

## STATEMENT FROM THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE FIRST JIWAKA WOMEN FORUM

We, the women participants of the the first Jiwaka Women's Forum held at Maria Kwin Centre, Banz, Jiwaka Province from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

The theme was – '**Jiwaka Women Uniting for a Change towards a safer community**' have discussed some of the major issues that are destroying the very fabric of our existence.

As a new province, Jiwaka has the opportunity to implement relevant social development policies, programs and services that will address the people's most pressing problems. These issues threaten to prevent or undermine the future achievement of political, social and economic stability in the Province and must be a priority for the Government.

The issues and demands to be presented today to our Government are grievances coming from the hearts of the mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and daughters.

Ending violence in homes and communities is the cornerstone of achieving the promise of PNG's Constitution. Equality, Participation and Integral Human Development, with every citizen and leaders are fully aware of their basic rights and their social obligations and their mutual accountability to develop our families, communities, province and country together.

**The forum acknowledges the impact of sorcery related violence on women and the deep and enduring beliefs in magic and sorcery** in Jiwaka Province blaming any death, injury or illness on the practice of sorcery. The torture and killing of the alleged sorcerer (most often marginalized women) increasingly occurs in broad daylight, in public spaces. Torture and murder of poor, marginalized and older women is increasingly common. Even if the victim's survives violent mob attacks, they are usually stripped of their property, homes, and rights to land and become outcasts or internally displaced. The majority of women victims, their families or communities do not report this cruelty and violence to the authorities including the police due to threats and intimidation of witnesses by perpetrators.

**We recognize Marijuana is produced and consumed** widely in Jiwaka. The effects and impacts on consumers is a grave concern, it does excessive damage to the whole human being. Marijuana is also produced on a larger scale to generate income. This is a major concern and needs a comprehensive, long term approach, to lessen and to eradicate the production and consumption of the drug.

**Bride price** is one of the major factor contributing to domestic violence. It is commonly believed – even by many women – to give men the right to control their wives, with violence if necessary. In abusive marriages, women are trapped by their inability to repay the bride price, especially with the escalation of cash and material goods, which are increasingly required. Relatives often do not want to repay the bride price if the woman leaves the men and would discourage divorce.

**Polygamy**, which is the traditional right of men in some cultures to have several wives, has become distorted in the cash economy, where men take on other wives and girlfriends without supporting them. This puts women in competition with each other for the husband's attention and resources for their children. There is a lot of disharmony and violence in families who practice polygamy. Many families are deserted, distorted and neglected; men are not taking up their responsibilities as a husband and a father.

**The current state of the market is very poor**, it is in bad shape and not fit for women to trade. These markets are in the hands of the landowners and every day women markets vendors are harassed, double taxed and trading under very difficult conditions. Markets are important places for women to earn income to support their families.

**There are currently too many liquor outlets** operating in odd locations and odd hours and causing excessive social problems in homes and communities as a result of alcohol abuse.

**We recognize and acknowledge** the commitment and support of the current Government led by Dr. Tongamb in building 3 Women's Resource Centres in the 3 districts of Jiwaka.

**We also acknowledge** the ongoing, important work of community based organizations, the church agencies and different institutions working on women's rights and women's development.

**To build a new Province, we need a new beginning, new values, standards and laws to protect women and end all forms of violence. We should build our province on beliefs and principles based on Christianity, the PNG Constitution and laws with an understanding of the human rights that belong to us all.**

This change in the hearts and minds of Jiwaka people is necessary if we want Jiwaka to develop and prosper. Lack of knowledge and enforcement is creating problems for economic development, social security and community safety.

**For development, peace and prosperity of our province, we call for an end to:**

- 1. All forms of discrimination against women and girls**, including attitudes and practices that result in cruel, inhuman, anti-social, and anti-women acts causing fear, terror, harm and death.
- 2. All forms of violence against women and girls** including wife-beating, sexual violence, incest and child abuse.
- 3. All torture, maiming and murder of innocent women and men** in our communities accused of practising sorcery.

We make a demand to our Jiwaka Provincial Government of the day that Jiwaka as a new province, commits to ZERO TOLERANCE on violence in homes, public spaces and in and between tribal groups.

