

Community Vision for Change

Pilot Project

World Vision Solomon Islands



World Vision Solomon Islands (WVSI) is changing people's beliefs and behaviour around gender-based violence in five marginalised urban Honiara communities, where most children live in violent homes.

From 2011-2014, WVSI piloted a method called 'Channels of Hope for Gender' (CoHG)¹ by working with church leaders in order to change negative local attitudes on gender-based violence and gender inequality, as part of its Community Vision for Change (CV4C) project. The project is funded by the Australian Government's Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

The Australian National University conducted a baseline study at the project outset and a project evaluation after the three-year pilot phase.

During the project, church leaders and church and community members participated in a program of CoHG training events. These participants formed community teams to further address gender-based violence and substance abuse and support positive conflict resolution in their own communities.

In the project communities, over 90% of the population is Christian and over half regularly attend church.

Following the training, church leaders began regularly incorporating messages about non-violence and gender equality in their sermons, teaching and counselling.

The evaluation study revealed the project is changing community attitudes in three main areas:

1. Towards recognising women's rights to non-violence and participation in decision making
2. Openness to discussion: men are becoming more willing to discuss gender-based violence and gender inequality and women are becoming more outspoken on support services
3. Many of the church leaders involved are committed to bring about change around gender-based violence

¹ A World Vision International method being used in projects around the world

The evaluation also found, however, that mixed messages on protection for survivors of violence and gender inequality are being given across some churches.

A second, three-year project is planned to follow the CV4C Pilot Project, building on the strengths of the project and addressing the key messaging concerns identified during the project evaluation.

The need for change

Solomon Island communities are violent places^{2,3}:

- Two out of three women have experienced physical violence from an intimate partner
- 38% of women's first sexual experience was forced
- 64% of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 reported physical or sexual violence in the last 12 months

According to the 2014 evaluation survey of 300 people in the CV4C Project communities⁴:

Three quarters of people believe their community is unsafe for children

- Half of people know of violence or abuse of children in the last month
- Around 90% of respondents had experienced alcohol related violence in the previous week
- Over 50% of all arguments between husband and wife lead to violence
- 64% report a high level of violence against women and girls

² The Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey of 2006-2007

³ Solomon Islands Family, Health and Safety Study: A Study on Violence Against Women and Children, Ministry of Women Youth and Children Affairs, 2009

⁴ Wu, J., Kilby, Dr P., Evaluation of Honiara Community Vision for Change Project, Australia National University and World Vision Solomon Islands 2015

- 63% of men believe it is acceptable to hit women in certain circumstances

Summary of Evaluation Method

Researchers from the Australian National University conducted a Baseline Study in 2012 prior to commencing the CV4C Pilot Project and an end-of-phase evaluation in November 2014.

The 2014 project evaluation methodology included a review of relevant documentation, focus group discussions with church groups, key informant discussions with WVSI staff and a survey of 300 people from randomly selected households in the five project communities.

In addition to ANU's evaluation, a qualitative evaluation was conducted from July-August 2014 by WVSI's staff in accordance with World Vision's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, 'Learning through Evaluation with Accountability and Planning'. The review report was included in ANU's documentation review.

Project Activities

The CV4C Pilot Project sought to change negative attitudes around gender-based violence and gender inequality in order to commence a process of change in social norms, that is, what is typically acceptable and practiced within the communities.

World Vision worked with church and community leaders in five marginalised urban communities in Honiara: White River, Fulisango, Sun Valley, Lord Howe and Burns Creek. In these communities, over 90% of the population are Christian. Around 60% of people attend church regularly and around 25% are engaged in regular church activities⁵. There are five major church denominations: Anglican, South Seas Evangelical Church, Roman Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist and the United Church.

The main project activities were as follows:

- In late 2011, lead trainers for the CoHG method from World Vision's Southern Africa Regional office introduced the method to 10 national-level church leaders and also ran a workshop for local church and community leaders about gender-based violence. Six months later, they trained a further 25 church and community leaders to facilitate discussion about gender-based violence in their churches and communities.
- The project established six 'Community Hope Action Teams' (CHATs), consisting of church leaders,

interested community and church members including Sunday School teachers. These community teams were supported to kick off a campaign of events, involving promotion of non-violence and gender equality so these messages could be incorporated into church teachings and promoted in focussed sessions in the wider church and community. Community teams were also trained in positive conflict resolution and substance abuse with support from the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the Ministry of Health.

- A final workshop using the CoHG messages on non-violence and gender equality attracted 17 church leaders in September 2014.

Supporting educational materials were aimed at pastors and church leaders and in addition, young people in Sunday Schools. Some leaders also chose to use them more widely in the community.

The project resulted in 25 religious and community leaders trained, which resulted in a further 73 community women and 74 men joining training on non violence and gender equality.



