

## Violence against women and girls

- 3.1 The inquiry's terms of reference required the Committee to examine the impact of family and sexual violence on the human rights of women and girls across the Indo-Pacific region.
- 3.2 A significant amount of evidence presented to the inquiry highlighted violence against women and girls, both as a direct assault on human rights and as one of the most significant barriers that must be overcome if women and girls are to achieve their full potential.
- 3.3 During the course of the inquiry a range of issues surrounding women and violence were identified including:
- the clear message that violence against women and girls is widespread, persistent and unacceptably high throughout the Indian Ocean–Asia Pacific region;
  - the available data suggests that levels of violence against women and girls are notably higher in some regions, including South Asia and the South Pacific;
  - the data on violence against women and girls is insufficient to capture the full extent of gender based violence in the region and the effectiveness of many of the programs aimed at combating violence;
  - violence against women and girls comes in many forms and has many causes, but basically arises from the unequal power relationship that exists between the genders; and
  - violence not only affects women and girls and their families physically, mentally and emotionally but also has a large financial impact on communities, national economies and the broader region.
- 3.4 This chapter presents an overview of the evidence to highlight the types of violence women and girls face across this very diverse region. More detailed information was received in relation to countries close to Australia and countries that are recipients of Australian official

development assistance (ODA). For example, PNG was the subject of considerable attention in a range of submissions. Inclusion or non-inclusion of any particular country should not be interpreted as an effort to single out any country or omit scrutiny of others, and is instead a reflection of the evidence received by the inquiry. Likewise, the coverage of some forms of violence in this chapter does not reflect less concern about others forms of violence that are not examined.

- 3.5 The types of violence and their causes are extensive and complex. Domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual violence, so-called ‘honour killings’ and acid attacks against women, murder of women accused of sorcery, human trafficking, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and virginity testing were among the issues brought to the attention of the Committee.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.6 Not all types of violence that women and girls experience could be examined in detail in this chapter. For example some evidence highlighted that lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and girls face high levels of violence in the region, as do women and girls forced into the sex trade<sup>2</sup> and female human rights defenders. However, the balance of evidence received was insufficient to support detailed examination of violence in relation to these issues. Some evidence referred to violence against women and girls in Australian detention centres.
- 3.7 Evidence indicated that the Australian Government, in co-operation with various aid partners, is undertaking a range of programs aimed at reducing violence against women and girls and supporting survivors.

## An epidemic of violence

- 3.8 Oxfam’s supplementary submission to the inquiry described violence against women and girls as ‘a global pandemic that knows no boundaries.’<sup>3</sup> Dr Nicole George from the Women, Peace and Security Academic Collective (WPSAC) at the University of Queensland described gender related violence as ‘an epidemic that is resistant to treatment’.<sup>4</sup>

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1 In 2013, the Committee inquired into and reported on the issues of human trafficking and slavery. For further information on these issues see <[www.aph.gov.au/jscfadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscfadt)>.

2 GLASS Research Unit, Monash University, *Submission 7*, p. 4. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Woman Asia Pacific estimates every year about 10 000 Nepali girls (between the ages of 9 and 16) are sold to brothels in Indian cities and that over 200 000 Nepalese girls are involved in sex trade in India.

3 Oxfam, *Supplementary Submission, 13.1*, p. 1.

4 Dr Nicole George in Women Peace and Security Academic Collective (WPSAC), *Submission 15*, pp. 4–5.

- 3.9 A World Bank Group report entitled *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*, observed that:
- One of the most alarming facts is that more than 800 million women alive today have experienced either physical or sexual partner violence or non-partner sexual violence during their lifetimes ... Freedom from these kinds of deprivations is a fundamental aspect of well-being that is too often denied.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.10 Quoting figures from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Oxfam noted that in 2013 some 35 per cent of women worldwide are estimated to 'have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.'<sup>6</sup>
- 3.11 The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) observed that:
- Physical and sexual violence has serious and ongoing impacts on women's physical, mental and sexual and reproductive health. Women and girls in the Indian Ocean-Asia Pacific region experience horrific rates of violence.<sup>7</sup>
- 3.12 ChildFund International advised the Committee that although violence against children 'is often hidden or unreported, it has been estimated that as many as 150 million girls are subject to sexual violence each year'.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.13 Evidence suggests that, increasingly, the high cost of this violence is being recognised. With regards to the Pacific region for example, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) observed that '[v]iolence places huge direct and indirect costs on society and the economy as a whole'.<sup>9</sup>
- 3.14 The 1993 *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* defined violence against women as:
- ... any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.<sup>10</sup>
- 3.15 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) stated that:

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5 Dr Susan Harris Rimmer, *Exhibit 28: Dr J Klugman et al, Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*, World Bank Group, 2014, p. 11.

6 Oxfam, *Supplementary Submission 13.1*, p. 1.

7 YWCA Australia, *Submission 65*, p. 3.

8 ChildFund Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 5.

9 Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), *Submission 24*, p. 3.

10 United Nations (UN) General Assembly, 'Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women' (Article I A/RES/48/104), 85th Plenary Meeting, 20 December 1993, <[www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm)> viewed 27 August 2015.

Subjecting women and girls to violence, limiting their choices, restricting their movement and not hearing their voices in decision-making is not only unacceptable from a human rights perspective, but it leads to poor social and economic outcomes for everyone.<sup>11</sup>

### Violence at every stage of life

3.16 Evidence received by the Committee covered a wide range of gender based violence across the Indo-Pacific region. A recent study undertaken for the World Bank Group entitled *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia* (2014) makes the point that the risks and types of violence experienced by girls and women change as they move through life stages from birth to old age. For example:

- in infancy and early childhood (excess female child mortality and physical and sexual abuse),
- in adolescence before marriage (sexual harassment by non-marital intimate partners), and
- in adolescence and adulthood once married (dowry-related violence and intimate and partner and domestic violence).<sup>12</sup>

3.17 Other forms of violence that ‘cut across life stages’ include ‘sexual harassment of adolescent and adult women, trafficking of women and girls, honour killings, and custodial violence’ (violence carried out in institutional contexts).<sup>13</sup>

3.18 Female infanticide is the first manifestation of violence against girls. Violence against women and girls also includes cultural or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation of young girls and forced marriage of underage girls.<sup>14</sup>

3.19 A paper by the Copenhagen Consensus Centre presented statistics that showed in the East Asia and Pacific regions:

During the first month of their life 18 girls per 100 000 are killed. This corresponds to a rate of 14 boys per 100 000. This is mainly due to higher homicide rates for newborn girls in the East Asia and Pacific region, which has the highest homicide rate for

11 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Submission 27*, p. 2.

12 J Solotaroff and R Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum, World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 6–9, <documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2014/09/20206575/violence-against-women-girls-lessons-south-asia-vol-1-2-main-report> viewed 19 October 2015.

13 J Solotaroff and R Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum, World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 6–9, viewed 19 October 2015.

14 For example, see Catholic Women’s League Australia (CWLA), *Submission 81*, p. 2.

newborn girls, 46 per 100 000, the corresponding rate for newborn boys is 18 per 100 000.<sup>15</sup>

- 3.20 A submission from Catholic Women's League Australia (CWLA) highlighted long-term consequences from 'emerging sex-ratio anomalies':

In 2007, the Chinese Government estimated that there were 37 million more males than females. By 2020, it is estimated there will be 55 million more males – more than twice the population of Australia – who have little prospect of marrying. Instead of increasing the worth of girls, this situation has led to increased trafficking, bride abduction, rape and pornography. Mao Tse Tung might have said that women hold up half the sky, but there are a lot fewer of them to do it!<sup>16</sup>

- 3.21 Noting the discriminatory treatment of women in Asia, DFAT stated:

The World Bank estimates that there are 100 million women in Asia estimated to be 'missing,' because of discriminatory treatment in health, nutrition, neglect, or pre-birth sex selection. In China alone over 42 million women are estimated to be 'missing', due to son preference depriving girls of access to health and nutrition, and sex selective abortion. This has implications for the next generation of women and men and is already resulting in young women being trafficked for marriage.<sup>17</sup>

- 3.22 ChildFund Australia noted reports 'that violence occurs in more than two-thirds of families in PNG, with some experts stating that this figure may actually be much higher.' ChildFund's own field research tended to support these estimates. The organisation also emphasised that domestic violence in PNG has a major impact on children:

Violence against children is committed by a range of adults in private and public settings – parents, teachers and other figures of

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15 Dr Anke Hoeffler, *Exhibit 47: A Hoeffler and J Fearon, 'Conflict and Violence Assessment Paper: Benefits and Costs of the Conflict and Violence Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda'*, Copenhagen Consensus Centre, *Post-2015 Consensus Working Paper*, 2014, p. 11.

