in the media which finally became the attention of the State to address the three cases. However, other cases were not reported and continued to occur every day. After the murder of Jennelyn Kennedy, the Community protested regarding cases of violence, the protest became a forum for every Woman to speak out about the violence they experienced. Several Women and Girls have expressed their feelings about Papua New Guinea not being able to provide a safe space for Women there (Awayang, 2022).

The Pacific Human Rights Assessment in its 2020 report, highlighted that Papua New Guinea is the most dangerous place for women and girls. Women cannot walk freely in the Port Moresby area without being verbally or physically harassed and people trivialize harassment and violence, and consider cases of violence that occur not to be noticed. Victims of gender-based violence need to be encouraged to speak freely about the problems they face to the authorities or to the platform. Facebook is one of the tools used by the three victims, finally reaching out to the authorities to help them. However, it is very unfortunate, because there are a number of women who are afraid to report their experiences of violence to seek help from the authorities. In fact, 39% of women who experience all types of physical and sexual violence do not seek help or tell anyone about the cases they experience. That is why women need to report all forms of violence they experience, and it is also the government's responsibility to resolve cases of violence that occur in Papua New Guinea (Awayang, 2022). The author sees that the cases that occurred above are just a few of the many cases that have occurred in PNG that need serious attention from the PNG government and other countries that care about realizing gender equality and overcoming the problem of gender violence in the country. As expressed by Elisabeth Giay in an article published on Jubi.id entitled "Resolving the Issue of Gender-Based Violence in Papua New Guinea", (Elisabeth, 2020), she revealed that the murder of Jenelyn Kennedy, domestic violence experienced by elite boxer Debbie Kaore, and the abuse of 4 women in Enga Province are proof that the prevalence of violence against women in PNG is an incident that is only the 'tip of the iceberg' of their daily experiences. The government should take firm and strategic steps to handle it at the local to national levels that are truly in accordance with needs and on target, so that in making policies it really budgets a gender-responsive budget. This is because it is still difficult to detect official data that should be easily accessible and reliable as evidence or reference for advocating for these GBV cases. Although the PNG government has created the PNG National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence 2016-2025, with an agenda calling for oversight from the highest level by establishing a parliamentary committee and national secretariat to monitor, support and lobby in support of the fight against GBV in PNG (Elisabeth, 2020).

Although the National Strategy has been formed and there have been strategic steps, the number of gender-based violence continues to increase, therefore, the government needs to strengthen gender mainstreaming in various government sectors down to the family level so that it can minimize GBV. The government also needs to collaborate with international organizations that also support handling gender equality issues.

The Role of United Nations Women in Handling Gender Equality Issues in Papua New Guinea

United Nations Women and Gender Equality Issues

United Nations Women (UN Women) is a global organization that seeks to improve gender equality and empower women, including girls. This organization was founded in July 2010 and has handled various gender equality issues and collaborated with governments in member countries of the United Nations (UN) in terms of drafting legal regulations or legislation, policies, programs and services that are the basis and are used effectively in creating gender equality that benefits women and girls (UN WOMEN, e.d).

The history of the establishment of UN Women is based on the response of the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly resolution 63/311 concerning Recalling the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In addition, the Secretary-General presented the report A/64/588 entitled "Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" in January 2006. Furthermore, the Secretary-General decided that a new entity, namely UN Women, be established to be responsible for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN WOMEN, e.d.)

When it was established in 2010, UN Women was led by former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. Now the Organization is led by Sima Bahous as Executive Director of UN Women and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and assisted by Kirsi Madi, UN Women Deputy Executive Director for Resource Management, Sustainability and Partnerships and Nyaradzavi Gumbonzvanda UN

Women Deputy Executive Director for Normative Support, UN System Coordination and Programme Results (UN WOMEN, e.d.)

The establishment of this Women's organization is part of the UN reform which originally had four divisions that handled Women's issues, namely: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (UN WOMEN, e.d). Several regions in the world are represented: Africa, America and the Caribbean, Arab countries, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and have supporting offices in several countries.