Honiara Community Leaders sharing their ideas and thoughts during training on gender based violence

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The CV4C Pilot Project also worked to improve access to support services for survivors of violence. People were appointed as 'Focal Points' at the project outset to provide connection with, and to support, existing services. As such, 13 women and 14 men were trained in referral pathways.

⁵ Wu, J., Kilby, Dr P., *Evaluation of Honiara Community Vision for Change Project*, Australia National University and World Vision Solomon Islands 2015

Examples of messages of non-violence

In the Lord Howe community, Father Nehemiah and his successor, Father Nigel from the Anglican Church of Melanesia, used the CoHG messages on a monthly basis, with the key theme:

“Respecting parents, family members to love each other, husbands must not hit their wife, and family must live as Christians”⁶

Pastor Alwyn from the Seventh Day Adventist church in White River held a weekly preaching every Wednesday at the market for one year, focusing on family life and domestic violence.

The women’s groups from Lord Howe and Fulisango adapted the CV4C Pilot Project messages for their pastoral care duties when visiting and counselling couples who experience domestic violence.

One interviewee explained how, in 2012, he attended a CoHG workshop that changed his thinking, attitude and view of life. “I was a violent person to my wife, my children, my neighbourhood and my community,” he said. “Now I treat my wife equally, and appreciate her as an individual, a wife, and there is mutual trust and love in our marriage. My children do not have fear and distrust in me anymore and we now have open relationship and love for each other ... The environment in our home is more loving and friendly, with positive words spoken to each other. After twenty three years of marriage now, my wife and my children are experiencing a truly happy life”.



Fred Sikini (top left), Sun Valley Community elder, conducting community outreach using CoHG messages

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Summary of Evaluation Results

The project evaluation identified that, over the three-year project, attitudes of community members and church leaders have changed in three main areas, as follows. However, consistent with international evidence across diverse contexts, a measurable change in social norms over this timeframe was not expected and not identified.

1. Towards recognising women’s rights:

- The percentage of men who believe a woman can accuse her husband of rape rose from 70% to 83%
- The percentage of women who believe that women should not make decisions fell from 34% to 4%
- The percentage of men who believe the Bible says that ‘man is boss’ fell from 83% to 66%

2. Openness to discussion: The fourteen focus group discussions revealed that, since 2012, men in general had become more willing to discuss gender-based violence and gender relations.

Women continued to talk openly about community perceptions of gender-based violence, the role of the church and women’s experiences of gender inequality and domestic violence in the focus groups.

Since 2012, women have become more outspoken and critical about the lack of response from the police, churches, and NGOs.

3. Commitment to change: Church elders and pastors who are members of the Community Hope Action Teams show a high level of commitment to tackling gender-based violence and support for the CV4C Pilot Project.

Some church leaders, including some who underwent training as part of the CV4C 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.

Women and men hear messages on gender-based violence and gender inequality in church differently, with 63% of women and 34% of men recounting that pastors give the message to never use violence.

⁶Lord Howe women’s focus group discussion, 21 November 2014 as part of the 2014 project evaluation

Learnings and recommendations

A second, three-year project is planned to follow the CV4C Pilot Project. Learnings and recommendations from the pilot project, outlined as follows, have informed a project redesign for the second phase:

- It is important to effectively engage national and influential church leaders throughout the project



South Seas Evangelical Church pastors at Burns Creek

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- Regular follow-up training (at least annually) is required to keep the messages given in church strong and consistent, to influence participants' perceptions and behaviours on gender based violence and gender inequality and to keep motivation high
- The messages can reach more broadly if the training is also offered and actively promoted to church staff, church women's groups and communities as well as World Vision staff

- The training must emphasise the need to focus on survivors' available options for safety and legal rights rather than attempting to reconcile or encouraging women to go back to perpetrators of violence
- The supporting training materials should be better adapted to the local context
- Instruction and training could be built around local stories and delivered in conjunction with local theatre companies and bands. Any materials should be tested with users before being rolled out.
- Project efforts should concentrate on attitudes around gender based violence and gender inequality, and the work on focal points discontinued. Though CHATs could learn about support services, existing, established national structures such as SafeNet continue to undertake this work.
- Focus group discussions revealed that community chiefs play a major role in referring serious cases of gender based violence to support services. As such, it is important to engage with community chiefs and involve them in CoHG training.
- Financial support should be in place to support the community teams in project related activities
- The current method of monthly project tracking should be bolstered to develop a coherent monitoring plan to regularly review project progress

Conclusion

The CV4C Pilot Project has played an important part in working towards reducing violence in Solomon Island communities.

The CV4C Pilot Project has started positive change in attitudes in five marginalised urban communities, towards reducing gender-based violence and gender inequality.

The evaluation suggests the project offers a model to continue into the future, with its learnings and recommendations to be incorporated into the next project stages.