

Violence against young women and girls in Vanuatu

The effectiveness of outreach and prevention strategies

A research project of the Vanuatu Women's Centre



VWC staff and supporters march through Port Vila, March 2016

July 2020

Supported by



VIOLENCE

*You give me distorted face
You give me crooked hands
You give me black eyes
You give me broken skull
You damage my health*

Violence

*You pollute my sustainability
You contaminate my attitude
You poison my relationship
You driftnet off my love
You damage my environment*

Violence

*You omitted my nomination
You jealoused off my election
You prevented my vote
You drive my decision making
You damage my participation*

Violence

*You burnt my certificates
You scolded off my lectures
You snarled at my tutor
You hid my homework
You damage my education*

Violence

*You are violent
You are oppressive
You are careless
You are Irrespectable
You are Violence*

*Merilyn Tahigogona
(Beneath Paradise, 1995 ')*

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Please note: parts of this report may be confronting or distressing for some readers

This report includes explicit examples and analysis of many different forms of violence against women and children.

Although the most extreme examples of violence from the database have not been included, some people may find parts of this report confronting or distressing.

Please contact the Vanuatu Women’s Centre, its provincial branches or CAVAWs if you would like to talk about your own or others’ experiences of violence against women and children – see contact details on the back cover of this report – or call 161 toll-free (24 hours) if you need help urgently.

Real names are not used in any case studies, and other details have been modified or omitted to ensure client confidentiality. Any resemblance to individuals known to readers is coincidence, since the case studies included in this report are typical of VWC’s national caseload, and of the experiences of many thousands of ni-Vanuatu young women and girls who experience similar abuse.



“Stop domestic violence – physical, sexual, emotional, financial”

Banner made by participants at a VWC community awareness workshop on Epi Island, May 2016

*VAELENS AGENSEM OL WOMAN
INO KASTOM BLONG MI*

“Violence against women, not my culture” – VWC campaign T-shirt

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Acronyms and Glossary

CAVAWs	Committees against violence against women – VWC’s rural volunteer network
CA-P	Child abuse – physical
CA-S	Child abuse – sexual
Child	Defined in this research as a girl or boy under the age of 18
CM	Child maintenance – financial maintenance of a child by the father whose mother is not married to the biological father
DV	Domestic violence
FPA	Family Protection Act
FPO	Family Protection Order
FM	Family maintenance – financial maintenance of a legal wife and children by the husband/father
MCC	Malampa Counselling Centre, a provincial branch of VWC
<i>nakamal</i>	A traditional meeting place, used for community gatherings, custom court proceedings and community ceremonies, presided over by chiefs.
New clients	Those seeking help from the VWC Network for the very first time
PECC	Penama Counselling Centre
Primary prevention	Aims to prevent violence against women before it occurs (see section 4.1)
P value	A measure of statistical significance, indicating how strong the association is between 2 variables – for example, between emotional distress and different types of violence. A P value of less than 0.05 (<0.05) means that there is 5% likelihood (or one possibility in every 20) that the association between the 2 variables is due to chance, or due to error.
VWC pathways of change	This refers to VWC’s strategic analysis of the step-by-step short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes needed to bring about the elimination of violence against women and girls throughout Vanuatu, how the different outcomes these are causally linked to each other, and to the range of strategies implemented in VWC’s national program. This type of analysis is usually called a “theory of change” in donor-led program designs. In VWC’s case, the term “pathways of change” reflects the fact that VWC has observed these causal linkages between outcomes over decades, although there remains an openness to update the analysis as new evidence and experience comes to hand. VWC’s pathways include the changes that need to take place among victims/survivors, community leaders and members, male advocates trained by VWC, and government and non-government agencies, and links each to VWC’s key strategies.
Repeat sessions	Counselling sessions by the VWC Network with clients who return for follow-up visits
SCC	Sanma Counselling Centre, a provincial branch of VWC
Secondary prevention	Includes responding to violence against women after it has occurred, along with preventing <i>further</i> violence (see section 4.1)
SH	Sexual harassment
SOPs	Vanuatu Police Force Standard Operating Procedures in relation to cases of domestic and family violence
TCC	Tafea Counselling Centre, a provincial branch of VWC
TOCC	Torba Counselling Centre, a provincial branch of VWC
VNSO	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
VWC	Vanuatu Women’s Centre
VWC Network	Includes the main VWC centre in Port Vila, the 5 branches in Torba, Penama, Malampa, Sanma and Tafea provinces, VWC’s rural network of CAVAWs, and VWC’s network of male advocates who have received intensive training by VWC through several sessions.
Young woman	Defined in this research as a woman aged between 18 and 29

1. Summary

Research focus

In 2009 the Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) undertook a national baseline study of the prevalence of violence against women aged 15 to 49, in partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office. One of the most important findings from the 2009 national prevalence study was that almost every form of violence is more prevalent among young women, than those aged 30 years and over.

For the research findings detailed in this report, young women were defined as those aged 18 to 29, and girls were defined as under 18 years. The current research posed several questions to explore the experiences of young women and girls. What proportion of clients seeking help from VWC and its rural network of branches are young women and girls? What types of issues are they seeking help with, what types of violence are they facing, and how severe is the violence they are experiencing? The findings provide a confronting insight into the lives of many young women and girls in Vanuatu.

This research also explores how young women and girls come to know about VWC's services, and what prevents them from seeking help. The findings add to existing evidence on the effectiveness of VWC's integrated approach to preventing and responding to the serious problem of violence against women and girls.

Data collection and analysis

This research was undertaken in 2018 and 2019. Quantitative data was analysed from 5029 counselling sessions undertaken across Vanuatu by VWC's national network of branches and rural committees against violence against women (CAVAWs) in 2015/2016. Qualitative data included 54 case studies on the experiences of young women and girls collected from July 2016 to May 2019. This was drawn from a total database of 121 case studies on clients of all ages documented over the same period by VWC and branch counselling staff as part of their regular monitoring and evaluation processes.

Data analysis draws on documentation in VWC's annual progress and project completion reports, which describe specific outcomes due to VWC activities during 2015/2016 and the period leading up to it. A participatory data analysis workshop was held with 12 VWC staff, in addition to several meetings between researchers and key staff to ensure that findings were accurately interpreted.

Access to VWC Network services by young women and girls

There is **strong evidence that VWC is effective at reaching out to young women aged 18-29.**

- More than half of the total counselling sessions (51%) were with young women and girls, including 46% with young women, and 5% with girls under 18 years.
- Less than half of total counselling sessions (49%) were with women aged 30 and over.

Age is a key factor that determines why women and girls come to seek help from the VWC Network in the first place (new clients), and how likely they are to follow up with further counselling (repeat counselling sessions):

- Overall, half of the new clients seen nationally were young women aged 18 to 29 (50%), 5% were girls, and 45% were women over 30.
- Girls under 18 mainly seek help with child sexual and physical abuse, which makes up over 80% of counselling with this age group: 31.6% of counselling sessions with girls are for child physical abuse, and 48.6% are for child sexual abuse. In addition, 6% of all counselling sessions with girls are to seek help with domestic violence in their own intimate relationships (as distinct from rape

and child sexual assault), and to make claims for child maintenance for children born before they turn 18 (4% of all counselling sessions with girls).

- 71% of new young women clients aged 18-29 come for help with domestic violence, compared with 81% of new clients over 30. Most of the remainder of new young women clients and those over 30 are seeking with help with child maintenance. Very few women of any age sought help for rape or incest (2% of young women and 1% of those over 30).
- Both younger and older women return frequently for follow-up counselling to have child maintenance claims dealt with, mainly due to delays in court processing, as well as new claims of child maintenance by women who are now separated from their de facto partners.
- Overall, young women under 30 are less likely than older women to follow up with further counselling to address domestic violence and other related issues. There are several possible reasons for this, which are explored in detail in chapter 5.

One factor that contributes to the high proportion of young women in VWC's national caseload is the higher prevalence of intimate partner violence in younger age groups (see chapter 3). Another is the positive impact of several milestones achieved in VWC's prevention work between 2009 and 2015, which contributed to a gradual shift in community attitudes to the problem. Two key milestones were VWC's 2009 national research on the prevalence of violence against women, and VWC's efforts to implement the Family Protection Act (FPA) after it was passed by Parliament in late 2008.

Both milestones built on the prevention work that had been done over many years by VWC; they enabled VWC to successfully advocate with communities and their local leaders, law and justice sector staff and other stakeholders to engage in a range of community awareness/prevention and training activities. For example:

- There was an increased demand for information from VWC, with more than 10,700 people approaching VWC and the branches to learn more about violence against women and associated issues from 2012 to 2016; this compares with 6,981 in the previous 4 years, an increase of 55%. In addition, 417 law and justice sector staff were trained from 2012 to 2016.
- Older women, parents, chiefs and male advocates (trained by VWC) were more likely to encourage younger women to seek counselling or directly assisting them to do so.
- The findings of the prevalence study also resulted in increased targeting of young women by the VWC Network.

VWC's experience indicates that public statements and actions by key male leaders can assist with challenging and changing prevailing norms, particularly where consistent messages on women's and girls' rights are portrayed by a range of leaders in a community, and repeated. Impact is increased when these statements are reinforced by actions, such as referrals by police to the VWC Network for counselling, prosecutions by law and justice sector agencies, successful claims for child maintenance, and assertive action by police to protect women and girls living with violence. All these actions increased prior to 2015/2016 due to long-term advocacy and awareness-raising by VWC.

The findings do not point to any one specific outreach or prevention strategy as being more effective than others. Rather, it is **the combination of strategies in an integrated and comprehensive program of prevention and response – sustained over a period of time, and at multiple levels (individual, family, community, societal) – that has prompted more young women to access VWC Network services.**

The nature of violence experienced by young women and girls

Many of the case studies document extreme forms of sexual violence, as well as confronting physical and emotional abuse and coercive control (including over young women's movements, use of phones, and ability to see family and friends).

Several trends and themes emerged which reinforced findings from the quantitative database, and which staff indicated were representative of and common in the national caseload:

- The length of time that young women and girls are enduring violence varies widely, but **more than 1 in 4 (28%) endured the violence for over 5 years before being able to seek help.**
- **The largest group of sexual assault offences against girls (39%) occurred when children under 18 were living in informal adoptive families** away from their birth parents.
- Case studies showed that **patterns of violence, abuse and infidelity by husbands and partners develop very early in relationships.**
 - Desertion after the first pregnancy or the birth of the first child emerged as a theme, including in custom/arranged marriages.
- Case studies document the **severe physical and mental health impacts** faced by women and girls due to violence by husbands and partners.
 - Young women either attempted or contemplated suicide in 11% of the case studies.
 - 15% documented impacts on the children of young women living with male violence.

Positive evidence of VWC's impact

There is strong evidence that the combined impact of VWC Network community outreach, counselling and advocacy work – a comprehensive and integrated approach – **is preventing further violence** and assisting young women and girls to access justice (secondary prevention):

- **74% of the case studies document a positive outcome from the assistance provided by the VWC Network.** Examples of counselling outcomes include empowering young women with the confidence to take some action – such as legal action including taking out a Family Protection Order; separating from her partner, or working within the relationship to try to stop the violence.
- 37% of case studies demonstrated a **positive response by the police and justice system**, due to VWC's advocacy and/or training – including timely and diligent responses to arrest and investigate crimes of violence, the removal of offenders in child sexual abuse cases, and providing assistance to women to recover children from partners and remove her belongings, among several others.
- There was some evidence of young women either **returning to work following counselling, or setting up new small businesses** (22% of case studies on young women).
- For cases of sexual assault against girls, there was some evidence that positive action taken by VWC to protect girls and help them to deal with the trauma had **influenced male leaders to allow the VWC Network** to follow up by entering their communities for the first time **to conduct awareness/prevention activities.**
- There were a few examples of **young women clients** – whose lives have changed following counselling and support from the VWC Network – **becoming effective advocates against violence**, and assisting relatives and neighbours to seek help.