The role and participation of UN Women globally also supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). This can be seen from the four (4) strategies carried out, namely: first, Women lead, participate and gain equal benefits in the government system; second, Women earn a decent income, work that respects human rights and economic autonomy; third, all women and

girls can live free from various forms of violence; fourth, Women and girls contribute and influence in building sustainable peace, and receive equal treatment in protection from natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian missions (UN WOMEN, e.d). Globally, UN Women records data traces of various forms of violence, oppression and injustice experienced by women in the world. 6% of women in the world report that they are victims of sexual violence from others, other than their husbands or partners. Then, 15 million adolescent girls around the world aged 15-19 years have experienced coercion to have sex. Most countries in the world report that the perpetrators are second or first husbands or their mother's partners and based on data from 30 countries only 1% have ever sought professional help. In 2021, based on a report by UN Women that around 49% of women have been victims of online harassment in Uganda. Then, research in Saudi Arabia found that 60% of women internet users have experienced online violence. Laws related to domestic violence have been passed by at least 162 countries in the world and 147 have laws related to sexual violence in the workplace. In 2022, Congo, Indonesia and Jamaica passed laws on sexual violence in the workplace and Congo also has a law on the protection of women from various forms of domestic violence (UN WOMEN, e.d). On the other hand, UN women also makes efforts for gender balance or gender equality with various strategies and programs carried out globally. Increasing gender equality and women's empowerment has shown its development in several countries in the world. UN Women data (2024) shows that women's representation in the ministerial cabinet and influencing policies is 23.3% and only 15 countries in the world have 50% or more women's representation in the ministerial cabinet. Then only 18 countries in the world have female heads of state and 15 countries have female heads of government. Furthermore, almost all countries in the world have not shown any gender balance or equality, but the quota for women in politics & government has always increased every year (UN WOMEN, e.d).

The Role of United Nations Women in Addressing Gender Equality Issues in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a country in the Asia-Pacific region that is categorized as an unsafe country for women and children. This is because violence occurs everywhere and the government has not been able to overcome it. In fact, this country has issued the Family Protection Act of 2013 and the Lukautim Pakinini Act 2015, namely laws that protect and promote children's welfare rights. The implementation of the above laws is not carried out properly and there are also limited services and facilities in handling victims of violence against women so that injustice and gender inequality still occur. In addition, the role of domestic institutions including the police who have units for handling sexual and family violence is not optimal (Ningrum.C.A., et.al, medium.com). In 2016, The Governor of the National Capital District Commission, Powes Parkop took to the streets holding a banner that read "Stand Together" (Sanap Wantaim) leading thousands of people to the parliament building to campaign against violence against women. This long march was held on November 25 to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence initiated by the UN and has become a routine activity every year. Furthermore, in 2021, the United Nations Development Programme issued a Gender Inequality Index report showing that PNG was

ranked 160th out of 161 countries in the world with a low level of gender equality. The government is trying to formulate policies related to women's rights, the existence of a national policy on gender equality and women's empowerment that can improve rights and participation in development (UN WOMEN Asia and The Pacific, e.d). Several things that are obstacles to efforts to improve gender equality and women's human rights in PNG include: first, women's participation in decision-making in politics and government is very low; second, the level of violence against women is very high. Around 60% of women in this country have experienced physical or sexual violence by their own partners and this figure is twice the world average; third, ongoing internal conflicts, especially in mountainous areas. Due to armed conflict and also competition between clans or tribes (UN WOMEN Asia and The Pacific, e.d).

United Nations Women is one of the international organizations that participated in Papua New Guinea in efforts to empower women, handle violence against women and girls and promote gender equality. The UN Secretary-General stated that "Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time and the greatest human rights challenge in our world" (Ningrum.C.A., et.al, medium.com). Therefore, the struggle for gender equality and women's rights will continue as carried out by UN Women as an This international organization has and will continue to carry out its role as an independent actor. Archer Clive stated that international organizations have three main roles and one of them is as an independent actor whose actions or activities are not influenced by other parties (Smith K.M. Rhona & et.al, 2015).

PNG as one of the countries in the Pacific Region that is part of the implementation of UN Women programs, namely: first, promoting women's participation in government. UN Women participates in supporting and providing recommendations for constitutional reform in the legislature so that women gain equal access in government. This international organization conducts leadership training for women political leaders, candidates and young women who are interested in politics and want to participate at the local, district, provincial and national levels. In addition, it collaborates with the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties to adopt and implement policies based on gender equality and women's leadership. UN Women also collaborates with the Department for Community Development and Religion to support women's groups and leaders to advocate for important national issues (UN WOMEN Asia and The Pacific, e.d).

