

SENISIM PASIN

We must learn to value ourselves, others

BY GARY BUSTIN



RECENTLY I had dinner with a group of local volunteers who talked excitedly about the difference their efforts are making in people's lives.

This group works in local communities to help individuals understand the value and potential they have and how important it is to add value to others.

I was encouraged as I sat and listened to stories of some of the lives this group has touched. They said: "When a person starts to value himself or herself then he or she finds it easy to value to others."

As I was listening I started to think about all the people I know across PNG who are contributing their time and effort to make a positive difference. I thought especially about those who work every day to end SARV (sorcery accusation related violence). Some of them regularly put their lives in danger to help rescue or protect victims. Why do they get involved? It certainly is not for money. It can only be that they value those who are falsely accused of sorcery. They risk their own lives because they understand the importance of valuing of others.

This is the exact opposite of

those who falsely accuse of sorcery and perpetrate crimes on SARV victims. By their actions, glassemen and those who torture and kill are saying, "I see no value in this person."

What they are also saying by their actions is, "I see no value in myself as a person." This is a very important lesson that is often missed in society. People who operate out of fear and greed do not understand the importance of recognizing value. They live in a dark place where they see worthlessness in themselves and in others. I actually feel sadness for them. How worthless do you have to feel in order to allow yourself to cause such terrible pain and suffering to someone else?

The interesting thing about value is the more you give away the more you get. What I saw in the volunteers who were telling me about their work was that they were receiving great value personally from showing value to others. They were operating in a very positive energy and I could feel it so strongly that I left encouraged and inspired.

It is time that we as a country learn the importance of showing value to our most vulnerable. The more we fight for them the better we become. One day SARV will end in PNG and it will be when we finally learn the importance of showing and receiving value.

Five safe houses built in Mul-Baiyer

BY MARJORIE FINKEO

MUL-Baiyer district in Western Highlands province is the only place in the highlands region that has five safe houses built.

The growing number of violence and sorcery accusation and related violence cases has pushed communities, church leaders, and ward members to start somewhere by offering five stand-alone houses built from bush materials given and to Kyokonda Community Development, a small organisation formed by the Slipwanyi Community in Baiyer Central.

The organisation aims to voice issues of gender based violence and sorcery accusation related violence (SARV).

In December, Kyokonda was one of the 13 successful recipients of the grants given by Department of Community Development and Religion to organisations offering services to those who are victims in SARV cases.

The National Government gave K300,000 out of K2.1 million to safe houses around the country, and Kyokonda Community Development (KCD) received K98,000.

KCD Safe Houses team leader, Yanga Treppe, who is behind the drive, and making it possible with the help of locals to fix the homes,

in making a start to help victims of SARV and gender based violence (GBV).

"We have been looking for means and ways to minimise GBV and SARV cases in the Baiyer district and because we are connected to Enga, everything that happened in both provinces, it comes to the district as well," Mr Treppe said.

"As soon as we established the safe houses the survivors started to come in and accessing the service and one thing we noticed is that when we introduced the safe house, we also made awareness telling the communities that safe houses are funded by the national government and there is a policy and system in place for provincial to district level."

Since December to February, 20 women (survivors) rescued out from GBV and SARV incidents were accommodated in those safe houses.

He said safe houses are legally recognised by the court as well and that has already had an effect among people who now know that the arm of the law has reached their area.

The safe houses are built within three local level government areas in Mul, Baiyer, and Lumusa and are clustered into 48 wards for locals to access them.

Every survivor is given 14 days to stay in a safe house and get help in terms of free counselling, referral pathways to police, village court and to aid post for medical treatment.

For serious cases, like SARV survivors, they can stay longer than 14 days.

He said safe house counsellors are church pastors, male advocates, and family sexual violence unit committees in the wards who are handpicked, those who are seen as role models in the community with no violence records, have good marriage background, respect women and families.

The survivors go to them for assistance before going into safe houses.

Security is the biggest challenge and Mr Treppe's vision is to extend the houses, build fences and employ guards who can provide security.

"We still having husbands coming after their wives just to pull them out and abuse them and most of these men are drug addicts," he said.

Mr Treppe said women police officers from the rural police station are always helpful whenever the victims and their helpers report their cases to them (female officers).

Special sorcery report edition

WELCOME readers and followers of our Special Sorcery Report edition. This week we feature Kyokonda Community Development.

Kyokonda Community Development is a civil society organisation in Mul Baiyer district, Western Highlands Province, which is one of the 13 recipients of PNG Government grants last December.

Next week, we will feature House of Yellow Ribbon Counselling Ser-

vice in Kimbe, West New Britain Province, and Meri Self House in Hoskins, West New Britain, who are behind the scenes and giving their best through voluntary work in helping women and girls in the communities affected by gender based violence.

We will also feature Kup Women of Peace in Kundilawa district, Chimbu Province, Family of Change Inc in East Sepik Province.



Department of Community Development and Religion Secretary Jerry Ubase (front second right), representatives from Gender Based Violence Secretariat desk, Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council, UN Development Program and frontline workers of GBV and sorcery violence attended a workshop last week in Port Moresby.

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