



IMPACT STORY

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GEDSI training empowers senior DJAG officer

Fidelma Kara works as the Executive Manager for the Department of Justice & Attorney General's (DJAG) Policy Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Branch. With over a decade's experience in the public sector, she has a robust background in Strategic Program and Project Management, as well as Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning & Reporting (MELR).

She holds a bachelor's degree majoring in Political Science and Public Policy Management from the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and is an Alumni of East West Center Asia, Pacific Leaders Program. She began her career in the public service in 2011 as an Administration Officer with the Correctional Service in the Momase Region Jails. In 2014, she transitioned to DJAG on a promotional transfer, where she has made significant contributions as a Monitoring & Evaluation Officer.

Fidelma is part of a growing number of women being employed and elevated to senior roles within the central government agency, as part of efforts to strengthen and improve gender equity under the leadership of DJAG Secretary Eric Kwa.

Supporting this work to ensure there is more gender-responsive governance, transparent, inclusive and accountable management systems and recruitment procedures within DJAG, is a significant aspect of the technical assistance being provided by the EU-PNG Partnership for Good Governance (P4GG) project.

This is being done through capacity building activities such as the training for DJAG's 29 Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Focal Points. Each branch within the department has a focal point and Fidelma is one of 15 females doing this.

In September last year, she attended the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) training which was facilitated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and supported by P4GG project.



Speaking during the closing of the training last year. Below: Getting ready to start another busy day.





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The training sessions have deepened her understanding of power dynamics within leadership roles and equipped her with crucial skills to effectively support survivors of GBV and SARV. Furthermore, she emphasized that these are important skills that a leader should have to effectively support team members.

Fidelma acknowledges the challenges when navigating the complexities of leadership, especially regarding cultural perceptions of authority and resistance to change. She recognizes the significance of fostering an inclusive environment where all voices are heard, and where junior employees feel safe to report incidents. She explained that as a leader it was important to understand power dynamics well and the impact it has on your team.

“For instance, junior employees might hesitate to report incidents of discrimination due to concerns about possible repercussions. Another obstacle is the resistance to change, particularly when established practices are altered. For example, a younger leader may find it difficult to earn the acceptance of older colleagues, as cultural norms often associate leadership with age. Furthermore, managing the diverse viewpoints of individuals from different cultural backgrounds poses yet another challenge,” she said.

Other takeaways from the training for her include having a better understanding of how to apply Psychological First Aid (PFA) when the need arises and the awareness of power dynamics.

Fidelma’s looks forward to imparting what she’s learnt and supporting colleagues who may need assistance in her team and within the department.