Second, ending violence against women and girls. UN Women works with the Government's Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee to strengthen referral pathways for women and children at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence, and violence related to witchcraft because cases of victims of violence due to accusations or practices of witchcraft have increased in recent years in PNG. The community is also provided with information and understanding to increase their awareness of the causes and consequences of gender-based violence. On the other hand, the government is also encouraged to be able to address and provide protection against gender issues, such as: human rights violations, sexual exploitation & violence, norms and behaviors that are

detrimental to women and girls. In addition, UN Women also supports the formation of policies, such as laws & policies for human rights defenders to be protected when carrying out their duties. Then women with disabilities, women with HIV and other groups are supported to campaign to end violence against them. This international organization also assists local authorities and transportation companies in creating safe and reliable public transportation for women and girls (UN WOMEN Asia and The Pacific, e.d). The third and fourth programs of UN Women implemented to improve gender equality and empower women, namely: strengthening women's peace and security and strengthening global policies and norms on gender equality and empowerment. Government institutions in Papua New Guinea are strengthened in their ability to protect and respond to inter-group conflicts by involving women and the younger generation in them. Then, the formation of a network of young women is also carried out to advocate for their needs and also support efforts led by women, youth, and people with disabilities to encourage unity and reduce triggers of conflict in Bougainville. Because this region is very vulnerable to conflict between groups or tribes in it. In addition, most women and their families work in the informal sector, where they do not have labor protection from the government. This makes them very vulnerable when an economic crisis occurs. Therefore, UN Women also supports women's income security and decent work (Ningrum.C.A., et.al, medium.com). Furthermore, UN Women provides practical skills training and financial literacy to women entrepreneurs and also seeks to increase their access to finance, so that they can help them grow. This international Women's Organization also assists government officials, market supervisors, security guards, and police in better managing markets and creating a safe and dynamic environment.

Then UN Women also encourages women businesspeople to form associations that can collectively voice their aspirations about market operations. The various things above are efforts to promote and increase economic benefits for women working in 15 markets in 12 provinces in PNG. The program to strengthen global policies and norms on gender equality and empowerment is carried out by providing technical support to the government to change, develop, and ratify national plans and policies on violence against women, gender equality and women's empowerment. The government is also encouraged to uphold its commitment to international frameworks including the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the sustainable development goals.

In addition to the four main UN Women programs above, various efforts have also been made to implement the role of this organization and encourage the improvement of gender equality issues and handling violence against women in PNG. In 2010 UN Women initiated Safe Cities with two programs. The first "Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls" program was carried out in the same year in collaboration with UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International, the Huairou Commission, the Women and Habitat Network of Latin America and the Caribbean and 80 local and international partners. This global program was the first in the world to develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive approach to prevent and address sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence

against women and girls in public spaces. The countries involved were: Quito, Ecuador; Cairo, Egypt; New Delhi, India; Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; and Kigali, Rwanda (UN WOMEN, e.d).

Then, UN Women together with UNICEF and UN-Habitat launched the "Safe and Sustainable Cities for All" program which was implemented in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; San José, Costa Rica; Tegucigalpa Honduras; Nairobi, Kenya; Beirut, Lebanon; Marrakesh, Morocco; Manila, Philippines; and Dushanbe, Tajikistan. This program also involved mayors, governments of each country, women's groups and other partners (UN WOMEN, e.d).

PNG with its capital Port Moresby is one of the countries that implemented the first program, Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls. The aim of this program is to prevent and address sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public areas. Port Moresby is the largest and most developed city compared to other cities. Then, the market becomes an important element in this city because it is a place for interaction and building social and economic networks. In addition, the market is a place where various necessities of life are available and also a place for women and girls to gather and socialize. Around 80% of economic actors in the market are women. However, many women in Port Moresby are unable to access and enjoy public spaces or facilities freely and safely due to the ongoing and increasing risk of sexual harassment ((UN WOMEN, e.d).