There is strong evidence that VWC's community awareness and education outreach is effective, with a positive impact on referrals and access to services by young women and girls:

- **In two-thirds (63%) of the case studies, the client either sought help directly from VWC** following a VWC community awareness/prevention activity or was referred by someone else who attended, or she was referred by a person trained by VWC to assist women and girls living with violence (such as a chief, male advocate or police officer) who then made a referral to VWC, a provincial branch or a CAVAW.

Conclusion and recommendations

VWC's 2009 baseline prevalence study found that places where VWC had been most active since its establishment had lower rates of physical and sexual violence by husbands and partners than places where VWC had been less active, and these differences were statistically significant (section 5.1.4). Although the current research does not investigate primary prevention, the findings show that VWC's comprehensive, integrated and multi-stakeholder approach is effective at responding to violence against young women, and at reducing further violence (secondary prevention).

Each of the recommendations below emerged as a priority from the findings of the current research. However, several are similar to those made in VWC's landmark prevalence study report published in 2011, and in a 2016 review by UN Women on *Women's and Children's Access to the Formal Justice System in Vanuatu*. Although much good progress has been made by a range of national and local stakeholders, many are still relevant and require further effort to speed up progress towards eliminating violence against women and girls in Vanuatu.

Prevention and response programs

- 1. All community awareness/prevention, education, training and response programs to address violence against women and girls, by all stakeholders, must be explicitly based on a human rights and gender equality approach, and firmly grounded in the evidence base of what works to prevent and respond to gender based violence.*
- 2. All initiatives and organisations which aim to raise awareness or conduct community education and training to prevent violence against young women and girls, including those which carry out research, must ensure that there are clear referral protocols in place for young women, adult women and girls and boys who seek help during each prevention activity.*
 - Victims/survivors should be referred to the national VWC Network, rather than to people or agencies who are not specifically trained to provide counselling and assistance on violence against women, and who are not receiving ongoing counsellor supervision.*
- 3. Youth training and other programs specifically targeting young women and men should include a focus on women's and girls' human rights and gender equality, sexual harassment, evidence of the high prevalence of violence against young women and girls in Vanuatu, its key features, and its devastating consequences for victims/survivors, their families, communities and the nation as a whole.*
- 4. Training to recognise signs of violence against girls and young women and to respond appropriately should be provided at all levels of the education system, with referral protocols in place, including refresher training as needed for both new and longer-term staff.*
 - This should include: Ministry of Education officials; Provincial Education Offices; principals and teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors; parents and teachers associations; and school counsellors.*
 - Training to recognise the signs in children (boys and girls) and youth who are impacted by violence against women at home should also be provided, with appropriate referral protocols in place.*
- 5. Male and female students must also have age-appropriate regular opportunities to learn about gender equality, human rights and violence against women and children, including the services that exist to help victims/survivors and their support networks.*

Strengthening the legal and policy framework and access to justice

- 6. The Vanuatu Police Force should, as a matter of urgency and in consultation with the VWC, review the practice of roundtables in cases of violence against women of all ages.*

- This is essential to ensure that the Vanuatu Police Force 2015 Family Violence Policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are applied consistently in every case.
 - Clear directions need to be given to all police officers that the Police Act does not override the provisions of the FPA and the SOPs.
7. The Vanuatu Government should consider instructing the Law Reform Commission to undertake an urgent review of all aspects of marriage and family law matters, in order to develop a comprehensive family law that takes into account the prevalence, severity and impacts of violence against women and children. Different types of family situations should be considered as part of this review, including:
- The current difficulties faced by women in de facto relationships with accessing child maintenance and in ensuring that these orders are enforced.
 - The current difficulties faced by married women who claim for family maintenance and who are separated from their husbands, as the husband has to be prosecuted first under the Maintenance of Family Act. This is a lengthy process for women, who must report to the police, and await investigation and prosecution, rather than being considered as an outright civil claim.
 - All other matters pertaining to marriage and family law, including relating to formal and informal adoption.
8. The Vanuatu Government should consider introducing a national policy and law on sexual harassment, including workplace provisions.

Further research on violence against woman and girls in Vanuatu

9. Donors should consider funding VWC, in collaboration with VNSO, to undertake a follow-up study on the prevalence of violence against women by 2024, using the WHO methodology that was adapted for the baseline Vanuatu study undertaken in 2009.
10. Further research is also needed on the findings of this research regarding the high proportion of child sexual abuse cases occurring in adoptive families, and the implications of this finding for Vanuatu's child protection provisions. This should ideally be explored in future national prevalence studies.
11. Consideration should also be given to undertaking research on the prevalence of sexual harassment by age, and its impacts on young women and girls.



VWC staff and volunteers with Independence Day 40th anniversary banner

2. The Vanuatu Women's Centre

The Vanuatu Women's Centre Network

The Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) is an independent women's rights and civil society organisation based in Port Vila, established in 1992. VWC's goal is to eliminate violence against women and children throughout Vanuatu. To achieve this long-term vision, VWC has a national program to *prevent* violence before it occurs, and to assist women and children living with this problem now. This is done through the national VWC Network including:

- the main centre of VWC in Port Vila;
- 5 Provincial Branches – Sanma Counselling Centre (SCC) established in 1995, Tafea Counselling Centre (TCC) established in 2001, Torba Counselling Centre (TOCC) established in 2011, Malampa Counselling Centre (MCC) established in 2015, and the Penama Counselling Centre (PECC) established in 2017;
- a rural volunteer network of 39 Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs) which undertake local community awareness activities to prevent violence, and assist women and children living in remote communities to end the violence in their lives; and
- a national network of trained male advocates (also volunteers) who work closely with and are accountable to VWC, the Branches and CAVAWs, and who apply a women's human rights perspective to their day-to-day work within their organisations and communities.

VWC's national program

VWC's nation-wide program has several integrated components and strategies (see Annex 2 for a summary). The core strategy has always been to provide an effective and confidential crisis counselling service for women and children victims/survivors (Box 1). This aims to empower clients to make their own decisions about how to deal with the violence in their lives, and to claim their rights and access justice, including by providing individual legal advice and advocacy. This feminist strategy informs all other aspects of VWC's work to eliminate violence against women and children.

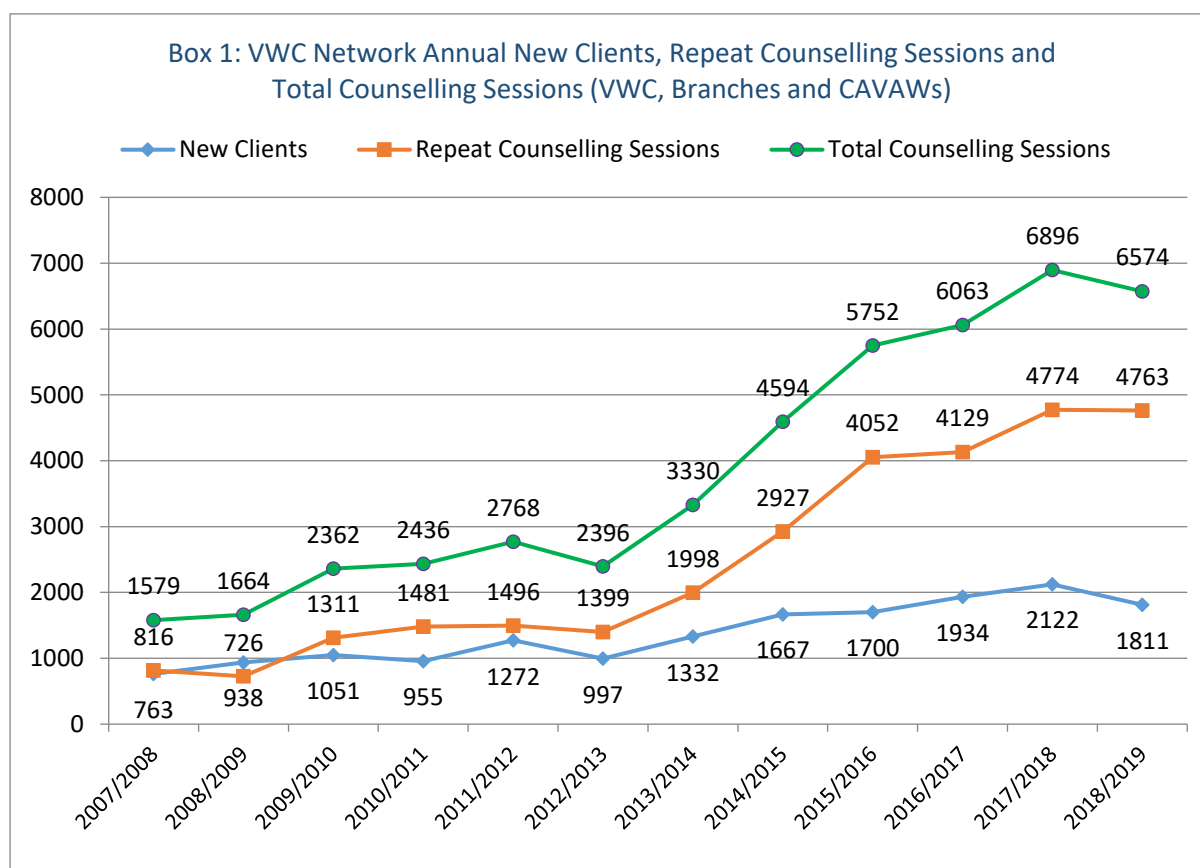
Since the outset, VWC has worked to prevent violence against women and children, including by raising community awareness that it is a crime and violation of human rights. VWC's prevention approach has focused on building understanding of the nature and impact of the violence, and the fact that it is caused by gender inequality. Legal advocacy for policy and legislative change is another important strand of VWC's long-term prevention work, as well as training other agencies to understand the causes and consequences of violence against women and children. These strategies aim to improve the responses of other agencies when they are called upon to support and respond to women and children living with violence, and to challenge and change the attitudes and behaviours that fuel gender inequality.

VWC's goal and vision is to eliminate violence against women and children throughout Vanuatu.

Violence against women is a crime and violation of human rights. VWC's national prevalence study concludes that it cannot be prevented unless "patterns of unequal power between women and men (gender inequality) are transformed ... most risk factors that increase women's likelihood of experiencing violence are related directly or indirectly to gender inequality in Vanuatu society".

(VWC and VNSO 2011: 14, 173-179.)

Training male advocates to reduce discrimination and promote equality between women and men, and between boys and girls, has been a feature of VWC’s approach for many years. Through the male advocacy program chiefs, police officers, church and other male leaders throughout the country undertake several week-long training sessions. These trainings and their ongoing contact with the VWC Network challenge them to change their behaviour at home, in their communities, and in their workplaces.



Sources: VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report” and VWC 2019 “Progress Report 4”. Note that 2018/2019 does not include CAVAW data; therefore the total number of counselling sessions is under-represented.

VWC’s research program

VWC’s first major research project was the national baseline study on prevalence, attitudes to and impacts of violence against women and girls in Vanuatu, undertaken in 2009 by VWC in partnership with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office.ⁱⁱ VWC internal data collection on client services and prevention initiatives dates from its establishment.

This study on violence against young women and girls draws on ongoing information collected from the monitoring, evaluation, research and learning component of VWC’s work. VWC has aspirations to conduct further national and local research to highlight the impact of violence on women and children, and to improve the effectiveness of strategies to eliminate this damaging practice.

VWC’s partners

VWC’s strategy for eliminating violence against women and children has always been focused on working in partnership with other local and national organisations, particularly those with strong links to rural and remote areas and urban settlements. VWC has forged effective partnerships over many years with Provincial Government/Area Councils and a range of community leaders, including Chiefs/Councils of Chiefs, Provincial and local Councils of Women, youth leaders and organisations,

and other community leaders. Working in collaboration with national government bodies including law and justice sector agencies, the health sector, and faith-based organisations have been a very important part of VWC’s advocacy and prevention work. In the future, VWC hopes to consolidate its work with youth and education sector agencies.