16 CWLA, *Submission 81* p. 4.

17 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 44. Reference to the '100 million "missing" Asian women' is derived from research of Indian economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen who, in 1990, estimated that the total number of women and girls in Asia was at least 100 million below expected demographic trends, suggesting that such a figure 'tell[s] us, quietly, a terrible story of inequality and neglect leading to the excess mortality of women.' Although Sen's assessment was initially challenged, there is now widespread acceptance that the deficit in the number of women is the result of factors that include sex selective abortion (aided by easy access to ultrasonography), infanticide and childhood neglect. See UNDP, *Asia Pacific Human Development Report: Power, Voice and Rights: A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific*, 2010, p. 34, cited by DFAT in footnote 125.

authority. However, violence within the family appears to be the most endemic, with ChildFund's report finding that children are often witnesses to assaults against their mothers, and around 60 per cent suffer physical abuse from the same assailant.<sup>18</sup>

- 3.23 ChildFund also observed that in PNG violence against women and girls 'often begins before birth,' noting that one study found '86 per cent of women in PNG experience physical violence during their pregnancy'.<sup>19</sup>
- 3.24 DFAT pointed out that violence against women and girls takes many forms: from harassment in the street, assault at school or in homes and workplaces, to sexual abuse and rape, or maiming through acid attacks by a rejected suitor.<sup>20</sup> Dr George in the submission from WPSAC observed that '[a]vailable figures suggest that between 40 and 70 per cent of women ... are subjected to violence from intimate partners and family across their lifetimes.'<sup>21</sup>
- 3.25 Violence in early life was also noted by WPSAC's Dr Swati Parashar who described combatting violence against women and girls in India as 'a mammoth task' that must address many forms of violence, including: 'female foeticide and infanticide, dowry deaths, domestic violence, sexual violence and rape.' Dr Parashar argued that traditional patriarchal stereotypes 'have prevented a meaningful engagement with barriers and impediments to enhancing the human rights of women and girls in India.'<sup>22</sup>

## Reliability of data on sexual violence

- 3.26 While the Committee received a great deal of information demonstrating that violence against women and girls is a pervasive and deeply persistent problem across the Indo-Pacific region, the evidence and other information also highlighted challenges in obtaining detailed and reliable data.
- 3.27 An independent consultant on gender and development pointed out in a think piece for the Office of Development Effectiveness that assessing violence against women can be difficult, as data provided for example by case reports can often be unrepresentative. The consultant advised:
- [Case reports] are affected by the level of service provision, going up or down according to expansion or contraction or quality

18 ChildFund Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 2.

19 ChildFund Australia, *Submission 2*, p. 2.

20 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 23.

21 Dr George in WPSAC, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

22 Dr Swati Parashar in WSPAC, *Submission 15*, p. 10.

changes in the service, usually funding related. They are also affected by the 'paradox of violence against women', that success in addressing the issue results in a rise in the statistics, not a decline, at least for some time. What is really needed is national prevalence data – the proportion of women who have ever experienced the particular form of violence being measured – and incidence data – the proportion of women who have experienced that particular form of violence during the 12 months.<sup>23</sup>

- 3.28 The dangers of relying on limited data, and data taken from small sample sizes, were brought to the Committee's attention by Dame Carol Kidu, former Papua New Guinea Member of Parliament and Minister for Community Development, who observed:

I was when I was a minister when there was this figure ... going around the globe that 60 per cent of the men interviewed said they had been involved in a pack rape. I found that completely unacceptable. I thought what on earth is going on here, because I thought of my own clan in the village, I thought of my own family and I thought of my staff. So I called the male staff and I said, 'This is the figure being sent around internationally,' and they were horrified. So I started to find out where that data came from. It was a very small sample of HIV-infected young men, and 50 per cent had said that they had been involved in pack rape. Yet that was extrapolated out as a figure for Papua New Guinea. I would really appeal to people who do these little studies to be very careful because dramatic data like that attracts money, too... Maybe just foreign journalists grabbed this without understanding where it came from. I really do not know.<sup>24</sup>

- 3.29 Dr George suggested that organisations and individuals need to be cautious not to create a backlash against positive change in their use of narrowly based statistics to support calls for social or political change:

For instance, there was a UN study done last year across the Asia-Pacific region. There were figures gathered on gender violence in Bougainville. These were very, very high. They showed an incidence of nearly 60 per cent of men committing rape. The pushback against those figures in the region was immense. There were some questions around the methodology deployed in the

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23 Australian Government, Dr C Bradley, *Ending Violence against Women and Achieving MDG*, AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE), 2011, p. 2, < [dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/ending-violence-against-women-christine-bradley.pdf](http://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/ending-violence-against-women-christine-bradley.pdf) > viewed August 2015.

24 Dame Carol Kidu, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 February 2015, p. 5.

study, and I think perhaps it inflated the figures a little bit ... But the political problems created by that study were such that sympathetic political leaders who would probably have been on side were very, very upset with the findings and felt that they completely overestimated the problem and reflected badly on Bougainvillean men. The whole study was seen as potentially inflaming what is already a very fragile political situation.<sup>25</sup>

- 3.30 The SPC emphasised the importance of soundly based research:  
It is proven that solid research informs actions. The Kiribati and Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Surveys, which led to legislative and other reforms to address violence against women, are clear examples of the power of good research and statistics.<sup>26</sup>
- 3.31 The Secretariat further advised that studies of gender-based violence had been conducted in ‘Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji and Kiribati.’ Further studies in five other countries – the ‘Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau’ would be completed by the end of 2014.<sup>27</sup>
- 3.32 These studies have been conducted by United Nations (UN) Population Fund and the SPC with support from Australia. The methodology used has been ‘World Health Organisation methodology, which allows global comparisons’ to be made on the prevalence of violence.<sup>28</sup>
- 3.33 The DFAT submission stated that ‘Australia [is] one of the world’s leaders in supporting evidence-based responses to violence against women.’<sup>29</sup> For example, in addition to the above studies in the Pacific, the Department has:  
... also supported violence prevalence questions being included in Demographic and Health Surveys in countries including Cambodia and Timor-Leste. As well as looking at women’s reporting of violence, DFAT supported the United Nations Multi-Country study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>30</sup>

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25 Dr Nicole George, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra 18 September 2014, p. 5. Dr George was referring to the UN Multi-Country study, entitled *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It?*, 2013.

26 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 9.

27 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 21.

28 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 21.

29 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

30 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 34.



- 3.34 DFAT's submission argued that '[t]hese studies have been critical' to building understanding of how to identify the means to address violence against women and girls in this diverse region:

For example, one study found that in Sri Lanka and both sites surveyed in Bangladesh, almost all reported partner violence occurred within marriage, and physical violence perpetration was more common than sexual violence perpetration. Whereas, in Cambodia and all sites in Indonesia, a larger proportion of men reported perpetrating sexual violence against an intimate partner than reported perpetrating physical violence.<sup>31</sup>

- 3.35 Further, DFAT suggested that, without evidence of the prevalence of violence that occurs across the region, responses and services for the women who are subject to violence may not be as effective or appropriate as they should be, noting:

Prevention and community education strategies need to understand what behaviours they are targeting and the attitudes that underlie the violence against women in any community.<sup>32</sup>

### Types of violence in the region

- 3.36 No country is free from gender-based violence. In Australia violence against women remains too high. The Australian Human Rights Commission, citing figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, has observed that: '[o]ne in three women in Australia will experience violence in her lifetime and one in five will experience sexual violence'.<sup>33</sup>
- 3.37 Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls Ms Natasha Stott Despoja also noted that:

Violence against women, gender based violence is universal. We know that one in three women in the world has experienced some form of violence ... More than 90 per cent of Fijian women experience some form of violence, yet they are quite surprised that a women a dies every week in Australia ...<sup>34</sup>

- 3.38 The World Bank's *Voice and Agency* report points out:

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31 DFAT, *Submission 27*, pp. 34–35.

32 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 35.

33 The Australian Human Rights Commission, *Violence against Women* <[www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/violence-against-women](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/violence-against-women)> viewed 27 August 2015.

34 Ms Natasha Stott Despoja, Ambassador for Women and Girls, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 December 2014, p. 4.

Hundreds of millions of women experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes, and many experience multiple forms over the course of their lives. Violence is not limited to specific regions of the world or to socioeconomic, religious, or ethnic groups.<sup>35</sup>

- 3.39 While there is great diversity and complexity in the circumstances in which violence takes place, the most prolific or common form of violence against women appears to be domestic violence. As Dr Jeni Klugman observed:

... around the world no place is less safe for a woman than her own home. More than one in three women globally have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence; in the vast majority of cases this is at the hands of their husbands or boyfriends.<sup>36</sup>

- 3.40 DFAT highlighted inequality of power as a key factor underlying violence against women and girls. In its submission to the inquiry, the Department observed:

Violence against women, and the fear of violence, is a result of unequal power distribution, exacerbated by a lack of functional laws, policies, and institutions in place to deal with perpetrators of violence and provide protection and services to survivors.<sup>37</sup>

- 3.41 This is not in itself a new judgment. The 1993 *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* included the statement that:

... violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women ... [it] is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.<sup>38</sup>

- 3.42 However, within an overall context of gender inequality, the determinants of violence are unquestionably complex. A submission from the International Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ISRHR) Consortium summarised important risk factors for both perpetrators and victims including:

35 Dr Harris Rimmer, *Exhibit 28*: 2014, p. 77.

36 Dr Jeni Klugman, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 2.

37 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 23.

38 UN General Assembly, Resouction48/104: *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, A/ RES/ 48 /104 , 20 December 1993 <[www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm)> viewed 14 July 2015.