### ***Violence Against Women and Girls***

**We call for** the Government of Jiwaka to honour and account for the commitments to ending Violence Against Women (VAW).

**We demand** the establishment of family and sexual violence units, in all police stations across Jiwaka to appropriately respond to violence, especially sorcery related violence and violence against women and children. The Government must ensure long funding commitments for responding to violence.

**We call for** increased resources for service provision (counselling, legal, health, accommodation) in rural areas where women continue to have limited access to support services. Including increased recognition and support for women's organisation and groups.

**We demand** adequate budget for proper operations of the Village Courts, Police, and Hospitals to attend to victims of violence and including rural areas.

**We demand** the Government of the day to make budget allocations and support programs for young women and men.

**We demand** for the Women of Jiwaka to be given the opportunity to participate in and at all levels of development. The work of women and the potential of women must be recognized.

**We urge** the current Government ensure that women's rights are adequately addressed under the legal system including criminal and family law.

**We call for** increased training in gender, Violence Against Women and human rights for the police, courts and key duty bearers working with communities.

**We call for** Perpetrator programs that can contribute to making home safer for women and ensuring that any programs developed will be survivor centred and prioritise the safety of the survivor.

### ***Sorcery Related Violence Against Women***

**We call for** all necessary actions to address sorcery related violence. Including comprehensive education across all levels including on changed laws from the Sorcery Repealed Act.

**We call for** appropriate psychosocial support and access to justice for survivors of sorcery related violence.

**We call for** the prosecution of perpetrators of sorcery related violence.

### ***Marijuana***

**We call for** the Government to establish and set up a drug squad, within the police force to address this issue.

**We call for** the Government to fund Rehabilitation Centres and provide the necessary support to work with victims, including through local organizations.

**We call for** the Government to take this issue seriously and to strictly enforce the laws in place for drug offenders.

### ***Cultural factors discriminating against women:***

**We call** on the Government to work with other institutions to eradicate cultural practices that discriminate against women and girls, and that are contributing to violence.

**We call for** a standardize bride price to maintain the culture or tradition of the tribe and family for celebrating a union of two people.

**We call for** the Government to support the existing mechanisms and to do more training and awareness on the rights of children and the responsibilities of both parents towards their children.

**We call for** the Government to step up and strengthen law enforcement to implement the Family Protection Act and Lukautim Pikinini Act.

**We call on** the Government to put an end to compensation and reconciliation for very serious crimes, including rape and severe injury against women and girls. These are often negotiated informally and not in a proper court of law.

### ***Safe Markets for Jiwaka***

**We call for** the Government to build new markets that can accommodate the needs of women vendors. Women vendors must be involved in all stages of planning and implementation and in the management and operation of these markets.

**We call for** the Government to improve existing markets, to develop new laws and policies that allow women to have an equal say in decision making on how the market will operate.

### ***Liquor Outlets***

**We demand** the Government to strictly enforce the Liquor Licencing Act and ensure that liquor businesses comply with it.

### **Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan**

We demand for our four Members of Parliament (MPs), Dr. Tongamb, Governor of Jiwaka, Hon Joe Kuli, member for South Whagi, Dr. Fabian Pok, Member for North Whagi and Hon Wake Goi, Member for Jimi, to come together, endorse, and implement the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan. The Plan calls for effective referral system for women and children who are abused can seek needed support.

The National Gender Based Violence Plan was endorsed by the National Government in December 2016 and immediately after that, the National Capital District was the first one to design its plan for implementation. The Jiwaka Province has a change to become the second province in PNG to have the Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan in place.

The women of Jiwaka are now looking up to you to endorse and implement the Jiwaka Provincial Gender Based Violence Plan.

### **LEAVE A LEGACY BEHIND FOR OUR CHILDREN!**

We can assure you all, that this can start with us and through us, the women of Jiwaka, we are the daughters, aunts, mothers, sisters and grand mothers of Jiwaka.

If Jiwaka society no longer accepts violence as normal and works to decrease the high level of violence against women, then Jiwaka will not only be beautiful in its natural environment but also in its human relations.

Jiwaka Women's Forum Participants

26 October 2017