**Vanuatu National Survey
ON Women's Lives AND
Family Relationships**

**VANUATU WOMEN'S CENTRE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE VANUATU NATIONAL STATISTICS
OFFICE**

MAY 2011

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**YUMI wandem wan hapi
laef, yumi mas STOPEM
Domestik Vaelens!**

Australian Aid **UN WOMEN**

*Sipos yumi wantem kasem wan kwaet mo hapi laef,
yumi mas stopem vaelens*

VWC's report from the 2009 survey shows the national prevalence of violence against women and girls in Vanuatu. Its findings include: the prevalence by province, the impacts on women's physical, mental and reproductive health and their financial autonomy, the consequences for children, women's coping strategies, and triggers, risk factors, and factors that help to protect women from gender-based violence

Cover of the VWC brochure

RISPEKTEM OL WOMAN MO OL PIKININI

"Respect women and children" – VWC campaign T-shirt

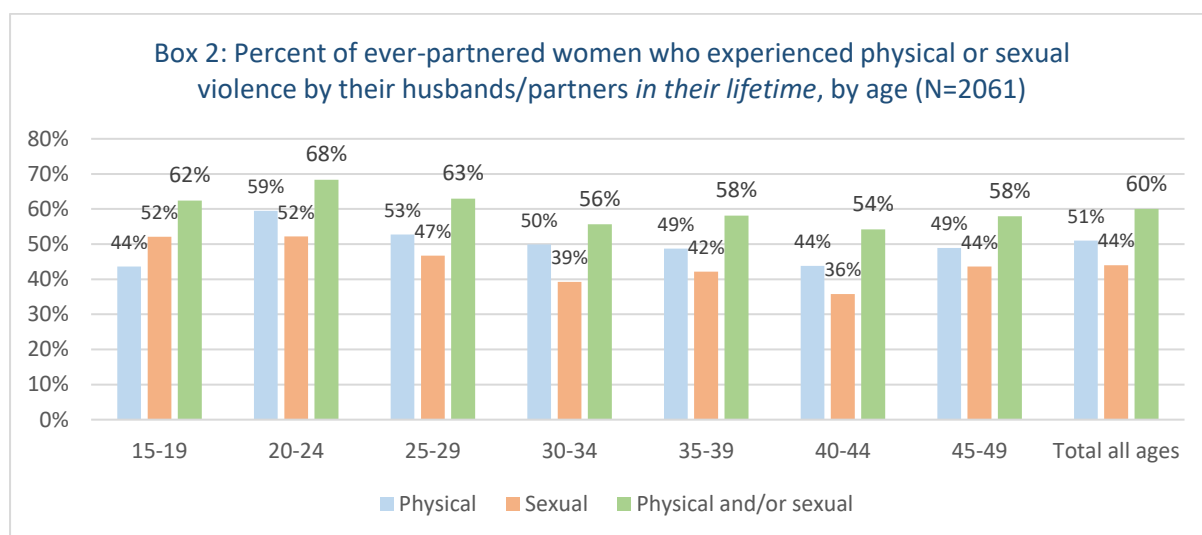
3. Why focus on young women and girls?

National prevalence of violence against women and girls

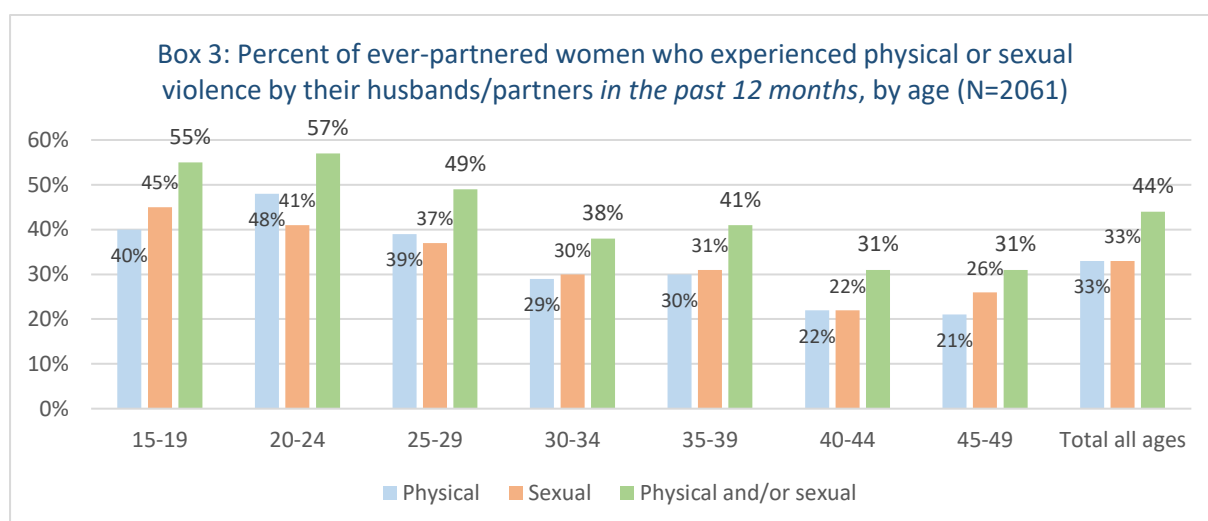
Since VWC's establishment, it has focused on violence against both women and children. National Children's Day has always been used by VWC as an entry point for raising awareness of the particular types of violence faced by girls and boys and its impacts. Nevertheless, for many years there was a persistent view held by some in the community that VWC's services were only appropriate or relevant to older women or married women with children ("mamas"), rather than younger women and girls who have not yet had children.

Almost every form of violence is more prevalent for young women.

VWC's 2009 national prevalence survey opened a door to women's lives, by challenging Vanuatu's view of itself as a nation that values and protects family and children.ⁱⁱⁱ One of the most important findings was that almost every form of violence is more prevalent among young women (Box 2 and 3).



Source: VWC and VSNO 2011: 60. "Ever-partnered": women who have ever been in an intimate relationship with a husband or partner.




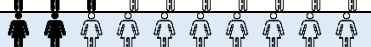





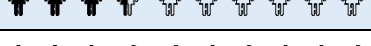
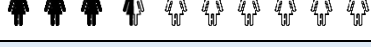




Source: VWC data files from 2009 baseline prevalence study.

Whereas 60% of all women in Vanuatu experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime by an intimate partner, women under 29 have the highest prevalence (Box 2). This is somewhat more marked in the previous 12 months before the survey, with 55%-57% of women under 29 living with violence, compared with 44% nationally (Box 3).

Similar patterns exist for emotional violence by husbands and partners, and for most of the various types of coercive control that husbands and intimate partners exert over women of all ages (Box 4).

Box 4: Emotional violence and coercive control over young women

Emotional violence against young women and girls in Vanuatu by husbands and partners	
Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself (7 in 10 for women aged 20-24, more than half for girls aged 15-19)	
Scared or intimidated her on purpose (more than 3 in 10)	
Belittled or humiliated her in front of her parents/family (3 in 10)	
Belittled or humiliated her in front of other people (3 in 10)	
Threatened to hurt her or someone she cares about (2 in 10)	
Coercive control of young women in Vanuatu by husbands and partners	
Insists on knowing where she is at all times (6 in 10 for women aged 20-24, more than half of women aged 25-29 and girls aged 15-19)	
Expects his permission before she does anything (5 in 10)	
Prevents her from seeing her friends (4 in 10 for girls and women under 24, and 3 in 10 for women aged 25-29)	
Expects his permission before she gets health care (4 in 10)	
Gets angry if she speaks with another man (3 in 10 for women aged 25-29 and 4 in 10 for women and girls aged 15-24)	
Often suspects that she is unfaithful (3 in 10 for young women, and almost 4 in 10 for girls aged 15-19)	
Ignores her or treats her indifferently (2 in 10 for young women and higher for girls)	
Restricts her contact with her family (more than 1 in 10 for girls and young women aged 15-24)	

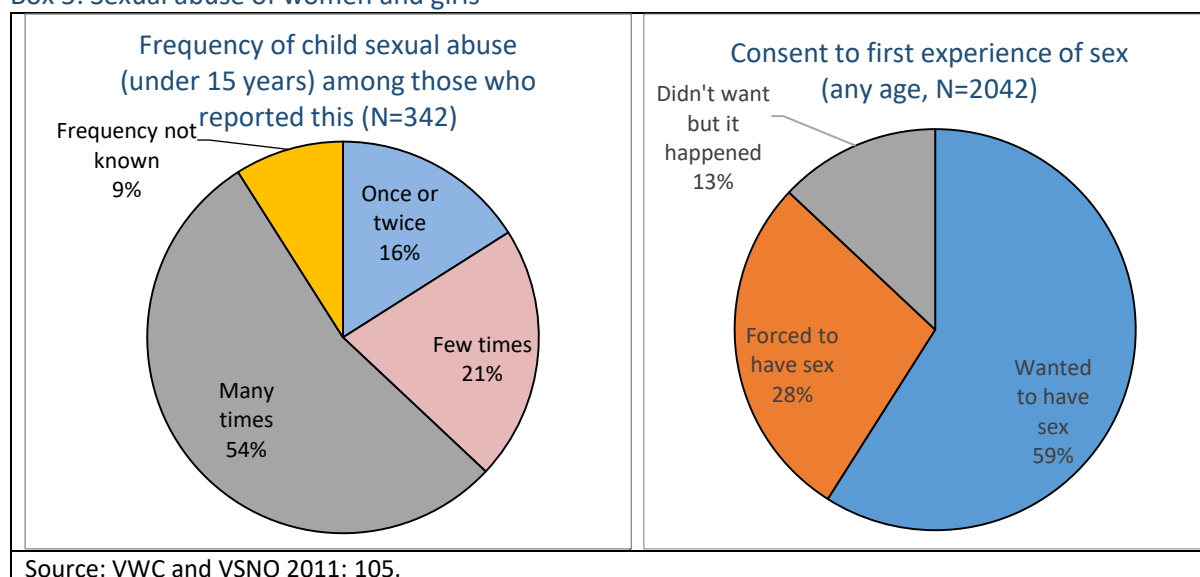
Source: VWC and VSNO 2011: 66-73.

Overall, 68% of women in Vanuatu are emotionally abused by their husbands and intimate partners during their lifetime, and 54% in the previous 12 months before the survey was undertaken. Emotional violence starts early in relationships – young women aged 20 to 29 have a high prevalence of each type of emotional violence and most types of coercive control, and many of these forms of abuse and control persist throughout a woman’s life.

(VWC and VNSO 2011: 68-73.)

VWC’s national research also showed that the prevalence of sexual abuse against girls under the age of 15 is one of the highest in the world. Almost 1 in 3 of the women who did the survey were sexually abused before the age of 15 years (30%), and the majority of perpetrators were male family members and boyfriends. For 28% of women, their first sexual experience is forced.^{iv} Overall, more than 1 in 4 women (28%) are physically abused by someone other than their husband or partner – and again, the prevalence rates are higher for girls aged 15-19 (37%) and young women aged 20-24 (32%).^v

Box 5: Sexual abuse of women and girls



All these findings are particularly disturbing because VWC's national survey also showed that non-partner physical violence and child sexual abuse are both significant risk factors that increase the likelihood that women will be subjected to violence by their husbands and partners later in life.^{vi}

1 in 3 women are sexually abused before 15 years of age, mainly by male family members and boyfriends.

(VWC and VNSO 2011: 100-103.)

National data from Vanuatu Correctional Services on sexual offences against young women and girls^{vii}

A study by the Vanuatu Department of Correctional Services found that sexual offenders made up approximately 60% of all offenders dealt with by the department in 2016. Most of the victims of these crimes were very young: 52% were under 15 years, and 31% were aged between 16 and 20. All but one of the victims were female, and the one male victim was a 12-year old boy. Ages of the victims ranged from 3 years old to a 69-year old blind woman.