When UN Women implemented Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls in 2011, 3 years later, in 2014, it was found that around 90% of women and girls experienced some form of violence, such as: robbery, sexual harassment, physical violence, verbal violence, threats and intimidation while on public transportation. Then 55% experienced it in the market and only 22% reported it. The number of violence against women and girls is caused by the lack of police on duty in public areas, the high level of alcohol consumption by men and boys which influences violent and uncontrolled behavior and other illegal activities ((UN WOMEN, e.d).

UN Women together with the City government collaborated through 2 initiatives, namely: The Safe Markets Initiative with an implementation period of 2011 to 2019 and the Safe Public Transport Initiative which began 2015-2019. Safe Markets focuses on institutional capacity building by establishing a market division and providing assistance in developing systems including: planning, finance, operations and monitoring. Then there are gender experts who work with UN Women in providing training related to gender, human rights and violence against women and girls. Then there is a market management committee, training for women economic actors on financial management, designing businesses and access to capital loans and the like. Police and market security guard training is also carried out as an effort to handle cases of violence. Market facilities are also being renovated (UN WOMEN, e.d).

The Safe Public Transport Initiative is carried out through the procurement of buses, namely The Meri Seif Bus at affordable prices and safe and reliable for women and girls. These buses have been recorded as having made 230,000 trips

carried by women and girls with operating hours from morning to afternoon in 2017. In 2015-2017, the Meri Seif Bus greatly assisted mobility and was safe to use.

In addition, a 6-month course program was also created for women to become Meri Seif Bus drivers. Bus services are also focused on safe routes and operating hours (UN WOMEN, e.d). In 2021, UN Women has played a broader role in efforts to improve gender equality and empower women in Papua New Guinea. Several programs have been launched, including: the opening of a political leadership academy for women in collaboration with the Pacific Institute of Leadership and Governance on December 9, 2021; the launch of a market operational tool that can be a guide for market owners & managers in managing markets properly and providing broad access for up to 80% of indigenous PNG people; holding a gender and human rights forum for civil society organizations. In addition, efforts to encourage women's participation in political and governmental life were carried out by training 552 women so that they could play an effective role in government, provinces, districts and women's councils in the province. Then 225 women leaders and candidates were trained and assisted and were active in forums (United Nations Papua New Guinea, 2024).

Furthermore, the program to end violence against women and girls is aimed at creating public awareness of the causes and impacts of gender-based violence. UN Women collaborates with the government committee on family and sexual violence in strengthening those who are vulnerable and survivors of sexual exploitation and violence and violence related to witchcraft. The 18 Women's Human Rights Defenders Group and their networks have increased their capacity by advocating to end violence against women and girls at the local, national, regional and global levels. UN Women's economic empowerment of women is carried out by empowering more than 350 women who own stalls in the market with practical skills such as: making cakes, food, designing fabric designs and sewing. In addition, training on finance and financial planning and designing businesses for women traders is carried out by this international women's organization together with micro-finance institutions (United Nations Papua New Guinea, 2024). Various programs that have been carried out by UN Women in PNG since 2011 to 2021 have shown that this UN agency has an important role in efforts to improve gender equality and women's empowerment. This includes influencing the government to strengthen efforts to protect women and girls from various forms of violence and minimize the occurrence of violence and violations of women's rights.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender issues are serious problems and need attention from the community and government in PNG. The government should take firm and strategic steps to handle them at the local to national levels that are truly in accordance with needs and on target, so that in policy making they truly budget gender-responsive budgets. This is because it is still difficult to detect official data that should be easily accessible and reliable as evidence or reference for advocating for these GBV cases. Even though the PNG government has created the PNG National Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence 2016-2025, with an agenda calling for

supervision from the highest level by forming a parliamentary committee and national secretariat to supervise, support, and lobby in supporting the fight against GBV in PNG. The government also needs to collaborate with international organizations that also support handling gender equality issues.

United Nations Women has an important role in handling gender equality and women's empowerment issues in the world. Papua New Guinea is one of the countries targeted for the implementation of various programs and strategies to improve gender equality in this country, minimize violence in various forms against women and girls and empower them in various areas of life. The Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls program, The Safe Markets Initiative, Safe Public Transport Initiative, political leadership training, business and financial management training, strengthening government capacity in dealing with gender equality issues in PNG are some of the evidence of the role and efforts that have been made by UN Women in the period 2011-2021.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so that further research is needed related to the topic of gender equality issues and the role of United Nations Women in Papua New Guinea in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers

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