... low levels of education; exposure to family violence as a child; harmful alcohol and drug use; and permissive attitudes towards violence and gender inequality. Additionally, a lack of political will, inadequate legislation and weak law enforcement hinder efforts to eliminate violence.<sup>39</sup>

3.43 A further risk factor brought to the Committee's attention was disability, with evidence indicating that 'globally women and girls with a disability are more exposed to discrimination, practices that amount to cruel and inhumane treatment, violence and poverty.'<sup>40</sup>

3.44 DFAT also noted that women and girls with disabilities:

... are two to three times more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse than women without disabilities. For women with an intellectual disability, the risk of abuse is tenfold.<sup>41</sup>

3.45 Some submissions argued that violence against women and girls is increasing across the Indo-Pacific region. One witness to the Committee put this in stark terms, saying: '[v]iolence is rising, and there are more extreme levels of violence. Acid throwing for example, has now become a really critical issue ... violence against women is becoming more extreme'.<sup>42</sup>

3.46 Monash University's Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit observed:

Women and girls in the area under study are exposed to increased violence and trafficking within and across borders ... We also note the rise of extreme violence across the region including the hideous practice of witch burning in PNG, the significant rise in acid attacks, the abuse of girls reporting sexual crimes at police stations by police officers and officials, the extreme punishments given to women for adultery, the failure to prosecute rape crimes and the increase in trafficking across the region. These issues represent major human rights abuses for women and girls across the region.<sup>43</sup>

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39 International Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ISRHR) Consortium, *Submission 52*, p. 4.

40 CBM Australia and Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC), *Submission 14*, p. 2.

41 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 27.

42 Professor Margaret Alston, Head of Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit, Monash University, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 3 November 2014, p. 27.

43 GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*, p. 4. Further information on forced marriage and slavery can be found in the Slavery Links Australia, *Submission 88*.

- 3.47 The GLASS Research Unit went as far as to submit that: '[a]cross the world and particularly in the region in question there is a growing war on women'.<sup>44</sup>
- 3.48 It was noted by the Australian National University (ANU) Gender Institute that a UN Development Programme (UNDP) study:  
 ... confirmed what most women's rights advocates already knew – that violence against women and girls in the Asia Pacific region is occurring at staggering rates with no solution in sight.<sup>45</sup>
- 3.49 A major finding of the UNDP report was that: '[p]reventing violence requires the sustained involvement of socialising institutions at the community and state levels, including schools, faith-based organizations, media and popular culture.'<sup>46</sup> The ANU Gender Institute asserted that: '[t]he question for governments and donors is how to invest in this process'.<sup>47</sup>

### East Asia

- 3.50 DFAT described the prevalence of violence against women in East Asia as a 'serious issue', particularly with regard to 'domestic violence and marital rape, child marriages, and trafficking in women and girls'.<sup>48</sup>
- 3.51 DFAT's submission observed that attitudes in many East Asian countries are tolerant of violence against women. For example, the submission noted that a study in Cambodia found that '83 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women reported doing nothing when they knew about domestic abuse' and few people reported abuse to authorities.<sup>49</sup> In relation to Timor-Leste, the Department further noted:  
 Similarly in Timor-Leste, 38 per cent of Timorese women reported having experienced domestic violence in their lifetime, most commonly at the hand of their husband or partner.<sup>50</sup>

44 GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*, p. 5.

45 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 4, citing *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*, 2013, at <[www.partners4prevention.org/node/515](http://www.partners4prevention.org/node/515)> viewed 18 September 2015.

46 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

47 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

48 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

49 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24. DFAT noted that this data was gathered in 2009, prior to the passing of the *Law Against Domestic Violence* – and subsequent awareness-raising efforts – in 2010.

50 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

- 3.52 DFAT stated that despite considerable efforts to combat violence against women:
- ... progress on eliminating VAW [violence against women] has been slow – largely the result of deeply entrenched cultural values, attitude and practices that are rooted in gender stereotype and ultimately justify exploitative behaviour and violence against women.<sup>51</sup>
- 3.53 The inquiry received little evidence relating to China, the most populous nation in the region and the world. The OECD *Social Institutions and Gender Index* notes that the Chinese Government does not make official statistics publically available on rape or sexual assault.<sup>52</sup>
- 3.54 However, there is evidence that violence against women remains a significant underreported problem in China. A 2013 UN Survey reported:
- That 22.2 per cent of men surveyed admitted to committing rape in their lifetimes; with 8.1 per cent admitting to have committed rape of a non-partner, and 2.2 per cent to gang rape of a non-partner. The most common motivation given by respondents for having committed rape was sexual entitlement.<sup>53</sup>
- 3.55 The United States (US) Department of State's 2014 country report on human rights in China noted that at least one-quarter of Chinese families suffer from domestic violence. There are also reports that kidnapping, and selling and buying of children, have increased in recent years and sexual harassment of women in the workplace is a significant problem.<sup>54</sup>
- 3.56 In 2014, China introduced the country's first ever national law against domestic violence.<sup>55</sup> The Committee notes work being done by the Australian Human Rights Commission in co-operation with the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) on a pilot program to establish crisis intervention centres for women and children affected by domestic violence.<sup>56</sup>
- 3.57 DFAT also advised the Committee that discussions on human rights issues confronting women and girls in China have taken place through the

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51 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

52 OECD Development Centre, *Social Institutions and Gender Index* <[genderindex.org/country/china](http://genderindex.org/country/china)> viewed 27 August 2015.

53 OECD Development Centre, *Social Institutions and Gender Index*, China, viewed August 2015.

54 United States (US) Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: China (includes Tibet, Hong Kong and Macau)*, <[www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=236432#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dclid=236432#wrapper)> viewed 17 September 2015.

55 Dr Klugman, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 2.

56 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

Australia China Human Rights Dialogue mechanism, and that technical support has been provided to China to assist with some of these issues as part of the Australia China Human Rights Technical Cooperation Program. This has included Australia:

... supporting the drafting of China's national domestic violence legislation and establishing domestic violence protection orders in courts in six provinces; and improving the capacity of over 700 female mediators and jurors within the Chinese justice system by providing training and professional development opportunities.<sup>57</sup>

- 3.58 Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad) highlighted sexual harassment perpetrated against women in the work place in Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Korea. The submission noted that studies have showed:

... 30 to 40 per cent of women suffer workplace sexual harassment compared to what is estimated at 25 per cent of women by the Australian Human Rights Commission here in Australia. So those rates are higher than our rate ... Some occupations are more at-risk than others. Certainly, women-dominated industries are. But, in particular, for migrant workers and domestic workers, being at the intersection with bonded labour has compounding effects for women in terms of sexual harassment.<sup>58</sup>

- 3.59 On the issue of the trafficking of women and girls, DFAT submitted that:

To date, the most trafficked people identified by Australian authorities have been women from Asia (particularly Thailand, the Republic of Korea and Malaysia) who have been exploited within the sex industry.<sup>59</sup>

- 3.60 Amnesty International Australia's publication *Indonesia: Setting the Agenda* (2014) noted that the Indonesia government has made progress towards fulfilling 'its pledge to combat violence against women and eliminate discrimination against women'. However, the organisation points out that women and girls in Indonesia:

... continue to face barriers in law, policy and practice which inhibit the full exercise of their human rights and are inconsistent with Indonesia's human rights obligations under international

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57 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 49.

58 Ms Kate Lee, Executive Officer, Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA (Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad), *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2015, p. 22.

59 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 37. Further to this the Department noted that Australia continues to invest significant resources to combat human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like offences and improve the capacity of Indo-Pacific countries' criminal justice sectors to tackle these crimes.

human rights law, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which it ratified in 1984 and made into law the same year.<sup>60</sup>

- 3.61 DFAT advised the Committee that: '[o]ver the past 13 years, Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women has recorded 400 939 cases of violence against women (including forced marriage)'.<sup>61</sup> Amnesty International was also critical of the Indonesian Government's failure to eliminate the practice of early marriage and female genital mutilation noting that 'the Indonesian government has yet to enact specific legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation with appropriate penalties'.<sup>62</sup>
- 3.62 Human Rights Watch provided evidence that: '[t]he Indonesian government subjects female applicants for Indonesia's National Police and ... National Armed Forces to discriminatory and degrading "virginity tests".' These tests were described by the women who underwent them as 'painful and traumatic.'<sup>63</sup>
- 3.63 According to Human Rights Watch's Ms Elaine Pearson, following the organisation's work to publicise the issue: '[t]he home affairs minister of Indonesia recently made a statement saying that he did not support virginity testing, and for all civil servants recruitment centres that they would not allow any virginity testing to take place.' Ms Pearson described this as a positive step, however she also noted that, 'not all police go through the civil servant recruitment centres' and that a similar statement from the police was awaited.<sup>64</sup>
- 3.64 Amnesty International highlighted the circumstances of domestic workers in Indonesia and in Hong Kong, many of whom are women and girls who live in poor conditions and suffer abuse.<sup>65</sup> The US State Department has described child labour and sexual abuse as serious problems in Indonesia,

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60 Amnesty International, *Indonesia: Setting the Agenda: Human Rights Priorities for the New Government*, 2014, p. 13, accessible at < [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA21/011/2014/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA21/011/2014/en/) > viewed 8 October 2015.

61 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24. The submission suggests that the real figure is higher due to widespread under reporting.

62 Amnesty International, *Indonesia: Setting the Agenda: Human Rights Priorities for the new Government*, 2014, p. 13, viewed 8 October 2015.