83% of victims of sexual offences are young women and girls under 20 years old. In contrast, about 20% of offenders are under 20.

In contrast with the age profile for victims, approximately 20% of offenders were under 20 years old, and only 3% were under 15. The age of offenders ranged from 11 to 72, and 59% were over 26 when they committed their sexual offence.

"Offenders included fathers, uncles, grandfathers, husbands/boyfriends, youth group leaders, village chiefs, pastors and village acquaintances."

Sadly, 90% of the victims knew their offenders, and 61% were in the same family and living in the same household as their offender. The most common offences were for rape/sexual intercourse without consent (73%); the remainder were for sexual intercourse with a child under protection (8%), indecent assault of a young person under 13 (9%), and incest (8%).

With this profile of offenders, it is not surprising that the study found that the majority of offences occurred in people's homes and villages; 61% occurred in rural areas, 12% of offenders were reported to have a leadership role in their churches, and 9% were repeat sex offenders. Offenders came from a wide range of employment and education backgrounds. Of the 120 offences committed, there were 9 gang rapes, and most of the male offenders in gang rapes were under 26. The exception to this pattern was 2 cases where women were also convicted of sexual assault; in both instances, the offence was committed with their husbands against vulnerable or dependent family members.

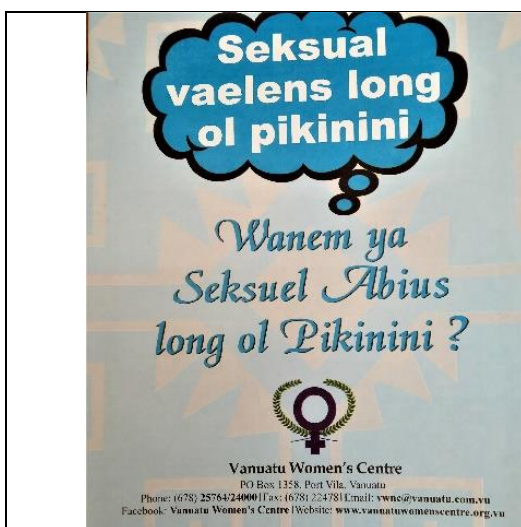
In 88% of the offences, no record of drugs or alcohol were reported as contributing factors. However, the high proportion of cases where additional violence was used is alarming, although not surprising

In 9% of the offences, children were bribed to comply with the assaults.

Other violence was used during attacks including being punched and hit with fists or rocks, strangled or suffocated, cut with knives, dragged and tied up, and held down while raped by other offenders.

to VWC, where women share many stories every day of sexual attacks being accompanied by either extreme physical violence, or threats: additional violence was used in 55% of offences, and threats were made in a further 22% of cases.

The Department's report notes that it was difficult for the study to find information about the impact of sexual offences on victims. However, some important findings were listed that resonate very strongly with VWC's counselling experience, and with findings from the VWC national prevalence survey. For example, the Department's report notes that the victim and sometimes her mother needed to move from the village home to another island, children were unable to concentrate and continue with their schooling, and that women found it difficult to continue to work following such assaults. A range of reproductive, physical and other mental health impacts were also mentioned, along with a tendency for women and girls to be re-victimised when offenders returned to the family home on parole.



*"What is sexual abuse against children?"
The cover of VWC's community education booklet on child sexual abuse.*

This is one of a series of 4 information booklets in Bislama. The others focus on rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Each describes:

- *the type of violence and its forms,*
- *who are the victims/survivors and who are the offenders,*
- *why the violence is often not reported,*
- *challenges and common myths about the causes and consequences, and*
- *what we can do about the problem.*

4. Methodology

4.1 Aims of the research

The original aim of this research was to establish a baseline of the number of young women and girls who access VWC's counselling service in Port Vila, to assess how well VWC's outreach is extending to this high priority group. To this end, July 2015 - June 2016 was chosen as the year of study, so that a comparison could be made with a future year.^{viii}

However, as the research proceeded, it was clear that **an accurate "baseline" would be very much earlier in VWC's history.** While VWC has always focused on women and girls of all ages, the findings from the national prevalence survey in 2009 prompted VWC to immediately redouble its efforts to reach out to both young women and men.

VWC's focus on outreach to young people was further intensified following an internal review of strategies. This was incorporated into VWC's 5-year program design commencing in July 2016. The aim was to increase the targeting of youth nationally in VWC's efforts to prevent violence before it occurs, and to respond to violence by reducing the likelihood of repeated incidents involving young women and girls (primary and secondary prevention).^{ix}

Following a pilot study of VWC's Port Vila database, the scope of this research was extended to include **quantitative data from all Branches that were operating during 2015/2016**, to provide national insights.

The scope was also expanded to review qualitative data collected from 2016 to 2019, to assist with analysis of quantitative data by providing insight into the daily lives of young women and girls living with violence. The age of clients was available from July 2016 in the qualitative database collected through VWC's ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning work.

Primary prevention aims to prevent violence before it occurs by:
- addressing the cause of violence (gender inequality), and
- enhancing the factors that protect women from violence.

Secondary prevention includes responding to violence, early intervention with individuals at high risk, and preventing further violence.

Box 6: Research questions

The research process aimed to answer the following key research questions:

1. What proportion of VWC Network clients are young women and girls?
2. What types of issues are young women and girls seeking help with from the VWC Network?
3. What have we learned about the experiences of young women and girls?
4. What have we learned about how young women and girls come to know about VWC's services, and what prevents them from seeking help?

4.2 Data collection and analysis process

4.2.1 Quantitative database

VWC has collected quantitative weekly and monthly data on services provided to clients since its establishment. These data are collated annually and disaggregated by the following categories:

- new cases and repeat counselling sessions;

- location – VWC, branches and CAVAWs;
- sex and age – adult women, and girls and boys under 18 years;
- the delivery mode of counselling – centre-based, phone, and mobile counselling in urban settlements, rural areas and outer islands; and
- the type of violence/issue that clients are seeking help with – domestic violence (DV), child maintenance (CM), family maintenance (FM), child abuse (CA, further disaggregated by physical and sexual abuse), rape, sexual harassment (SH), incest, and others; and
- clients living with disabilities – VWC began trialling how to record this in 2015/2016, but this data was not systematically collected until July 2016, and consequently has not been recorded in the database for this study.

Client files record the date of birth of each new client, and their current age is recorded on weekly sheets for both new clients and repeat counselling sessions. A separate weekly data sheet is compiled by each Counsellor, and collated into monthly process reports by Branch Project Officers and the VWC Counsellor Supervisor/Manager. This data is checked and collated by the VWC Research Officer, and compiled 6-monthly into progress reports to the funding agency. At the end of each funding phase, data is collated into an Activity Completion Report, which provides a summary of clients seen nationally. However, due to the large quantity of disaggregated data collected and collated, age breakdowns (other than adult and child) are not collated on monthly data collection forms, and therefore not included in 6-monthly progress or Activity Completion reports.

For this research project, quantitative data was extracted on the age of clients from the VWC and branch counsellor weekly sheets for the twelve months from July 2015 through to June 2016. VWC's definition of a child is a boy or girl under 18 years. For the purposes of this research, young women are defined as those aged 18 to 29. The data included in Annex 1 is disaggregated as follows:

- Girls under 18 years
- Young women aged 18 to 24
- Young women aged 25 to 29
- Women over 30 years

VWC also provides counselling to boys under 18, but for the purposes of this research, data has only been extracted on girls (0-17 years).^x Age breakdowns for young women (18-24, and 25-29) were selected because they facilitate comparison with VWC's national prevalence research (see section 3).

Definitions used in this research:

- *child – under 18 years*
 - *young woman – aged between 18 and 29*
-

Quantitative data for this research was extracted from VWC in Port Vila and the branches. Although CAVAWs are trained to record disaggregated data for counselling on all the indicators listed above, the capacity to collect, store and accurately report disaggregated data on age varies considerably in remote areas of Vanuatu. Consequently, CAVAW data was not included in this study. Nor was data from PECC, since the Penama branch was established in January 2017.

The total database for this research was 5029 counselling sessions, including 4782 with women and 247 with girls under 18 (Box 7); this includes new clients and follow-up counselling sessions. During the data collection process, it was found that age was not recorded on weekly sheets for 495 counselling sessions with women and girls (9% of the total counselling sessions undertaken). A systematic process was used to search for this missing age data, including by asking the counsellors concerned to check the client files and update the weekly sheets as needed. This process significantly reduced the number of counselling sessions where age data was missing to 285 (5% of the total sample). It also showed that there were 28 more girls under 18 who participated in counselling

sessions than was originally recorded in the Activity Completion Report (Box 7); these girls were incorrectly recorded as young women over 18 (the most likely reason for this is because they already had children).

Box 7: Database of total counselling sessions by location, July 2015 – June 2016

VWC Centre / Branch	Total number of counselling sessions recorded in the Activity Completion Report*			Total database for this research (total number of counselling sessions)#		
	Girls (0-17)	Women (over 18)	Total women and girls	Girls (0-17)	Women (over 18)	Total women and girls
VWC	94	2490	2584	135	2366	2501
SCC	43	1227	1270	56	1269	1325
TCC	15	339	354	14	348	362
TOCC	23	399	422	20	376	396
MCC	44	640	684	22	423	445
TOTAL	219	5095	5314	247	4782	5029

*VWC Activity Completion Report, July 2012-June 2016 page 79-95 shows 5356 total counselling sessions for the year; 42 of these were boys, leaving a total of 5314 sessions with women (5095) and girls (219). PECC is not included in the quantitative database for this research because it was established in January 2017.

See Box 9 for a breakdown by age of the quantitative databased used in this research.

4.2.2 Qualitative database

The case studies included in the qualitative database were not identified or collected specifically for this research. Like the quantitative data described above, they are drawn from VWC’s internal monitoring and evaluation database.

The qualitative database includes all case studies related to young women and girls documented by VWC and Branch staff from July 2016 through to May 2019.

VWC’s monitoring and evaluation plan includes several qualitative indicators designed to assist with monitoring progress towards behavioural changes, including the short-term, medium term and long-term outcomes identified in VWC’s pathways of change for key target groups.^{xi} These include the documentation of case study evidence on the following, among others:^{xii}

- significant changes in clients’ lives;
- women’s experiences with the Family Protection Act (FPA), including access to Family Protection Orders under the FPA; and
- outcomes from court cases related to interventions by the VWC Network.

Case studies are documented monthly by some VWC staff and Branch Project Officers, drawing on the total counselling caseload of the previous month, and submitted with monthly reports. Although the selection is not random, staff have been trained and mentored to select cases according to several criteria and guidelines outlined in VWC’s monitoring and evaluation plan.

At least one case study per month is required by most staff on the monitoring and evaluation team, although some submit more, and others may write up case studies during or immediately after 6-monthly reflection workshops to document examples of important trends in positive changes and challenges that have emerged over the reporting period, and that have been highlighted and discussed extensively during the workshop. The reflection workshops are also used to explore and verify whether examples documented in the previous 6 months are isolated examples, or whether they are indicative of broader provincial and national trends that require discussion, analysis, verification and action.

In summary, while case studies in all the categories above are written to assist with analysing positive outcomes on VWC’s pathways of change, writers have been trained to ensure they also select negative and unexpected outcomes. Challenges to achieving change, breakthroughs in dealing with ever-present obstacles, and the effectiveness of strategies are also explicit criteria for selection and documentation.

For example, for case studies on significant changes in clients’ lives, the guidelines instruct writers to document small steps taken by clients which may not seem to be significant to an outsider (or which may even be interpreted by some as negative), but which are seen as positive and significant by the women themselves, including why they are perceived in this way by survivors. The guidelines include prompts to: document the challenges that clients and Counsellors face in bringing about sustained change; identify how (and whether or not) VWC’s counselling, legal advocacy and community education/prevention strategies have assisted to bring about any change; and give equal weight to documenting case studies that demonstrate when clients have been able to step out of violent situations, as well as where they have not been able to do so. A similar set of criteria and guidelines are used for the case studies documenting women’s experiences with the FPA and legal outcomes.

