

Determinants and impacts of GBV on farming communities of the PNG Highlands

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Abstract

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) looms large, especially in rural farming settings, where the safety and well-being of women are crucial for agricultural productivity and community stability. Annually, more than 1.5 million women and girls in PNG are subjected to GBV, stemming from a myriad of factors including internal conflicts, political pressures, and other forms of abuse. This situation places PNG among the world's most dangerous places for women and girls, ranking second lowest globally in gender equality.

Women farmers are the major producers of subsistence food in PNG, and the 'backbone' of farming families. Our research explored the social and cultural norms that sustain GBV in farming communities in the PNG Highlands, specifically examining how GBV impacts on agricultural livelihoods. Through our research, we uncovered a multitude of challenges confronting farming communities, revealing an intricate interplay of social, cultural, economic, legal, structural, and political factors that perpetuate GBV. Practices such as polygamy and belief in sorcery further heighten the vulnerability of women, where the current legal and justice frameworks frequently fall short in safeguarding their rights and well-being.

To effectively tackle the factors driving GBV in PNG farming communities, it's imperative to address the root causes. This involves confronting power imbalances, tackling structural and systemic issues, and promoting safety measures. When designing interventions for these communities, researchers must thoroughly grasp the local context and identify key factors critical for fostering social initiatives that enhance the well-being and economic prosperity of families and communities.

Keywords: gender-based violence, farming communities, remote areas, social construct, gender inequality