63 Human Rights Watch, *Submission 19.1*, p. 5.

64 Ms Elaine Pearson, Australian Director, Human Rights Watch, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 16.

65 Amnesty International, *Submission 74*, p. 6. Under Indonesian Law, domestic workers do not have the same legal protections as other workers.

further noting that, while child abuse is prohibited by law, government efforts to combat it appear ineffective.<sup>66</sup>

- 3.65 Amnesty International urged the Indonesian Parliament to pass a draft Domestic Workers Law that would include limiting working hours, guaranteeing adequate pay and living conditions as well as providing clearly defined leave periods and legal provisions that take into account the particular needs of women. The organisation argued: '[t]here must be a clear route to holding employers accountable when they abuse their workers.'<sup>67</sup>
- 3.66 Sexual and gender based violence was also identified as a critical issue affecting the women of Timor-Leste. A study of domestic violence conducted in Timor-Leste over 2009–10 found 'that 48.1 per cent of women at the current age of 25–29 years old had experienced physical violence since the age of 15'.<sup>68</sup>
- 3.67 The Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality from the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste acknowledged the scale of the problem, observing that:
- Domestic violence is the most common form of GBV (Gender Based Violence) in Timor-Leste: across all districts between 2000 and 2009, domestic violence was the most frequently reported crime.<sup>69</sup>
- 3.68 The DFAT submission noted that violence in Timor-Leste schools is widespread and that '[o]f women aged 15–49 who [n]ever married, 13 per cent experienced violence from their teachers.'<sup>70</sup>
- 3.69 The Timorese Secretary of State also pointed out that more effort is needed to effectively implement legislation through Timor-Leste's National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence. The submission listed barriers to accessing justice, including:
- ... the limited outreach of police, the low number and long distance of courts, coexistence of customary and formal justice systems, language and literacy (both legal and general literacy)

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66 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Indonesia*, <[www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236432#wrapper](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236432#wrapper)> viewed 27 August 2015.

67 Amnesty International, *Submission 74*, p. 6.

68 Rebecca Lim, Mercy Community Services Romero Centre, Migrant Practitioner; Louise Woolley Independent Researcher and law student; Felicity Mashuro, Independent Researcher (Rebecca Lim *et al*), *Submission 70*, p. 2.

69 Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, *Submission 45*, p. 3.

70 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.



and insufficient resources translating into long delays in the legal process.<sup>71</sup>

## South and South West Asia

3.70 DFAT highlighted the intractable nature of violence against women and girls in South Asia, and observed that:

Limited investment in, and commitment to, change community attitudes toward violence and to advocate for the protection of women's rights, law reform and access to services is a significant barrier to combatting violence against women in South and West Asia. The lack of functioning laws, policies and institutions to deal with perpetrators of violence against women and provide protection and services to survivors presents a major impediment to addressing violence against women in the region. In many countries in the region there is also a lack of reliable data on violence against women to inform advocacy and policy decisions and enable acknowledgement of the severity of women's rights violations.<sup>72</sup>

3.71 The World Bank study *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia* (2014) observed that violence against women and girls in South Asia is characterised by 'unrelenting pervasiveness throughout a woman's life – from childhood through adolescence, adulthood, and eventually to old age. It is a persistent part of [women's] lives, throughout their lives'.<sup>73</sup>

3.72 The Afghanistan Government submission stated that family or domestic violence 'is one of the main hurdles for the role of women in society.' It further noted that '[o]ne of the main and critical factors of family violence is limited awareness of human and women's rights'.<sup>74</sup>

3.73 The UN Pacific Gender Group Asia Pacific Region drew the Committee's attention to demographic and health survey data for India from 2005–2006 that showed around '50% of both men and women surveyed believed that a wife deserved to be beaten if she were to neglect their children, go out without informing her husband, argue with him, burn his food or refuse sex.'<sup>75</sup> 37 per cent of women surveyed indicated they had experienced

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71 Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, *Submission 45*, p. 3.

72 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

73 J L Soltaroff and R Prabha Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum, World Bank Group, 2014, p. 27.

74 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Submission 75*, p. 1.

75 Amnesty International Group University of Western Australia (UWA), *Submission 58*, p. 10.

physical or sexual violence from a partner, with 24 per cent stating that this violence had taken place in the last 12 months.<sup>76</sup>

- 3.74 Dr Parashar from WPSAC drew attention to reforms and progress by the Indian Government in addressing violence against women and girls:

The achievements have also been significant. Firstly, the Verma Commission report after Dec 16th [2012] gang rape [in New Delhi] put back gender issues on the social and political map of India ... the new government seems committed to addressing female foeticide and promoting women's participation in different skill sectors of the economy to guarantee jobs. And finally, the economic independence of women is increasingly being recognised as the way to tackle this menace.<sup>77</sup>

- 3.75 DFAT cited figures indicating that, '[i]n Pakistan in 2013, 869 women were victims of "honour killings" and more than 800 committed suicide, largely as the result of domestic issues'.<sup>78</sup> Further to this, the Department stated:

UN Women reports that violence against women is pervasive in Pakistan with some analysts claiming that 70 to 90 per cent of women are subjected to violence, including in the form of acid burning, rape, honour killing and forced marriages.<sup>79</sup>

- 3.76 DFAT noted that, although rates of forced and early marriage are hard to estimate accurately, 'nearly half of young women in South Asia are married by 18 years of age'. In Bangladesh rates are as high as 66 per cent while in India the rate is 48 per cent. The Department added:

In Afghanistan 59 per cent of women are in forced marriages, with 53 per cent of women aged 25-49 married by the age of 18 and 21 per cent of these married before they turned 15.<sup>80</sup>

- 3.77 Human Rights Watch highlighted Bangladesh's particularly high child marriage rate noting the significant consequences child marriage can have for girls, 'including health dangers associated with early pregnancy, lower educational achievement for girls who marry earlier, a higher incidence of spousal violence, and an increased likelihood of poverty'.<sup>81</sup>

- 3.78 According to Human Rights Watch, poverty is one of the main drivers of child marriage. The organisation stated:

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76 Amnesty International Group UWA, *Submission 58*, p. 10.

77 WPSAC, *Submission 15*, p. 11.

78 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 24.

79 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 23.

80 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 15.

81 Human Rights Watch, *Submission 19.1*, pp. 2-3.

All of the work we have done across the Middle East, Africa and now in Asia shows the correlation that child marriage is much more prevalent in poorer societies ... In that context, child marriage is a survival strategy. It is something that allows parents to reduce the number of mouths to feed. In many respects, it is important to recognise that they think they are doing the best for their girls. They are letting them marry a family which has more resources. There is testimony in the Bangladesh report where girls say, "It was awful getting marriage, but at least I have food. At least I'm going to bed having eaten today". So the connection is that stark.<sup>82</sup>

- 3.79 The World Bank sponsored study *Violence against Women and Girls* reported data that indicated rates of child marriage are declining across South Asia, and suggested that qualitative data provides 'cautious optimism that attitudes toward child marriage may also be changing.' However, the report warned that:

... [s]till, a divide persists between individual desires on the one hand and perceived cultural norms and compulsions for early marriage on the other, thus contributing to the persistence of child marriage in the region.<sup>83</sup>

- 3.80 The study considered that changing attitudes against child marriage may be related to education and/or socio-economic status changes and generational change.<sup>84</sup>

## The Pacific

- 3.81 Regarding the human rights of women and girls in the Pacific region, DFAT highlighted the high levels of violence against women and girls across the Pacific:

Intimate partner violence and violence against children is pervasive and deeply embedded. Violence in the home is learned early, and is handed down from one generation to the next. Of ever-partnered women between the ages of 16-49, 64 per cent have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner; 42 per cent reported experiencing violence in the past 12 months.<sup>85</sup>

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82 Ms Liesl Gerntholtz, Executive Director, Women's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 17.

83 J L Soltaroff and R Prabha Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum, World Bank Group, 2014, pp. 32, 34, viewed 19 October 2015.

84 J L Soltaroff and R Prabha Pande, *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, South Asia Development Forum, World Bank Group, 2014, p. xxvii, viewed 19 October 2015.

85 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 25.

- 3.82 The SPC told the Committee that: '[m]any Pacific cultures condone violence against women and girls and physical, sexual and emotional violence is common'.<sup>86</sup>
- 3.83 The Australian Federal Police (AFP) undertakes work across the Pacific and Timor-Leste through its International Deployment Group (IDG). In its submission to the inquiry, the AFP described the challenges associated with working in countries that are 'characterised by patriarchal societies, [and] home to practices such as bride-price, which entrench notions of women as male property'.<sup>87</sup>
- 3.84 The AFP also reported on the difficulties for women who wish to seek redress for violence or abuse, noting that 'poor investigative processes coupled with a lack of community support services allow abuse to continue unchecked'.<sup>88</sup> More broadly, DFAT also noted that Pacific countries suffer from weak institutional frameworks, corruption and have poor records regarding the ratification of international human rights instruments. Oversight and regulatory bodies are often not well resourced.<sup>89</sup>
- 3.85 Dr George from WPSAC further highlighted the persistence of high levels of violence in the Pacific Islands region:
- Disturbingly, these levels have remained constant despite 30 years of aid programming in this area, and the very best efforts of local and international gender advocates to see them reduced. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that in many parts of the region, gender violence may be increasing.<sup>90</sup>
- 3.86 The UN Gender Group observed that incidents of violence against women and girls in Pacific Island countries 'are among the highest in the world. Evidence shows that two out of three Pacific women have experienced violence'.<sup>91</sup>
- 3.87 DFAT advised that a World Bank study ranked the Solomon Islands as having the worst rates of sexual violence in the world with 'the Pacific as the worst region in the world for physical violence against women', and

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86 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 3.