Age of the client or victim/survivor has never been a specific criteria for the documentation of case studies. Nevertheless, a significant proportion (45%) of case studies documented focus on young women and girls. The qualitative database used for this research includes all case studies related to young women and girls from across the country, written up by VWC and Branch staff from July 2016 through to May 2019 (Box 8). Most of the case studies were written in order to document evidence on significant changes in clients’ lives, and their experiences with the provisions of the FPA; a few related to outcomes from court cases.

Box 8: Database of case studies on young women and girls by location, July 2016 – May 2019

VWC *	SCC ^	TCC	TOCC *	MCC	PECC	Total cases studies on young women and girls	Total case studies in qualitative database	% of total case studies on young women and girls
17	12	5	12	2	6	54	121	45%

Source: VWC internal database of case studies on significant changes in clients’ lives, experiences with the FPA and outcomes from court cases.

* Includes 5 case studies where young women were referred by CAVAWs (3 for TOCC and 2 for VWC).

^ Includes 2 case studies where clients were young women with disabilities.

4.2.3 Data analysis processes

A one-day data analysis workshop was held with 12 VWC staff in March 2019. This included senior counselling, legal, research, community education, management and other staff at VWC, as well as Branch Project Officers. Following a refresher on the methodology for the research, preliminary findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data were presented, and the strengths and limitations of the research (section 4.3) were discussed. Each research question was discussed in detail (Box 5 above). The analysis, interpretation and conclusions presented in sections 5 and 6 below is based on the reflections and discussions in the workshop. Follow-up meetings were also held with groups of key staff after the workshop to clarify points of interpretation and to ensure that valid conclusions were drawn from all data sources.

Each research question had several sub-questions for discussion in the March data analysis workshop. For the quantitative findings, these questions were designed to explore variations in the data by location, age group (girls under 18, and young women aged 18-24 and 25-29), type of presenting problem, and new clients compared with repeat counselling sessions; any surprises and trends in the quantitative findings were explored.

For the qualitative findings, additional sub-questions focused on 3 key topics for interpretation:

- whether the case studies provided accurate insights into the extent to which the needs of young women and girls are being adequately met by VWC Network services, or other service-providers, and whether any reliable conclusions could be drawn on these topics and on the impact of counselling approaches;
- whether we could draw any reliable conclusions about the impact of VWC's community awareness and prevention activities in reaching out to young women; and
- whether the case studies overall are broadly representative of the severity of the various forms of violence experienced by young women and girls, or whether they tended to describe only a small proportion of the most severe types of cases seen during counselling.

The third question on the severity of violence was very important to ask, because when collated and compared over the 3 years, it was apparent that many case studies documented extreme types of physical, sexual and emotional violence and forms of coercive control, which by any accepted definition amount to torture – and because the severity of violence has never been a criteria for the selection of case studies. The firm conclusion of all staff at the workshop was that the database was typical and representative of the severity of cases seen weekly throughout the country by VWC Network staff.

In addition to the 4 key research questions, the last session of the workshop focused on the following:

- Overall, do the findings challenge or confirm any assumptions that VWC (or others) have had about the extent to which the VWC Network is assisting young women and girls?
- Are there any surprises, or other analysis needed about the types of violence experienced by young women and girls, the issues they are facing, how they are being supported, and their views about violence against women and girls? (This question was added to assist with identifying and prioritising future research by VWC.)
- Are there any types of violence experienced by girls and young women that are not captured adequately in the research data, or where young women are not approaching VWC for help, such as violence related to social media, and particularly image-based violence?

The analysis in this report also draws on several internal VWC reports.^{xiii} These documented key activities, milestones, and both quantitative and qualitative evidence of outcomes and impacts in the four years prior to the 2015/2016. These were used to test and validate interpretations and analysis from the March 2019 workshop, to ensure that all were soundly based on and supported by previous documented evidence and reliable sources, and to avoid confirmation bias. Further validation of the analysis and draft report was undertaken in a workshop meeting with 4 Port Vila staff held in September 2019, in a review by VWC staff in April 2020, and again in July 2020 following peer review comments.

Themes in the qualitative database are aggregated and presented as percentages in the analysis in chapter 5, using the relevant denominator (either the total research database of 54 or an explicit subset such as the number of women or girls). Quantification of the findings from the case studies is used to ensure that the findings are transparent. This approach was chosen to facilitate accurate analysis and triangulation with interpretations made during the workshop, and the data documented in the internal reports noted above.

4.3 Strengths and limitations of the research method

The research has several strengths and limitations. One strength is the reliability of the quantitative data, which is based on careful review of counsellors' weekly data collection sheets, and cross-checking of the data where age was missing. The database includes all the delivery modes for counselling, including at centres, by phone and through mobile counselling in urban settlements, rural areas and outer islands.

Another strength is the one-day analysis workshop and the participatory process used to interpret and make sense of the findings. A third strength is that interpretations in the workshop were supplemented and validated by previously documented evidence in VWC internal reports to its funding agency, rather relying on memory, and by several further meetings between the author and key staff to ensure that findings were interpreted accurately.

One limitation of the research method is that no quantitative data has been used from CAVAWs (section 4.2.1), which means that it is not possible to know with any certainty whether girls and young women are accessing CAVAW counselling services to the same extent as the rest of the VWC Network. However, it is important to note that complex cases are referred by CAVAWs to VWC and the branches for counselling and follow-up actions, and 9% of the qualitative database includes such examples. Although CAVAWs are trained annually in basic counselling skills, many are only able to provide a referral service to VWC and the Branches, and their community awareness and prevention activities remains the most important part of their work. Consequently, this limitation is offset by the fact that these referred CAVAW cases are incorporated into VWC and branch quantitative data; the inclusion of branch data is a key strength of the research method which ensures that the data presented is national, including remote rural areas and islands from all provinces of Vanuatu.

Another limitation of the research is that only internal VWC Network data could be used due to financial constraints.^{xiv} Consequently, it was not possible to undertake interviews with young women's leaders or to hold focus group discussions prior to publication to explore their views.

The strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and participatory methods of enquiry and analysis have been well-documented. Some potential risks include: the lack of a large or representative sample; poor facilitation; and confirmation bias, including over-generalisation of findings and over-reliance on striking quotes or outliers which may exemplify exceptions rather than trends.^{xv} The qualitative database is assumed to be broadly representative of the national caseload, given the guidelines used for internal monitoring and evaluation purposes and the regular collection of case study material; this is reinforced by participatory discussion and enquiry during 6-monthly reflection workshops. Nevertheless, it is possible that positive outcomes are over-represented in the case studies in any one year, compared with the challenges faced in bringing about change. This risk has been addressed by drawing on the total database of case studies over 3 years, by supplementing the analysis with previously documented evidence in VWC internal reports, by quantifying the qualitative findings for transparency and to avoid confirmation bias, and by follow-up meetings with key staff to ensure that themes were interpreted accurately.

A final limitation is the fact that the quantitative data is only for one financial year, which constrains making firm conclusions about trends in access to services. However, although the qualitative database draws on a different time period, this is seen as a strength; combining the two data collection methods over different time periods provides insight into young women's experiences since 2015/2016, adds a richness to the data and analysis, and addresses several of the potential limitations discussed above.

5. Analysis of findings

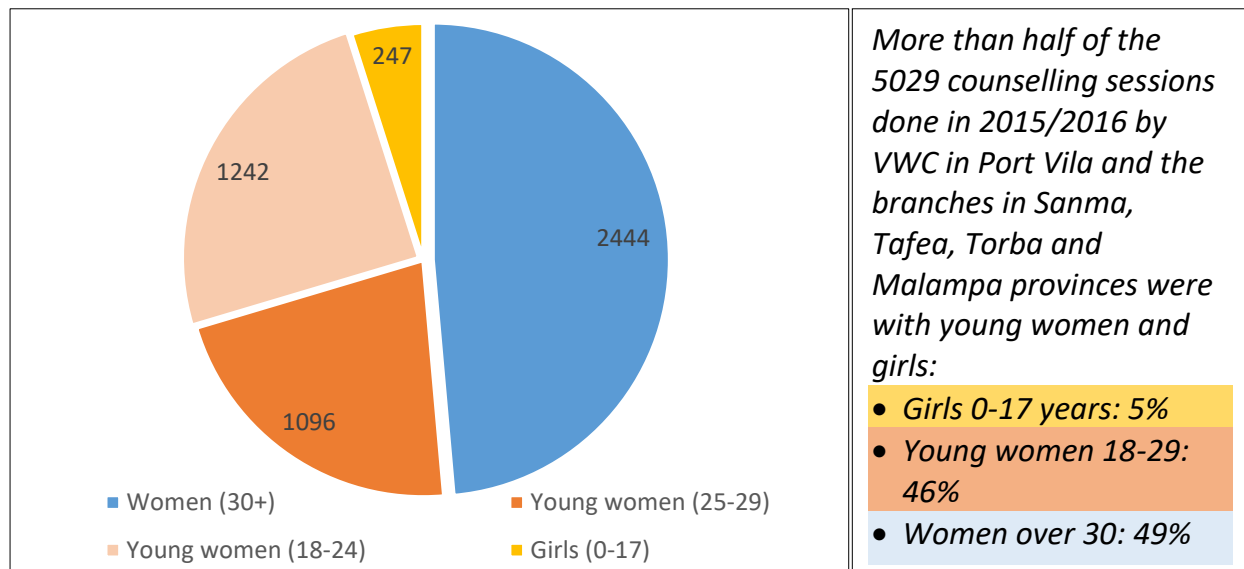
This chapter analyses findings according to the 4 key research questions (Box 5). Sections 5.1 and 5.2 focus on the quantitative database (attached at Annex 1). Findings from the qualitative database are presented and discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

5.1 What proportion of VWC Network clients are young women and girls?

5.1.1 Total counselling sessions by age and location

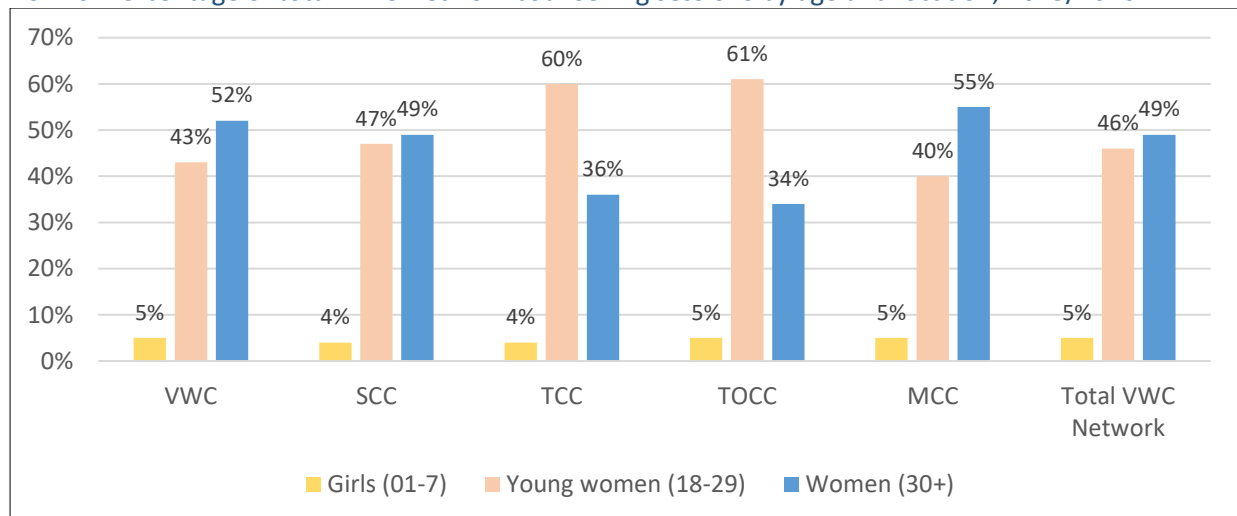
More than half of the counselling sessions provided by the VWC Network in 2015/2016 were with young women and girls. Of the 5029 counselling sessions done, 2585 were with young women and girls (51%), and 2444 were with women aged 30 and over (49%). Young women aged 18 to 29 made up 46% of all counselling sessions; of these 25% were aged 18 to 24, and 22% were aged 25 to 29. Girls made up 5% of all counselling sessions undertaken during the year (Box 9).

