



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 23 April 2024

Helpline services in Papua New Guinea must be improved

Services provided through counselling and comforting worried and unhappy people via telephone (helpline) contribute to health and social care by directly responding to issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against children (VAC). However, the limited scope for users' feedback or follow-up of impacts makes assessment of the effectiveness of helplines problematic.

The National Research Institute (NRI) Discussion Paper No. 212 titled "**Strategy to improve helpline services in Papua New Guinea: Gender aspects and family violence**" by Associate Professor Eugene Ezebilo of Papua New Guinea (PNG) NRI, Henry Gorea and Kinime Daniel of ChildFund PNG and Thea Joy-Jarvis, former Program Manager at ChildFund PNG provide insights into strategy relevant to helplines for strengthening interventions to key issues on family violence.

According to the study, strategies that can be used to improve the effectiveness of a helpline include the following:

- Provide long-term support to survivors and/or supporting survivors to link in with face-to-face counselling services.
- Strengthen child helplines by using different methods such as online chatting and online video calls preferred by children so that they can receive the support they need especially in the period of emergency.
- Train more counsellors on how to address issues associated with children so that affected children can have more confidence in using helplines.
- The barriers that restrict some people from using helplines can be addressed by conducting culturally appropriate awareness programs, ensuring services are culturally relevant, for youth, hosting school-based education session and using online and off-line contact strategy.
- Focus on a single problem at a time, adopting to the pace of callers and creating a supportive environment that provides the caller with emotional safety.

The findings will provide more understanding to Government and Non-Government organisations focused on providing GBV and VAC services in PNG on how to strengthen the effectiveness of services including helplines. The findings also identify the need for more research to support evidence-based programming and service delivery in PNG.

The Publication and Media Release can be accessed on the PNG NRI website <https://www.pngnri.org>.

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