87 Australian Federal Police (AFP), *Submission 31*, p. 2.

88 AFP, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

89 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 17.

90 WPSAC, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

91 UN Gender Group, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

further noted that: '[i]ntimate partner violence and violence against children is pervasive and deeply embedded.'<sup>92</sup>

Since the publication of the 2009 Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study, significant progress has been made in raising awareness about the prevalence of the problem about violence against women in government agencies and in the media. Legal reforms are under way and there is an Elimination of Violence Against Women Task Force in place, bringing government, civil society and donor interest groups together to co-ordinate efforts. Furthermore, the Pacific Conference of Churches' high-level discussion held in Honiara in March 2013 featured debates the churches' response to family violence.<sup>93</sup>

3.88 Reflecting on AFP involvement in operations in the Pacific region and PNG, the AFP noted:

... many local language groups often lack concepts such as 'rape', with rape being conceptualised as an abuse of male property rights rather than an abuse of victim rights. Cultural beliefs and kinship ties unite local people in these settings, with police officers' notions of right and wrong often coinciding with the views of society rather than the inherited Western laws that they are employed to enforce.<sup>94</sup>

3.89 The WPSAC submission noted research indicating that high levels of violence directed against women and girls in Fiji created a general feeling of insecurity in which 'vulnerability to theft, physical and sexual abuse were serious everyday concerns and required women to be constantly vigilant about their safety'.<sup>95</sup>

3.90 DFAT observed that it was not only the attitudes of men that need to be addressed; changing Pacific women's views about domestic violence is a major challenge. The Department cited survey figures that indicated:

... 73 per cent of women believed that a man is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances. Of women who had

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92 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 25, citing World Bank, *Toward Gender Equality in East Asia and the Pacific: a Companion to the World Development Report*, 2012.

93 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 25.

94 AFP, *Submission 31*, p. 2.

95 WPSAC, *Submission 15*, p. 5. Dr George's work contributed to a multi-sited project supported by the Australian Research Council in 2013–2015 which studies the links between gender security and women's political and economic participation in four Pacific Islands contexts – Fiji, Bougainville, Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

experienced physical and/or sexual violence, 70 per cent reported that they had not told anyone about the violence.<sup>96</sup>

- 3.91 Dr George told the Committee that women in Fiji are often unable to speak out against violence:

It was unacceptable for them to stand up and speak in a village meeting. The men sit at the front, the meeting is conducted by a man, and the women sit at the back. It is quite hard for them to actually speak. Some women said that if they did want to speak and raise these issues they could be subjected to violence as well. So there is a kind of norm that circulates in some Pacific contexts where it is very hard for women to make these issues known.<sup>97</sup>

- 3.92 The SPC observed that research has found the custom of 'the bride price' increases the risk of intimate partner violence:

Women whose bride price had not been fully paid were particularly at risk; they were more than two and a half times more likely to experience partner violence than women whose marriage did not involve bride price.<sup>98</sup>

- 3.93 The UN Pacific Gender Group noted that extreme violence against women in Pacific Island countries is sometimes associated with claims of sorcery. According to a report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women belief in sorcery is widespread in PNG. A sudden or unexplained illness or death can result in a person being accused of practicing black magic or sorcery which may result in them being tortured or even killed.<sup>99</sup>

- 3.94 Amnesty International advised the Committee that '[t]here is ongoing sorcery-related violence in a number of Melanesian countries, such as PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.'<sup>100</sup> Research conducted by Oxfam in 2010 found that those accused of sorcery were usually 40 to 60 year old women who were often 'among the most vulnerable in society'.<sup>101</sup>

96 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 25.

97 Dr George, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 18 September 2014, p. 4.

98 SPC, *Submission 24*, pp. 10-11.

99 UN Gender Group, *Submission 49*, p. 2.

100 Amnesty International, *Submission 74*, p. 11; for further information see the human rights briefing prepared by Amnesty International ahead of the September 2013 Pacific Island Forum, accessible at <[www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA05/001/2013/en/5e80f0f6-0fde-4478-915d-2d77758a03d7/asa050012013en.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA05/001/2013/en/5e80f0f6-0fde-4478-915d-2d77758a03d7/asa050012013en.pdf)> viewed 27 August 2015.

101 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 13*, p. 9.

3.95 Some witnesses<sup>102</sup> suggested that rapid economic and social change that challenges or erodes traditional social practices and family networks may contribute to high levels of violence against women and girls in Pacific Island countries. For instance, Dame Carol Kidu made the following observation about conditions in PNG:

I think most people would regard that women were safer and more secure before than they are now. It does not mean there were not problems before; we are not trying to give a picture of that. We are going through enormous change in Papua New Guinea, and we have this interface between tradition and modernity.<sup>103</sup>

3.96 Evidence suggests that empowerment of women can have unexpected consequences and in some cases form the context for what was described as a 'backlash' resulting in increased violence directed towards women and girls.<sup>104</sup>

3.97 DFAT highlighted the complexity of the relationship between violence and women's empowerment, noting that:

[A] study in Vanuatu revealed that conflict may arise if a woman's work upsets the gendered equilibrium of the household. The 2011 *Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships* found that earning an income was associated with women's experience of violence – with women who earn their own income being 1.5 times more likely to experience physical and/or sexual violence than those who do not earn an income. This conflict was attributed to women having to travel for work, sometimes earning more money than their spouse, and because they are perceived as neglecting their household duties.<sup>105</sup>

3.98 Based on observations from her field work in the South Pacific, Dr George reported that:

Women also mentioned to me the fact that, if they were more economically active than their husbands, that might be a trigger for violence as well. There can be a backlash because men believe in that breadwinner expectation that is established more generally in society and that can be a trigger for a backlash of violence as well in some instances.<sup>106</sup>

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102 For example, Dame Carol Kidu and Professor Betty Lovai, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 February 2015; see also GLASS Research Unit, *Submission 7*.

103 Dame Carol Kidu, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 February 2015, p. 1.

104 See for instance: Dr Nicole George, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra 18 September 2014, p. 5

105 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 13.

106 Dr George, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 18 September 2014, p. 4.

- 3.99 Professor Margaret Jolly argued that it was ‘really important not to make the situation worse’. Giving an example of how backlash can occur, she stated:

I will take an example from Vanuatu, on the island of Espiritu Santo. There was a men’s group formed called Violence Against Men. It was really formed in the context of major work being done by not just Australian aid but also broader aid efforts. It was protesting against family protection legislation which finally passed the Vanuatu parliament 11 years after it was drafted. One gets backlash right around the world in relationship to movements for women’s emancipation, but I think that in this context what you have to think about is how that can provoke this idea of ‘the foreign’. It can be too readily dismissed as just a foreign idea. That is why I [am] putting emphasis on Indigenous advocates and on making sure the economic and political situation is consonant with seeing this as something they can own and not something that is being imposed from outside.<sup>107</sup>

- 3.100 Efforts and policies aimed at confronting violence can have unintended and negative consequences. Dr George noted that, in the wake of the 2006 coup, ‘Fiji’s military government promoted a new “zero tolerance” policing response to the phenomenon of gender violence at the community level.’ As part of this policy, Dr George informed the Committee:

Villages have been encouraged to declare themselves “violence free” as part of this strategy which is combined with a Duavata or community policing program which aims to incorporate community members as both stakeholders and participants in law and order provision ... But deeper scrutiny of this community policing effort on gender violence reveals it to have had unintended negative consequences. Representatives from non-government organisations such as the highly regarded Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre, argue that that the focus on community-based interventions tend to privilege reconciliation between aggrieved family members and see pressure placed on women to endure violence in the home rather than seek external forms of justice. A gross under-reporting of incidents of gender violence to authorities is said to have ensued because villages who declare themselves “violence free” are eager to maintain their

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107 Professor Margaret Jolly, Professor/ARC Laureate Fellow, School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 18 September 2014, p. 5.



positive profile with potentially punitive state authorities and have become fearful of unwanted police scrutiny.<sup>108</sup>

## The costs of violence against women and girls

3.101 Evidence emphasised the costs of high levels of violence against women and girls for individuals and communities. The physical and emotional costs can range from physical and psychological trauma and injury to long term injury and death.

3.102 In recent times, efforts have been made to estimate the economic cost of violence against women and girls. Dr Klugman, in her former capacity as Director of Gender and Development of the World Bank Group, stated:

Domestic violence isn't just an egregious human rights abuse. It's also an economic drain. This research should help to mobilize far greater investment in addressing and tackling domestic violence.<sup>109</sup>

3.103 Dr Anke Hoeffler, an economist who co-authored a paper on *Benefits and Costs of the Conflict and Violence Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda* on behalf of the Copenhagen Consensus Centre, undertook research into the 'cost of collective and interpersonal violence to low and middle income countries.' This analysis included 'civil war, homicides and (non)-fatal violence against children and women.'<sup>110</sup> Dr Hoeffler noted that:

Costing it ... helps to compare the different burdens of different types of violence and helps some governments maybe come up with some will to intervene.<sup>111</sup>

3.104 The ANU Gender Institute further added to the debate about costing violence against women and girls. The Institute's submission noted that:

At present, demographic and social analysis is often chronically underfunded and ignored by elite decision-makers. Women's rights advocates have tried a variety of tactics to push the issue into the realm of high politics of economic growth and global

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108 Dr Nicole George, Lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, *Submission 39*, p. 2.