Box 9: Total number of VWC Network counselling sessions by age, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1.

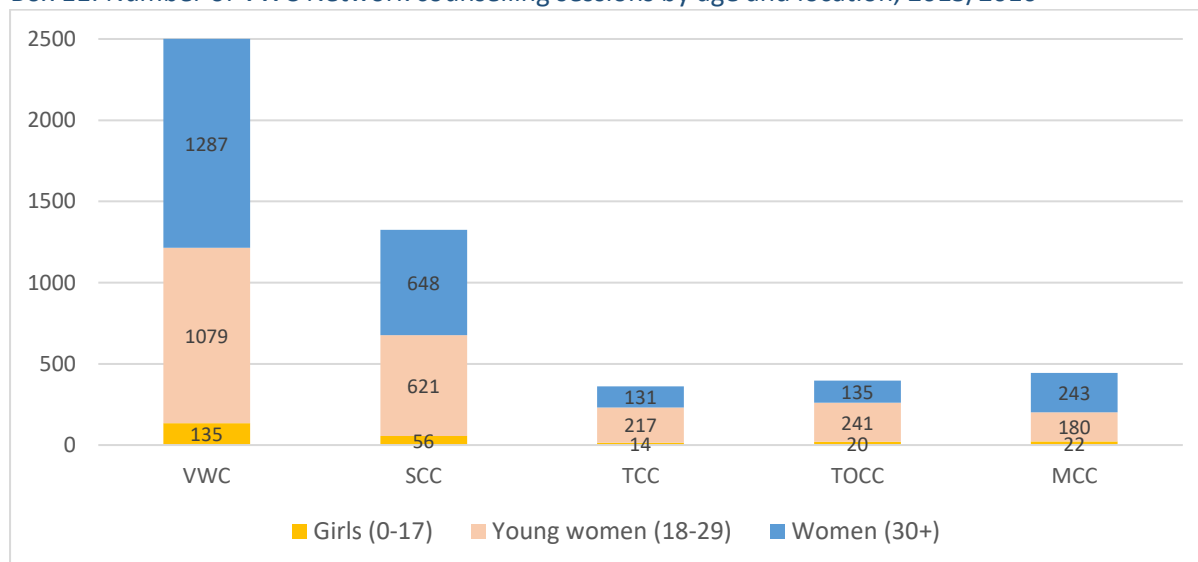
Box 10: Percentage of total VWC Network counselling sessions by age and location, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1.

The proportion of girls seen across the VWC Network varies very little, but some differences are seen in the proportion of young women between the centres (Box 10), with TCC and TOCC having the highest proportions of young women (60% and 61% respectively), and MCC and VWC having the lowest proportions (40% and 43%). However, VWC undertook half of all counselling sessions (2501 of the total of 5029), and 46% of the national total of counselling with young women (1079 of the 2338 counselling sessions, see Annex 1 Tables 1.3.1 and 6.3.1 and Box 11).

Box 11: Number of VWC Network counselling sessions by age and location, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1.

5.1.2 Breakdown of new clients and repeat counselling sessions by age and location

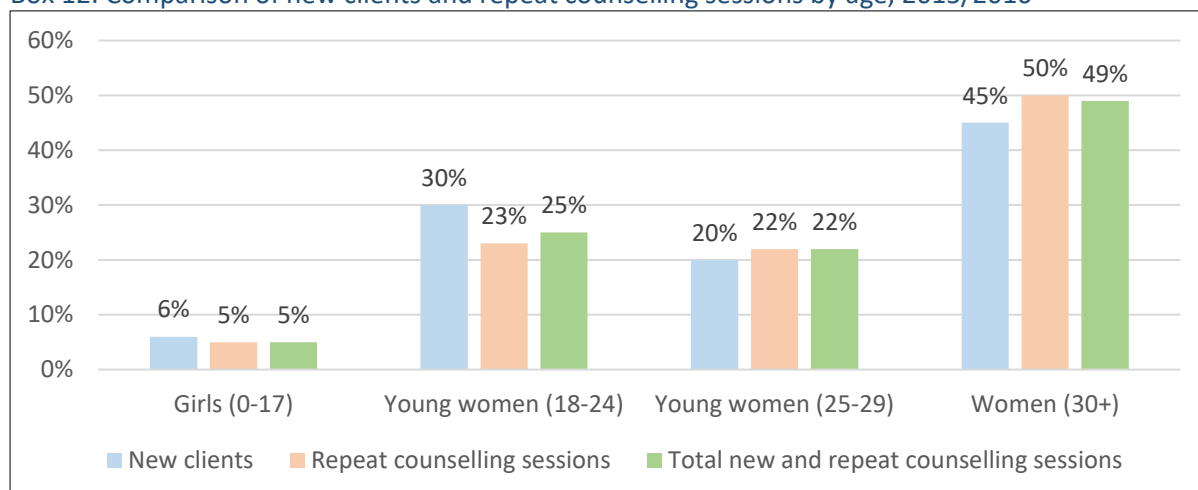
A new client is a victim/survivor who has sought help from the VWC Network for the very first time.

Seeking help is a major step towards change for many women and girls who have experienced male violence. VWC's 2009 national prevalence study found that 57% of survivors had never asked any agency for help, and 43% had never told anyone about the violence. The prevalence study also found that usually, the first contact with the VWC Network (or any other agency) is at a time of crisis, sometimes when she believes her life or those she loves are in danger, or because she simply cannot take it anymore.^{xvi}

A survivor who returns for counselling following the first contact is recorded as a repeat counselling session. This is also a significant sign of change, since it indicates that she has been able to take an additional step to address the violence and issues associated with it once the crisis has passed, in some cases by claiming her rights and accessing justice. However, it is important to acknowledge that some clients do not return for a very long time – sometimes many years – and for a complex range of reasons.

- *New clients are those seeking help for the very first time: this accounts for 26% of total counselling sessions with all age groups during 2015/2016*
- *Repeat counselling sessions are with clients who return for follow-up visits: this accounts for 74% of total counselling sessions with all age groups during 2015/2016*

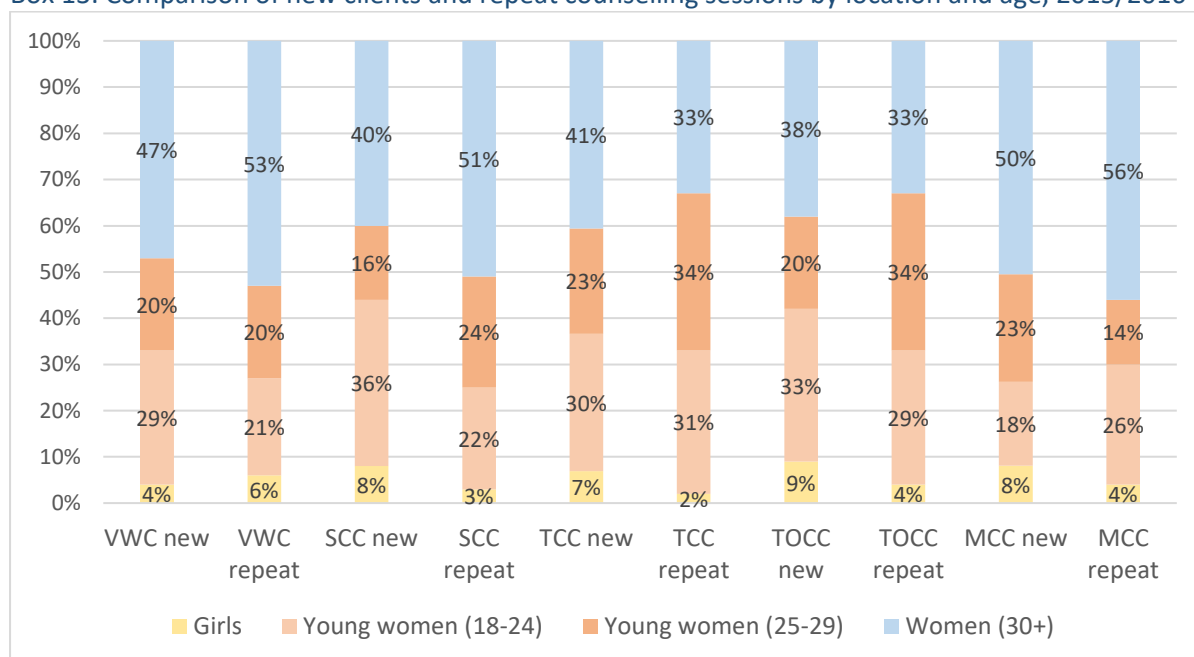
Box 12: Comparison of new clients and repeat counselling sessions by age, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1, Tables 6.1.1 – 6.3.2. Percentages are of the total number of new clients, repeat counselling sessions, and total counselling sessions seen by the VWC Network in 2015/2016.

New clients made up 26% of the national total of 5029 counselling sessions, and 74% were repeat counselling sessions. Overall, young women under 25 are slightly less likely to return for follow-up counselling visits than women over 30 (Box 12). These findings need to be interpreted cautiously, because clients who were assisted in repeat counselling sessions may be those who came earlier in 2015/2016, or clients who first sought assistance in previous years. Some new clients come back many times over the following weeks and months after their first contact with VWC Network services, whereas others may make more infrequent visits. This depends on many factors: the nature of the case and its urgency; the follow-up required with counsellors, legal staff, police, courts or health staff; distance from a centre and the cost and availability of transport and other communications; fear of the perpetrator; and the influence of family and other community members which may either encourage or discourage clients from seeking further help and taking action to protect themselves (for examples, see case studies 5 and 6).

Box 13: Comparison of new clients and repeat counselling sessions by location and age, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1, Tables 1.1.1 – 5.3.2. Percentages are of the total number of new clients and repeat counselling sessions seen by each centre in 2015/2016.

There is little variation by location on the proportion of girls who return for follow-up counselling. Most centres have a lower proportion of younger women aged 18-24 returning for further counselling, with the exception of MCC. On the other hand, SCC, TCC and TOCC have a higher proportion of young women aged 25-29 returning to follow up on their issues; this partly explains the higher overall proportion of young women seen by TCC and TOCC (see Boxes 10 and 13). VWC, SCC and MCC have higher proportions of women over 30 returning for repeat counselling sessions (Box 13). Nevertheless, none of the differences between new clients and repeat counselling sessions are significant.

5.1.3 Discussion of findings: positive evidence of effective outreach to young women^{xvii}

With young women and girls making up 51% of all VWC Network counselling sessions (Box 8), and 55% of new clients (Boxes 11 and 13), the VWC data analysis workshop concluded that 2015/2016 cannot be considered a “baseline” year against which to measure any future changes. This finding was not unexpected given the long-term experience gained through counselling, and conclusions reached at VWC’s annual in-depth reflection workshops which draw on both qualitative and quantitative data.

