



## IMPACT STORY

05 February



Gabi Diari (middle seated) with some of the Village Court officials preparing for a court session at Gaire village.

### **How Interim Protection Orders issued by Village Courts are preventing domestic violence**

Papua New Guinea's grassroots justice system relies heavily on its 1,680 Village Court areas and over 18,400 Village Court officials, who preside over thousands of cases every year. Since their establishment in 1975, Village Courts have played a vital role in providing access to justice, promoting mediation, resolving conflicts, and upholding the rule of law across communities. Village Courts are the lowest court of the National Judicial System and it's the front-line justice service.

#### **Gaire Village Court Chairman**

Gabi Diari, a Village Court Chairman is one such village court official serving a community of approximately 4,000 people in Gaire, Central province. He is supported by a team of 10 officers, including 2 women who deal with cases ranging from domestic violence to land disputes, and drunk and disorderly behavior. While most disputes are resolved through mediation, Gabi acknowledges that the work is not without challenges when enforcing court orders and fines.



## **Support by the European Union-PNG Partnership for Good Governance**

In February last year, Gabi attended transformative training on the Family Protection Act 2013 (FPA) supported by the European Union-PNG Partnership for Good Governance (P4GG) project and facilitated by the Department of Justice & Attorney General's (DJAG) Village Courts and Land Mediation Secretariat (VCLMS).

The training brought together 24 Village Court officials from the National Capital District and Central province. Its primary objective was to educate the officials about their legal powers and responsibilities under the Act, particularly the procedures for issuing Interim Protection Orders (IPOs) in domestic violence cases. The Family Protection Act empowers both male and female survivors of domestic violence to seek protection orders and other legal remedies against perpetrators.

### **Impact of the Training**

Gabi shared that the training significantly expanded his understanding of IPOs and their importance.

"I have put this into practice with a few domestic cases here, and it is encouraging to see IPOs stopping husbands from beating their wives again out of fear of the consequences for breaching the order," he said.

The IPOs are not only protecting survivors but also raising awareness within communities about the support Village Courts can provide while emphasizing the importance of the rule of law.

Moreover, perpetrators are beginning to understand the serious consequences of breaching these orders, leading to reduced violence in some communities. This training has empowered officials to deliver justice, protect survivors, and promote peace more effectively.

### **Revitalizing the Village Court System**

The Family Protection Act training is part of broader efforts under Component 2 of the P4GG project to support DJAG's implementation of the "Crime Prevention Through Revitalized Village Court System Strategy 2020-2030". These efforts include training Village Court officials, to improve their capacity to address pressing community issues, improve gender equity, and create access for disabled persons and other vulnerable groups. The P4GG project is funded by the European Union.

### **The Family Protection Act 2013**

The Family Protection Act 2013 (as amended) aims to promote safe, stable families, deter domestic violence, and ensure effective protection for victims. Family Protection Orders (FPOs) can be issued by courts for a set period, with conditions to prevent further violence. Applicants may include spouses, family members (including children), or those treated as family.



## EU-PNG PARTNERSHIP FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE



Two types of FPOs exist: Interim Protection Orders (IPOs) valid for 30 days (extendable by 30 days) and longer-term Protection Orders (POs) lasting up to two years. Breaching an order is a criminal offence punishable by up to two years of imprisonment. Village Courts can issue IPOs, while District Courts can issue both IPOs and POs.

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