109 Dr J Klugman, Director of Gender and Development of the World Bank Group, *Press Release*, 25 November 2013 <[www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/11/25/violence-against-women-exacts-high-economic-price-world-bank-says](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/11/25/violence-against-women-exacts-high-economic-price-world-bank-says)> viewed 27 August 2015.

110 Dr A Hoeffler, *Exhibit 47: 2014*, p. v.

111 Dr Hoeffler, Oxford, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 62.

peace and security, including calculating the loss of economic productivity from sexual violence.<sup>112</sup>

3.105 For communities, the costs in monetary terms can include increased medical, legal and policing costs, and the cost of time being taken off work. The SPC notes that '[a]n economist at the University of the South Pacific estimated that domestic violence cost Fiji's economy \$498 million in 2011'.<sup>113</sup>

3.106 DFAT noted that a study conducted by UN Women in Vietnam found that both men who commit violence, and women who experience violence, suffer loss of earnings:

For women the loss of earnings per incident was estimated to be 13 per cent of the woman's average monthly income. Women reported that on an average 33 hours of household work was missed, the value of which came to 501525 VND [Vietnam Dong] or 18 per cent of the average monthly income for women.<sup>114</sup>

3.107 World Vision Australia noted that:

While the devastatingly high rates of violence against women prevalent in the Indian Ocean–Asia Pacific region are of themselves enough to motivate donors and non-government organisations to take action, productivity losses arising from domestic violence, ranging from 1.78 per cent of GDP in Vietnam to 6.6 per cent in Fiji, are additionally compelling. This national-level economic impact provides further impetus for the Australian Government to view the elimination of family and sexual violence as central to enhancing and securing prosperity within our region.<sup>115</sup>

3.108 The Institute also referred the Committee to a recent CARE study that, in 2010, estimated the total cost of domestic violence in Bangladesh amounted to over US \$1.8 billion:

This was the equivalent of 12.7 per cent of government spending that year and close to the total government expenditure for health and nutrition. The majority of this cost is borne by survivors and their families.<sup>116</sup>

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112 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

113 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 12, citing Fiji Broadcasting Corporation.

114 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 22. Note: the sum of 501525 VND as quoted above was equivalent to AUD \$32.00 in September 2015.

115 World Vision Australia, *Submission 37*, p. 4.

116 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

3.109 Conversely the potential benefits from ending high levels of violence against women and children have been estimated to be very considerable. The study co-authored by Dr Hoeffler for the Copenhagen Consensus Centre estimated that the global costs of all forms of violence at US\$9.5 trillion per year, mainly in lost economic output and equivalent to 11.2 per cent of world gross domestic product. The majority of this loss, an estimated US\$ 8 trillion, was attributed to domestic violence, mostly against women and children. Efforts to reduce violent assaults were estimated to be likely to yield \$17 for each dollar spent while ending severe physical violence in child discipline would yield \$11 dollars for each dollar spent. The benefits from improved policing and ending all forms of violence against women and girls were similarly estimated as 'likely to be high'.<sup>117</sup>

### Australian efforts to combat gender violence

3.110 Submissions to the inquiry gave examples of some of the ways countries across the region were taking positive steps towards addressing the issue of violence against women. The inquiry however was not able to examine all these strategies, instead focussing on the efforts Australia is making to eliminate violence against women and girls in the region.

3.111 DFAT argued that, 'Australia [is]one of the world's leaders in supporting evidence-based responses to violence against women'<sup>118</sup> The Department's report *Performance of Australian Aid 2013-14* stated:

2013-14 saw an increase in investments specifically targeting gender equality. This included a significant scaling up of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program, and new programming to address violence against women in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Results included helping over 66 000 women survivors of violence access critical services such as emergency shelters, counselling and legal advice in countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.<sup>119</sup>

3.112 DFAT listed a number of Australian Government supported programs that directly or indirectly contribute to combating violence against women

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117 Dr A Hoeffler, Exhibit 47: 2014, pp. i, iv, and see summary and estimates of the costs of interpersonal violence including female and child homicides, child abuse, child sexual violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women at Copenhagen Consensus Centre, Publications <[www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-conflict-and-violence-assessment-hoeffler-fearon](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-conflict-and-violence-assessment-hoeffler-fearon)> 27 November 2015.

118 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 34.

119 DFAT, *Performance of Australian Aid 2013-14*, February 2015, p. 59.

and girls. These include the Australian Government's flagship program Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (Pacific Women) which aims to provide support to women for political, economic and social opportunities across 14 Pacific Island countries. One of the aims of the program is to: 'reduce violence against women and increase access to support services and to justice for survivors of violence.'<sup>120</sup>

3.113 Initiatives which are funded through Pacific Women and are aimed at reducing violence against women and girls directly include:

- Targeted programs to support the survivors of domestic violence are underway in PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. For example, in Tonga in 2014, 500 women and children received support services (counselling, health, legal) provided by the Women's and Children's Crisis Centre.
- In the Republic of Marshall Islands and Nauru, advisers are assisting to design domestic violence crisis services and improve the health sector responses to domestic violence.
- Work with church leaders from four of the five main churches across 30 communities in Solomon Islands (targeting 10 000 women and men) aims to change attitudes and behaviours about violence against women.<sup>121</sup>

3.114 DFAT noted that:

Pacific governments' ownership of the gender equality agenda is evidenced by the recent introduction in a number of countries of legislation to criminalise domestic violence and provide greater protection for women (e.g. Tonga, Kiribati, Samoa and Solomon Islands)<sup>122</sup>

3.115 Programs being undertaken by the Australian Government in partnership with organisations or governments to assist in combating violence include:

- Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund
- PNG Gender Equality/Gender Based Violence Program
- Femili PNG: the Lae Case Management Centre
- PNG Oxfam Repatriation and Reintegration Program
- PNG–Australia Law and Justice Partnership
- Solomon Islands Gender Equality Program
- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre
- Pacific Women (Vanuatu)

120 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.2*, p. 25. Further information on this program can be found in chapter 10.

121 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.2*, p. 27.

122 DFAT, *Submission 27.2*, p. 26.

- Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan or MAMPU)
  - Timor-Leste Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW)
  - Cambodia Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) Program
  - Afghanistan Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Program
  - Challenging Gender Based Violence Program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh Provinces (Pakistan)
  - Combating Acid and Burn Violence in Bangladesh.<sup>123</sup>
- 3.116 DFAT provided information on the program Partners for Prevention which brings together:
- ... the UNDP, UNFPA [UN Population Fund], UN Women and UN Volunteers along with governments and civil society to promote and implement more effective programs and policies to end violence against women. This program combines research, capacity development and networking, and communication for social change.<sup>124</sup>
- 3.117 DFAT further noted that this program, which supported the South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM) and the Regional Learning Community (RLC) for Transforming Masculinities to Promote Gender-Justice for East and Southeast Asia, achieved outcomes including:
- [organising] prevention programming and policy on violence against women and girls in the region;
  - producing learning curriculum on masculinities and gender justice; and fostering a sustainable pool of regional expertise.<sup>125</sup>
- 3.118 The inquiry was informed that the first phase of the Partners for Prevention program featured targeted social media campaigns to engage young people on the issue of violence prevention against women and girls. The program designed an initiative to engage young men through social media which included 'three pilot social media campaigns in China, India and Vietnam with a view to extracting good practices and evidence for effective communication interventions using social media'.<sup>126</sup>
- 3.119 One example of an initiative to raise awareness and change attitudes amongst young men was 'Must Bol' in India which targeted youth in

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123 DFAT, *Submission 27.2*, pp. 24-56.

124 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 9.

125 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 9.

126 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 10.

Delhi, using social and creative media to generate discussion on gender violence as well as other issues relevant to young people.<sup>127</sup>

3.120 The evidence from these programs indicated that:

... social media can be a mobilizing force and a tool for creating dialogue and fostering an enabling environment, but on its own will most likely not change gender norms. The fundamental changes that are needed for long-term violence prevention are rooted in a complex series of actions ranging from community mobilization, legislation and institutional capacity change through to attitudinal and behaviour change in relationships, discourse and social norms. Thus it is only when social media work is connected to other on-the-ground, interpersonal interventions that it can become a powerful tool to foster change for the prevention of violence against women.<sup>128</sup>

3.121 DFAT noted that a 'key lesson' from these programs was that:

... it is difficult to understand and measure the kind of impact social media interactions have on the target audience, though possible with the right monitoring plan - capturing both indications of 'performance', for example, website metrics such as number of visitors to the campaign website, actual changes in understanding of concepts of violence against women and girls, and tools to prevent and address it, attitudinal change and commitment change.<sup>129</sup>

3.122 The Australian Government is funding Partners for Prevention Phase Two which is:

... focusing on prevention interventions, capacity development and advocacy and will apply the recommendations from its external evaluation and learning from Phase One into a new approach for sustained regional results, and increased global knowledge of what works in preventing violence against women and transforming harmful masculinities. The consolidated learning, advocacy and capacity development will help improve future programs and policies, especially efforts to transform harmful forms of masculinity and social norms and to promote gender equality and women's rights.<sup>130</sup>

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127 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 9.

128 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 11.

129 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 11.

130 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 11.