While national census data for 2016 is not directly comparable to VWC’s database, it indicates that the proportion of young women seeking help from VWC is very high, compared with the proportion of this age group in the total population. Although they only made up 14% of the total female population in 2016, young women aged 18-24 were 30% of VWC Network new clients in 2015/2016. Similarly, women aged 25-29 were 9% of the female population, compared with 20% of new clients. This suggests that VWC is providing a service that is accessible to young women experiencing violence (Box 14).^{xviii}

Box 14: Comparison of VWC new clients with Vanuatu census population data, 2015/2016

VWC Network: number and % of new female clients 2015/2016			National population census: number and % of females in Vanuatu 2016		
Aged 0-17 years	80	6%	Aged 0-17 years	58,525	44%
Aged 18-24 years	392	30%	Aged 18-24 years	18,176	14%
Aged 25-29 years	264	20%	Aged 25-29 years	12,045	9%
Total aged 0-29 years	736	55%	Total aged 0-29 years	88,746	66%
Aged 30+	591	45%	Aged 30+	45,448	34%
Total new clients	1327	100%	Total female population	134,194	100%

Sources: Annex 1 (Table 6.1.1); and VNSO 2017 2016 Post-TC Pam Mini-Census Report, Vol 1: 9. Notes: totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.

The high proportion of new young women clients is explained by two related factors: the very high prevalence of intimate partner violence in these age groups; and the positive impact of the VWC Network’s outreach to young women since the prevalence research was undertaken in 2009, which in turn is due to several milestones achieved through VWC’s prevention strategies from 2009 to 2015.

VWC’s national prevalence study found that 68% of young women aged 20-24 experienced physical or sexual violence from their intimate partners and husbands in their lifetime, and 63% of those aged 25-29; this contrasts with between 56% and 58% of women over 30, depending on the specific age group (Box 2). There was an even larger difference between young women and those over 30 who were subjected to incidents of violence in the previous 12 months before the study was undertaken:

57% of young women aged 20-24 and 49% aged 25-29 were living with physical or sexual violence by husbands and partners compared with between 31% and 41% of those aged 30 and older (Box 3).

Statistical analysis undertaken for the prevalence study found that the association between age and the experience of intimate partner violence was complex: while uni-variable analysis indicated that younger women were at greater risk than older women in their lifetime, on the other hand age was not a protective factor for women aged over 30, given the seriously high prevalence across all age groups. Multi-variable regression analysis of prevalence over the lifetime did not identify youth as a statistically significant risk factor.^{xix}

The higher prevalence of violence by husbands and partners among young women does not sufficiently explain their over-representation among VWC Network clients – particularly given that VWC was historically seen as a service mainly for “mamas”. The high proportion of young women clients demonstrated in this research confirms the effectiveness of VWC Network efforts to reach out to young women, which increased significantly from 2009/2010. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that VWC’s national prevalence study also demonstrated a statistically significant impact from VWC’s outreach efforts over many decades, regardless of age.^{xx}

VWC has always had a national focus with a *range of integrated prevention and response outreach activities*. These include mobile counselling (where community awareness-raising is a key first step in the mobile counselling visit to remote communities and settlements), a series of annual campaigns, various media activities (through printed materials and radio broadcasts), and community education and training activities targeting key male and female leaders as well as community members and youth. Community awareness and prevention activities vary in duration from an hour to a whole week, depending on the nature of the group and their previous engagement with the VWC Network and the issues of violence against women and children. While there are many areas of the country that have not received VWC’s core human and legal rights messages face-to-face, some community members and leaders have been exposed to these prevention efforts several times, using different formats and media over the decades since VWC’s establishment, through a *combination* of the different outreach strategies listed above (see Annex 2 for a summary of VWC’s model).

VWC’s national prevalence study found that places where VWC had been most active since its establishment had statistically significant lower rates of physical and sexual violence by husbands and partners than places where VWC had been less active:

- *The combined impact of VWC’s integrated community education/prevention, advocacy, campaigns and counselling work reduced women’s risk of violence (see Annex 2 for a summary of VWC’s approach).*
 - *For example, women in Malampa province – where VWC had done less outreach and had fewer CAVAWs – were twice as likely to experience violence as those in areas where VWC had been working over many years. (VWC/VNSO 2011: 20-21, 172-176.)*
-

Stopem Kalja blong Vaelens Agensem Ol Woman: Ol man tu oli kat risponsibiliti blong stopem Vaelens Agensem Ol Woman

“Stop the culture of violence against women: men have responsibility to stop violence against women” - VWC brochure on men’s responsibility

The findings from this research do not provide insight into whether any *one* outreach strategy is more effective than others at preventing violence and encouraging young women to seek help from the VWC Network. On the contrary, VWC's evidence over the long-term – including both quantitative data and qualitative case studies – indicates that no *single* strategy is effective by itself. VWC has learned that it is essential to integrate approaches that aim to *prevent* violence in the first place (primary prevention), with strategies that enable women to *access* services so that further violence can be prevented (secondary prevention, see section 4.1 for definitions). Several meta-reviews of effective prevention strategies have come to similar conclusions.^{xxi} This research on young women adds to the growing evidence base on the effectiveness of integrating prevention and response strategies, and of seeing these two approaches as part of a continuum of strategies needed to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The national prevalence study in 2009 was a major turning point that significantly increased the effectiveness of VWC's community awareness and prevention outreach. During and immediately after the fieldwork for the prevalence research was undertaken, VWC began to see steady annual increases in the number of women of all ages seeking help for the first time, as well as increases in the number who followed up to stop the violence through repeat counselling sessions. This was due to several factors:

- One woman/girl between the ages of 15 and 49 was randomly selected from each household in the survey, which was conducted across all provinces and major islands. All interviewees were offered a brochure on VWC services at the end of the interview, regardless of whether they made disclosures of violence. The majority accepted the brochure; only a handful refused to take it. The brochure provided contact details for all VWC's branches and CAVAWs. With 49% of all survey interviewees under 29, this was a significant and direct outreach to over one thousand young women and girls and their peers. In addition, protocols were in place to refer women to VWC Network services when they requested immediate or follow-up assistance. These ethical and safety measures account for some of the increase in clients of all ages seen in the two years following the fieldwork for the prevalence study.^{xxii}

New clients increased by 93% and repeat counselling sessions by 556% since VWC's national prevalence research was done in 2009 – an overall increase of 295% in total counselling sessions nationally to 2018/2019.

The findings from this research provide strong evidence that VWC is effective at reaching out to women of all ages living with violence – especially young women aged 18-29:

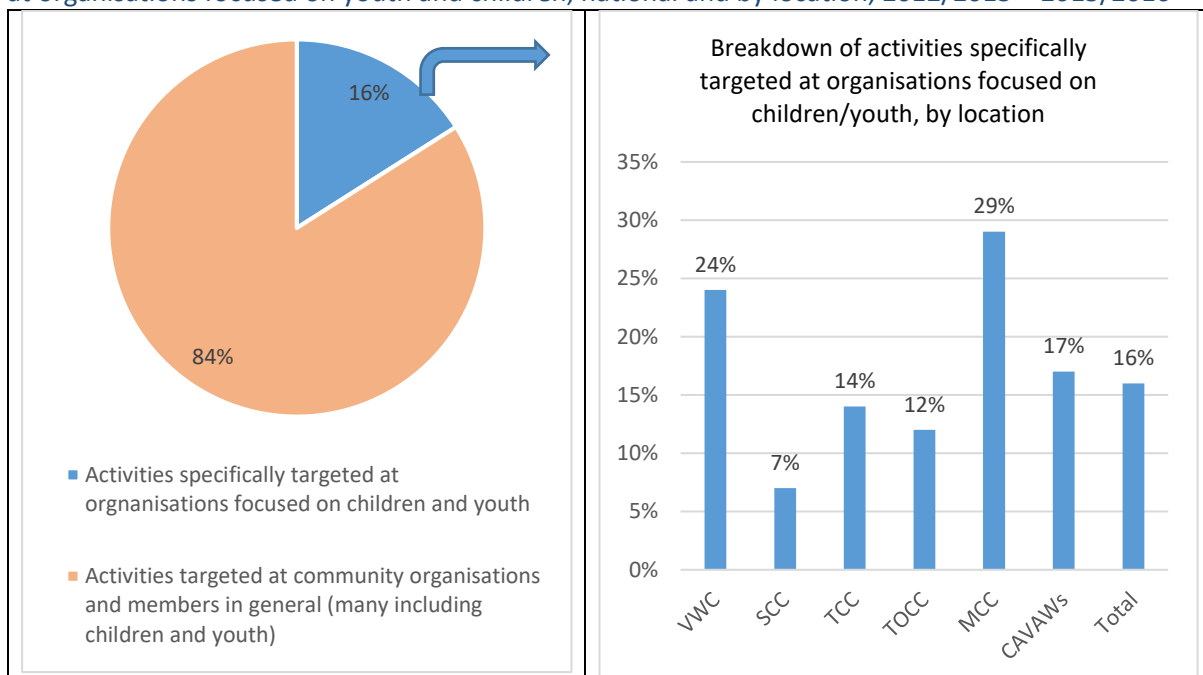
- *Young women aged 18-24 are 30% of all VWC Network new clients, compared with 14% of the total female population.*
 - *Young women aged 25-29 are 20% of VWC Network new clients, compared with 9% in the total female population.*
 - *The findings do not point to any one specific outreach strategy as more effective than others. Combining data from all sources indicates that **no single strategy is effective by itself.***
 - *Rather, it is **the combination of these strategies in an integrated program** – sustained over a period of time, and at multiple levels (individual, family, community, societal) – that has prompted more young women to access VWC Network services.*
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- Although many of the fieldwork team members were older CAVAW members, there were younger women on most teams. This helped to increase the visibility of VWC as relevant to young women.
- Following publication of the findings in 2011, VWC visited all provinces to share and discuss the findings with a range of local stakeholders. The findings were integrated into VWC and branch prevention activities. Staff were trained to discuss key findings, including the damaging consequences of violence for individuals, children, families and whole communities – and the findings continue to be disseminated in this way.

VWC intensified its outreach to young people following the publication of the 2009 prevalence research, due to the extent to which young women were affected by all forms of violence by partners, husbands and non-partners (see section 4.1). Data for 2012/2013 – 2015/2016 provides evidence of the extent to which children and youth were targeted by VWC interventions. Overall, 16% of community awareness/prevention activities were specifically targeted at organisations that include children and youth, with some variations by location (Box 15). These include primary and secondary schools, youth groups, tertiary education institutions, children’s and sporting groups, but not community and church groups which would usually include males and females of all ages.

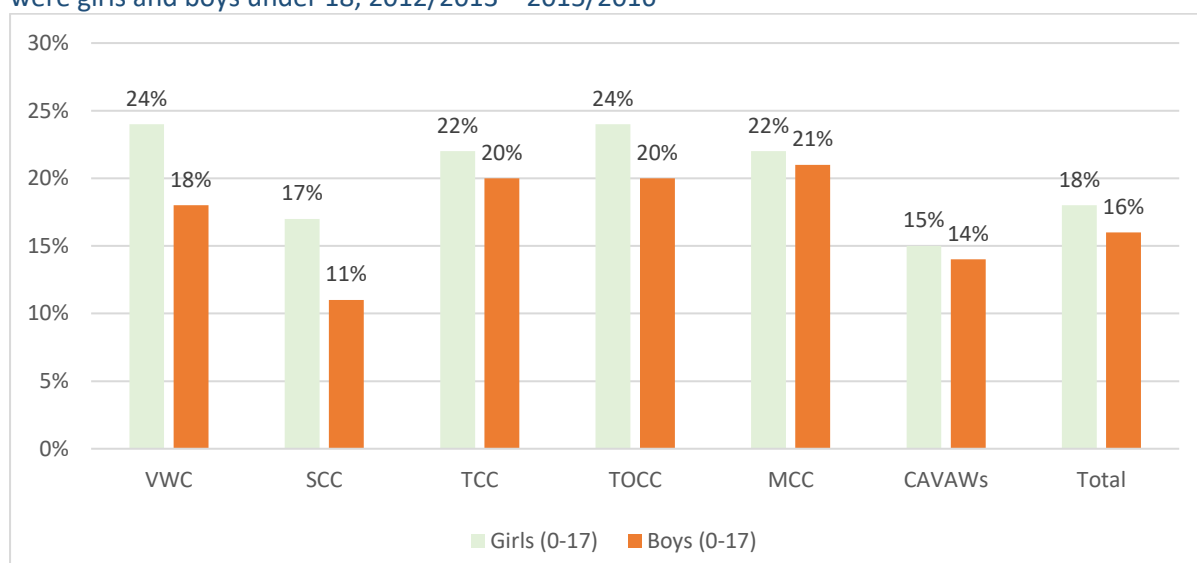
Another (but incomplete) measure of outreach is the number of boys and girls participating in all community awareness/prevention activities. Overall, 18,558 girls and 16,025 boys aged under 18 participated in these activities over the 4 years to 2015/2016, compared with 41,439 women and 26,216 men, although some of these participants may have attended more than one prevention activity.^{xxiii} Children were 34% of total participants (18% girls and 16% boys, Box 16).