3.123 The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), to which Australia has contributed over \$8 million,<sup>131</sup> was singled out by several witnesses as a program that has made a difference to the broad problem of violence against women and girls. Dr Priya Chattier from the ANU noted:

In the case of Fiji, the one classic example would be the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, which has been working not just in Fiji but also in other parts of the region. They are the service providers for women who have been victims of domestic violence. They have not just been providing counselling services but have also been mentoring women. In the next few years they will be trying to get shelters organised. We do not want women going back to their houses and being beaten up again. Safer houses is another concept that we need to look at in the region, not just in the case of Fiji. The other programming as part of the Women's Crisis Centre has been working with men, especially community leaders, at the village level. They have been trying to work closely with our church and men's groups in village settings to change attitudes towards violence.<sup>132</sup>

3.124 DFAT advised that a joint independent evaluation commissioned by the Department and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade found that the FWCC:

... has made a significant contribution toward building human resource capacity for eliminating violence against women and has been instrumental in the development of rights-based, gender transformative services that are accessed by increasing numbers of people.<sup>133</sup>

3.125 DFAT also highlighted work with faith-based organisations, in particular Channels of Hope for Gender which is a program implemented by World Vision in the Solomon Islands that seeks to change social norms and attitudes about violence against women and girls. An evaluation found that over the three-year project attitudes of community members and church leaders changed in three main areas. These related to:

- percentage of men who believe a woman can accuse her husband of rape rose from 70 per cent to 83 per cent;
- percentage of women who believe that women should not make decisions fell from 34 per cent to four per cent; and

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131 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.2*, p. 39.

132 Dr Priya Chattier, Pacific Research Fellow, Governance in Melanesia Program, ANU, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 18 September 2014, p. 7.

133 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 12.

- percentage of men who believe the Bible says that ‘man is boss’ fell from 83 per cent to 66 per cent.<sup>134</sup>
- 3.126 Further, DFAT noted that the evaluation of the Channels for Hope program found that the male participants in general were more willing to discuss gender-based violence and gender relations. Women became ‘more outspoken and critical about the lack of response from the police, churches, and NGOs’. In addition, Church elders and pastors who were involved in the program showed ‘a high level of commitment to dealing with gender-based violence.’<sup>135</sup> However, DFAT reported that some church leaders:
- ... including some who underwent training as part of the pilot project, prefer to provide counselling to the perpetrators and urge forgiveness by the survivors and reconciliation of the couple. This reveals that mixed messages on protection for survivors of violence and gender inequality are being given across some churches.<sup>136</sup>
- 3.127 DFAT further suggested that:
- Women and men hear messages on gender based violence and gender inequality in church differently, with 63 per cent of women and 34 per cent of men recounting that pastors give the message to never use violence.<sup>137</sup>
- 3.128 The AFP is working with local authorities to set up:
- ... specialised domestic violence units, train police staff and build partnerships with non-government organisations that support victims of domestic violence.<sup>138</sup>
- 3.129 These have recently been set up in Palau, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Federated States of Micronesia, as well as the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, providing a link between the police and NGOs that support victims of family violence.<sup>139</sup>
- 3.130 The AFP stated that the IDG is committed to:
- integrating a gender perspective into IDG policy and practice;

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134 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 18.

135 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 18.

136 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, pp. 18–19.

137 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 19. Further information on the outcomes of Australian Government programs in the region can be found in *Supplementary Submission 27.3*.

138 AFP, *Submission 31*, p. 7.

139 AFP, *Submission 31*, pp. 7, 10.



- supporting partner country policing organisations to develop policies and practices that enable men and women to participate equally as employees; and
- supporting partner country policing organisations and civil society to promote equality and deliver services equitably, including through appropriate responses to gender-based violence.<sup>140</sup>

3.131 The approach taken by IDG deployments is to:

... foster understanding and gradual, sustainable change that strengthens the ability of police services to fairly uphold the rule of law. Within this context however, improvements in attitudes toward women are difficult to measure objectively and require a long-term focus.<sup>141</sup>

3.132 The SPC noted that despite high levels of violence against women and girls in the Pacific, 'action against gender-based violence has enjoyed renewed momentum and action in recent years' and that this was 'due in part to encouragement and support of development partners such as Australia, the United Nations, and women's human rights groups'.<sup>142</sup>

3.133 Chair of the Management Committee of Femili PNG and Director of the Development Policy Centre, Dr Stephen Howes, reported significant progress in improving Lae's two safe houses, with the assistance of funding from the Australian Government. Dr Howes said he and his team worked to improve the existing safe houses run by local organisations and reportedly learned that building 'something new' is not always the best approach, saying 'work with what there is, and see if it can be improved'. Dr Howes also highlighted the importance of sustainable ongoing funding to keep such services running.<sup>143</sup>

3.134 Dr Howes reported that, with the addition of case management services and improvements to infrastructure, the safe houses were able to help more women and children escaping from violent situations:

In February 2014, the Australian Government announced that it would support the project. We began operations in July 2014. A little over one year on, and we have provided assistance to over 400 clients and their families. There is still a long way to go, but the safe house situation has definitely been turned around. Both safe houses are functioning much better. Both are often full, and

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140 AFP, *Submission 31*, p. 3.

141 AFP, *Submission 31*, p. 3.

142 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 20.

143 S Howes, 'Putting Lae's Safe Houses to Work', *Devpolicy Blog*, 7 September 2015 <[devpolicy.org/putting-laes-safe-houses-to-work-20150907/](http://devpolicy.org/putting-laes-safe-houses-to-work-20150907/)> viewed 22 September 2015.

host between 10 and 16 clients and their children, staying there for anywhere between a couple of days to several weeks.<sup>144</sup>

- 3.135 Although violence towards women and girls in Africa has not been addressed in this report (as little evidence was provided in this area), the Committee is well aware that violence against women and girls is an issue of considerable concern in this region. The Committee noted the following views expressed by Human Rights Watch with regards to possible budget cuts to a program in southern Africa:

We are deeply concerned ... AusAID set up a gender-based violence fund that initially focused on South Africa. But in about 1996-97 that expanded to southern Africa. That was an incredibly important pot of money that has built up very significant programming and has had a long-term impact on gender-based violence in the region. We know that the 40 per cent cut overall is not going to affect all programs equally. We know that in some geographic regions, specifically Africa, as we understand, the cut is going to fall more heavily. But I think we do not know. We are deeply concerned, because Australia is often a key advocacy target for us. We are often an ally in many of the issues that we are trying to push with governments. So we await with some trepidation to see what the impact of these cuts is going to be on the work and also, frankly, on Australia's moral standing and ability to be an important and respected voice on these issues.<sup>145</sup>

## What needs to be done

- 3.136 The Committee received evidence that highlighted progress made in combatting violence against women and girls, especially in awareness raising in the region and strengthening legal frameworks.<sup>146</sup>
- 3.137 Ms Gillian Brown, previously the Principal Gender Equality Adviser at AusAID between 2010 and 2012, told the Committee:

If you go back 15 years, when almost no countries in the region even had a law on violence against women, this has been incredibly significant ... In the Pacific there is still a lot of progress that needs to be made, but, if you look at other cases like Cambodia, Indonesia or any of these countries in the South-East Asia region, those laws are in place a lot because people were supported by bilateral donors like Australia. It is not only

144 S Howes, 'Putting Lae's Safe Houses to Work', *Devpolicy Blog*, viewed 7 September 2015.

145 Ms Gerntholz, Human Rights Watch, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, pp. 17-18.

146 SPC, *Submission 24*, pp. 22-23.

Australia, but Australia contributed to get these laws in place. The challenge now is getting these laws implemented. That is an ongoing job and it is something that does bring people together to really focus on an issue and overcome that issue.<sup>147</sup>

- 3.138 The ANU Gender Institute pointed out that the 2013 UNDP survey produced some insight into the attitudes and motivations of male perpetrators of violence against women and girls. For example, it revealed that:

A common motivation of men who have admitted to rape is the belief that they are entitled to sex even without the female partner's consent. The report also found that perpetrators were more likely to have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse as a child. A large proportion of men also suffered from work-related stress, depression and suicidal tendencies.<sup>148</sup>

- 3.139 The ANU Gender Institute argued that these findings are particularly important, and that more insight is needed:

... given that current responses from international donors focus on providing services to victims (though not at levels that are remotely enough to meet demand) rather than on preventing structural violence by working with men and boys to change their behaviour. Refuges, counselling and health services are crucial, but it is even more vital to ensure that violence does not occur in the first place and that laws both exist and are enforced by the security and judicial sectors. Legal norms are important but they are moulded by social and cultural practice.<sup>149</sup>

- 3.140 The SPC stated that: '[t]he most notable achievements have been in developing awareness of, information about and legislation towards elimination of violence against women.' However, the Secretariat also considered that there is still much more to do.<sup>150</sup>
- 3.141 DFAT contended that there has been progress in the Pacific over the last decade or so.<sup>151</sup> However, the Department acknowledged that a number of current programs that aim to address violence against women are still quite new and it is consequently difficult to evaluate progress. Ms Moyle stated that:

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147 Ms Gillian Brown, Private capacity, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 6 May 2015, p. 53.

148 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 5.

149 ANU Gender Institute, *Submission 63*, p. 5.

150 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 20.

151 Ms Sally Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 2.

... more broadly across the program, we have violence against women prevention programs in Timor-Leste, in Cambodia, in Afghanistan and in Pakistan. Most of those are still quite new. We have some early indications of progress, but we do have not a lot of real progress because they are within their first couple of years.<sup>152</sup>

3.142 The Committee sought to identify programs that were working and having a measurable impact on combating violence against women and girls. Although many programs were presented to the Committee in evidence, it was by no means clear what programs would deliver the best results for women and girls in the region who are subject to unacceptable levels of violence.

3.143 Dr George advocated for a long-term and broad perspective:

We ... need to think about how this effort cannot be prosecuted in isolation from broader questions around women's political and economic empowerment. If we look at the 30 years of really good work that has been done in the region on this question, we still see these increasing incidence of gender violence. We really have to ask ourselves serious questions about what we have achieved and what we have not achieved too.<sup>153</sup>

3.144 This point was reinforced by Ms Joanne Crawford, from the International Women's Development Agency, who emphasised the marginalisation of women in the PNG decision-making processes:

There is something about the fact that it is experienced by women, that women are a tiny fraction of decision makers in [Papua] New Guinea – I think there are three women there now – the voice is not heard in civil and political spaces and it is not influencing budgetary allocation. What we are trying to do in that example is saying that if you flip it – if we saw two-thirds to 90 per cent of men experiencing a particular form of violence – we might call it a war and we might be going in and trying to address it. We are not because we are still working with a civil and political space where women are 'other' and are at the margins. And they are not; they are 50 per cent of the population.<sup>154</sup>

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152 Ms Sally Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 6.

153 Dr George, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 18 September 2014, p. 3.

154 Ms Joanne Crawford, Research and Policy Adviser, International Women's Development Agency, *Committee Hansard*, 3 November 2014, p 14.

## Committee comment

- 3.145 The Committee acknowledges the efforts being made by the Australian Government and NGOs with which it partners in seeking to combat violence against women and girls, including through: the advocacy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Ambassador for Women and Girls; diplomatic activity in multilateral and regional fora and bilateral dialogues; and, programs that advocate for political and legislative change, such as the Pacific Regional Ending Violence against Women Facility Fund.<sup>155</sup>
- 3.146 Evidence presented to the Committee left little doubt that very significant challenges remain. The Committee is concerned that progress in combatting violence against women and girls has been slow, limited, and fragile. At the very least, as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community put it, ‘much, much more’ needs to be done to eliminate violence against women and girls.<sup>156</sup>
- 3.147 Evidence presented to the Committee suggests that there is no magic bullet to solve the issue of violence against women and girls. Violence perpetrated against women and girls because of its nature, its embeddedness in cultures and social attitudes, as well as its different triggers, represents an ongoing and deep-seated challenge.
- 3.148 The diversity of the Indo-Pacific region also presents a major challenge for the design and implementation of development assistance programs to address this problem. The Committee agrees with comments by Ms Sally Moyle, who emphasised the importance of socio-economic and cultural context:
- Development is such a complex area. It relies on really closely aligning to the context of the region or country that you are working in – having the right people in place to do the work, measuring properly ... What might work in Tonga will not work in Papua New Guinea or Cambodia. It has to work with the cultural and the gender norms in place.<sup>157</sup>
- 3.149 The Committee recognises that Australia has a limited aid budget and that it is necessary to target Australia’s efforts where they will have most impact. However, it also agrees with Oxfam Australia that ‘the scale and

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155 DFAT, *Supplementary Submission 27.3*, p. 29. More information about the fund can be found at <[www.pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/UNwomen-Pac-Fund-Brief.pdf](http://www.pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/UNwomen-Pac-Fund-Brief.pdf)> viewed 18 September 2015.

156 SPC, *Submission 24*, p. 24.

157 Ms Moyle, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 May 2015, p. 3.

complexity of the challenge should not overwhelm or dissuade us. Violence is not inevitable, and it is preventable.<sup>158</sup>

- 3.150 If significant and lasting reductions in violence are to be achieved, further research needs to be done, including program evaluation. Future policy implementation needs to be focussed on programs and action that will deliver both immediate results and long-term attitudinal changes.
- 3.151 A common theme in the evidence was the need to work within communities, to engage local people in policy making, and to include men and boys in this process. The Committee notes the work DFAT and other aid providers are already doing in this area, including incorporating the use of social media.
- 3.152 While legal reform and effective enforcement are critical, and need further investment and support from donor countries such as Australia, greater emphasis needs to be placed on preventing violence.
- 3.153 Violence against women and girls must be made unacceptable, for example through community mobilisation programmes, media, and engagement with people who influence culture, social norms and behaviour, such as through programs that promote indigenous male role models.
- 3.154 Particular emphasis needs to be placed on efforts to change the attitudes and behaviours of the primary perpetrators of violence against women and girls including, for example, through sustained school-based or sports-based education programmes. Education focussed on young people, that has a gender sensitive curriculum and uses gender sensitive texts that promote an understanding of consent, healthy sexuality, and respectful relationships should be a key focus, especially in the light of evidence that suggests violence is often learnt in the home at an early age.<sup>159</sup> The Committee notes the work being undertaken by the Australian Government and its aid partners to support behavioural change, including Partners for Prevention, 'Must Bol', and the '17 man' social media campaign.
- 3.155 Without attitudinal change, efforts to increase the education of girls or strengthen laws against violence are unlikely to be effective, or may be only marginally so, in combating pervasive violence against women and girls in the region.
- 3.156 These areas need greater priority in national and international responses. For example, the Male Champions of Change program was highlighted as a program changing male attitudes in Australia. This program may

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158 Oxfam, *Submission 13.1*, p. 2.

159 DFAT, *Submission 27*, p. 25.

represent a concept that could be used more widely to bring about attitudinal change amongst populations.<sup>160</sup>

- 3.157 Given the influence of strong community networks associated with faith-based organisations in the Pacific, particular effort needs to be made in working specifically with appropriate leaders of faith based organisations to change community behaviours and attitudes towards violence against women and girls.
- 3.158 At the same time, support and services for survivors of family and sexual violence need to be given high priority. Investments by Australia and other donors, in partnership with recipient governments and non-government organisations, in the development and strengthening of services for survivors of family and sexual violence have the potential to provide direct, immediate and concrete outcomes. The chapter in this report on health examines the physical health care needs of survivors of gender based violence in greater depth.
- 3.159 Recognising that inequality in power is a key factor underlying violence against women and girls, Australia's development assistance programs need to have a clear and unambiguous focus on the empowerment of women and girls and the elimination of gender violence. In this regard, the Committee is concerned about evidence suggesting the possibility of a 'backlash' against women and girls when gender norms are challenged. Strategies for effective programming that can avoid this backlash are discussed in chapter 10.
- 3.160 The Committee recommends that efforts to reduce violence against women and girls should be an integral part of all Australian development assistance efforts. There are a range of international donors working in the area of gender based violence in the region. Australia's aid program should prioritise countries in the Pacific region where the levels of violence are endemic.<sup>161</sup> By taking a focussed approach, Australia's efforts may be more likely to deliver tangible results, and could then inform models for broader engagement across the region.
- 3.161 Submissions to this inquiry have contained many compelling examples of barriers to women and girls caused by violence in the region and have offered the Committee a large number of general and specific recommendations on how to combat this problem. The Committee urges the Australian Government to examine these submissions with a particular focus on those with expertise in providing services for specific

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160 See Ms Janet Menzies, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 May 2015, p. 12, regarding the Male Champions of Change initiative.

161 Ms Harinder Sidhu, First Assistant Secretary, Multilateral Policy Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 17 June 2014, p. 2.

types of violence or geographical expertise, for instance the recommendations made by the UN Gender Group on the Asia Pacific region.<sup>162</sup>

- 3.162 Finally, recognising the deeply entrenched and persistent nature of violence against women and girls in many societies, policy makers must commit to the long haul. Programs that seek to bring about attitudinal change are unlikely to produce results quickly. Only long term commitments are likely to make sustained progress and achieve intergenerational change in attitudes and behaviour.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 6

**The Committee recommends that the Australian Government take every opportunity:**

- **to engage with governments in the Indo-Pacific region, including at regional fora, to highlight the extent of violence against women and girls, the persistence of the problem, and its consequences; and**
- **to press other governments to enact and enforce laws that protect the human rights of women and girls, in particular in relation to sexual and gender-based violence, especially under-age and forced marriage and marital rape.**

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<sup>162</sup> UN Gender Group Asia Pacific Region, *Submission 49*, p. 6-9.



### **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that, in light of the evidence showing continuing and pervasive violence against women and girls across the Indo-Pacific region, the Australian Government:

- facilitate targeted and co-ordinated research (including gathering national prevalence and incidence data, as well as quantitative and qualitative surveys of community attitudes), legal reform, and programs directly aimed at community attitudes that are tolerant of violence against women and girls; and
- consider increasing funding for activities to combat violence as a proportion of Australia's development assistance budget, as well as commit to the provision of resources for the long term.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- continue to support existing programs that partner with governments, non-government and community organisations, and faith-based organisations which:
  - ⇒ deliver education with a particular focus on boys and adolescents, to promote understanding of consent, healthy sexuality, and respectful relationships; and
  - ⇒ make use of technology to expand the reach and engage young people.
- explore ways to extend programs addressing violence, such as those being run by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, and linking to similar initiatives operating in Australia and other countries across the region; and
- review work being undertaken in Australia and overseas to address gender-based violence to identify programs of best practice that are culturally appropriate for countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