Box 15: Percentage of VWC Network community awareness/prevention activities specifically targeted at organisations focused on youth and children, national and by location, 2012/2013 – 2015/2016



Source: VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 108-115. Activities specifically targeted at organisations focused on children and youth include the following: primary and secondary schools, youth groups, tertiary education institutions, children’s and sporting groups.

Box 16: Percentage of participants in VWC Network community awareness/prevention activities who were girls and boys under 18, 2012/2013 – 2015/2016

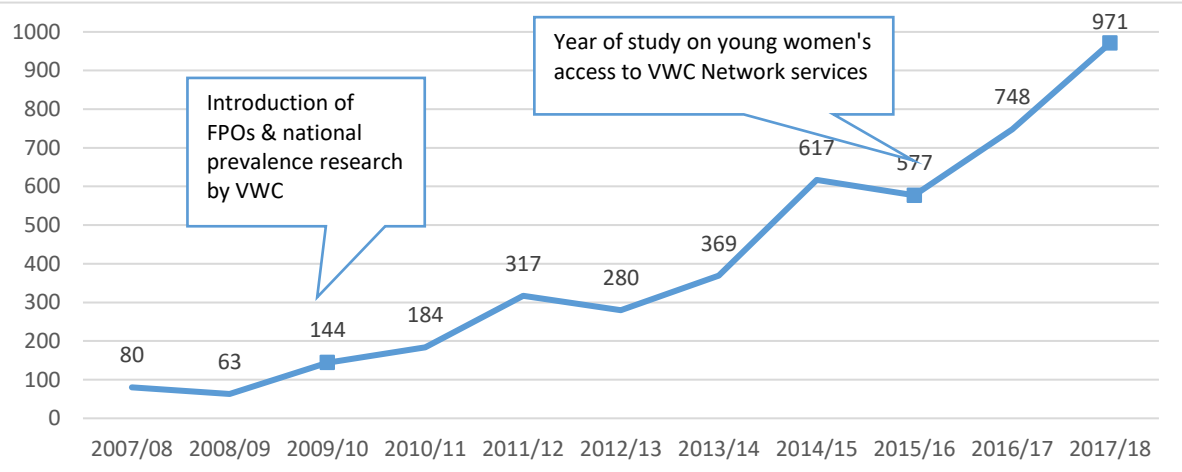


Source: VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 115. Note: this graph does not include the proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 who participated.

The national research on prevalence also increased VWC’s authority with local leaders, including provincial government, churches and chiefs. Although VWC had been talking about violence against women and children for a very long time, the strength of the research findings and their shocking nature resulted in VWC having a stronger voice nationally. This led to increased trust of VWC by key community leaders and members – it was finally clear that what VWC had been saying for years was not only true, but worse than many had previously believed. This trust and authority enabled the VWC Network to disseminate its core messages on women’s legal and human rights to new communities and organisations that had refused requests in the past.

The passing of the Family Protection Act (FPA) also played a key role in encouraging women of all ages to seek help, and to claim their right to live free from violence and abuse. The FPA was passed by Parliament in 2008 and gazetted in 2009, prior to the fieldwork for the prevalence study. Even before the FPA was implemented through the use of Family Protection Orders (FPOs), VWC was at the forefront in assisting women to gain Domestic Violence Orders and facilitated about 70% of these orders issued by the Port Vila Magistrate’s Court. Following the introduction of FPOs, the number of women seeking legal protection increased substantially – by 300% from 2009/2010 (when FPOs first began to be issued) to the year of study for this research (2015/2016), and by 574% in 2017/2018 (Box 16). Unfortunately, there is no age-disaggregated data available to provide insight into the number of young women taking this step. However, VWC’s qualitative database provides solid evidence that a significant proportion of young women who seek help from the VWC Network choose to use this measure to protect themselves from further violence (section 5.3.4 and case studies 5 to 9 and 12).

Box 17: Number of Family Protection Orders facilitated by the VWC Network annually



Sources: VWC 2012 “Final Activity Completion Report”: 90-91; VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 105; and VWC 2019 “Annual Plan for Year 4”: 222.

Notes: Figures from 2009/10 include FPOs received by both new clients and those who decide to apply for FPOs following repeat counselling sessions; figures for 2007/08 and 2008/2009 are for domestic violence orders received by new clients only. Note that the length of time for a woman to make a decision to pursue legal protection varies greatly – ranging from the first counselling visit, to several months or several years in some cases.



**Famili Proteksen Oda
Hemi protektem yu
long taem blong
domestik vaelens**

“Family Protection Orders protect you from domestic violence” – Text and graphic from VWC’s poster on Family Protection Orders

FAMILI PROTEKSEN LOA

**I MEKEM Domestik Vaelens
hemi wan KRAEM**

**I GIVIM MINING blong Domestik
Vaelens OLSEM YA :-**

- Physical Asolt, o Faetem wan famili memba;
- Psychological abuse, o wan famili memba i harem nogud o i wari tumas long wan toktok, aksen o fasin.
- Seksual Asolt, o yusum sex blong spoelem wan famili memba.
- Stalking, o folfolem o watchem wan famili memba blong mekem hemi fraet o givim kil long hem;
- I thretenem wan famili memba blong i mekem ol aksen ya.

**I Loa blong Protektem famili Blong Yu
wetem 2 kaen Proteksen Oda :-
Temporary mo Famili Proteksen Oda**

VWC’s poster on the Family Protection Act, defining the types of violence against women and children which victims/survivors can take out a Family Protection Order

Staff at the VWC data analysis workshop who have worked with VWC and SCC for many years reflected that the change in young women being prepared to seek help was very gradual: even when women had heard about their rights and felt the impact of the problem of violence personally, it took decades for mindsets to shift, so that both older and young women could begin to apply women's rights messages to their own day-to-day lives. One key change noted by staff was the increase in older women who encouraged younger women to access services and claim their rights (see case study 1).

The national prevalence research combined with the impact of the FPA are milestones that built on the work that had been done over many years by VWC. They helped to change the way women and community members in general began to think about the problem of violence. Staff believe this conclusion applies to both younger and older women.

By 2015, there were many more churches and chiefs who began to ask for information and community education sessions, and there was an increase in the number of police exposed to VWC trainings. Both fathers and mothers had also begun to send their adult children to get help. For example, in the 4 years from July 2012 to June 2016, 10,787 community members approached the VWC Network for information on violence against women and children:

53% were women aged 18 or older, 5% were girls under 18, 38% were men and 4% were boys under 18. This compares with 6,981 information requests in the previous 4 years, an increase of 55%. There was also an unprecedented demand for talks, workshops and trainings by different organisations and groups at all levels and from all across the country. Most of these requests were "ripple effects" from VWC's work, by people who had already participated in a VWC training workshop or talk, and who saw the need for prevention messages to be broadcast more widely. All these contacts with were initiated by community members themselves – clear evidence of VWC's prevention impact, and of the growing trust that was placed in VWC's expertise on the issue of violence against women.^{xxiv}

VWC was very active in the national media in the lead-up to 2015/2016; this reinforced the combined prevention impacts of conducting and disseminating the prevalence research, and VWC's efforts to implement the FPA. For example, VWC ran television advertisements on Television Blong Vanuatu where key male leaders including chiefs described the different protections available through FPOs. Although the impact of this would have been mainly restricted to Port Vila, the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) generously ran the advertisements for several months longer than VWC had paid for; the advertisements played in late 2013, in early 2014, and from time to time from December 2014 through to April 2015. In addition, VWC's regular radio programs focused frequently on both the findings of the prevalence study, and specific situations where women and girls would be able to take out an FPO. Once again, these initiatives were heard by women of all ages. However, in the VWC radio programs, it was common for VWC staff to talk about forms of violence by boyfriends

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- *"Everything made a difference in helping young women to come to us – CAVAWs, radio programs, community education, the counselling support that we gave to women, and ensuring that perpetrators are held to account."*
 - *"The change was very gradual and it took decades for mindsets to shift."*
 - *"FPOs were a big eye-opener for women and men – they were a new thing that helped women of all ages to see that something could be done."*
 - *"VWC's national prevalence survey and the FPA came at around the same time, and people finally believed us. The survey gave us authority. It was evidence. And after the FPA came out, we were also very busy in the field raising awareness on how women could use the FPOs to protect themselves."*
 - *"More churches and chiefs stopped humbugging us around 2012, and parents began sending the younger ones to get help."*
- (VWC data analysis workshop, March 2019)*
-

against girlfriends, based on the national prevalence findings, and this prevention/awareness messaging was specifically targeted to youth.^{xxv}

The data analysis workshop acknowledged that the Department of Women’s Affairs had also done awareness-raising on the FPA, which would have reinforced the impact of VWC’s efforts. Violence against women and girls featured much more strongly as a nationally recognised issue around 2015/2016, with several new policies and strategies coming into operation which received media attention. These included the Vanuatu Police Force “Standard Operating Procedures” (SOPs) and “Family Violence Policy” introduced in 2015, although they were not systematically implemented at this time. The Department of Women’s Affairs “National Gender Equality Policy, 2015-2019” was released in 2015, and the Ministry of Justice and Community Services developed its “Justice and Community Services Sector (JCSS) Strategy”. This included several activities to prevent and respond to violence against women, and acknowledged VWC’s key role by improving the response of the law and justice sector to victims/survivors and in crime prevention.

Between July 2012 and June 2016, there were 417 individual law and justice sector personnel trained by VWC on violence against women. This included: 237 police officers (201 male and 36 female officers); 138 male chiefs from various provinces around the country; 3 state prosecutors, and 39 staff with the Department of Corrections (31 men and 8 women). Many of these trainees had ongoing contact with VWC Network staff after their training, and several received more than one training over the 4 years. This enabled VWC to monitor their responses to survivors/victims, and to provide support where needed.^{xxvi} In particular, the police received training on the requirements of the Family Protection Act, SOPs, and the Police Family Violence Policy. For most police and other trainees, it was their first time to receive in-depth training on their legal and policy obligations.

Each time a woman or girl in a community is protected from violence – because an FPO is served, or a perpetrator is arrested for sexual violence against a woman or a girl – this has a powerful preventative impact. It demonstrates that there are consequences for violent behaviour, and that it is possible for girls and women of all ages to take action to stop the violence from recurring, in a context where it has been widely accepted as normal and unable to change.

(See case studies 3, 6 and 12 for examples).

Between 2012 and 2016, more than 10,700 people requested information from VWC. In addition, 417 individual law and justice sector personnel were trained by VWC on violence against women. For most police, chiefs and other participants, this was the very first time they had received in-depth training on their legal and policy obligations under the Family Protection Act.

VWC had long advocated for the issue of violence against women to be treated seriously by law and justice sector agencies. This was beginning to be felt in communities by 2015/2016, even though responses to cases were very far from being fully institutionalised, and further efforts are still needed on this – charges are laid for physical and sexual cases of violence against women in only about 2% of total cases^{xxvii}.

For example, some police trained by VWC were more diligent in following up cases and arresting perpetrators after their training. In some cases arrests occurred immediately after police were trained, and were easily traced as an impact of the program. Similarly, there was evidence of improved filing and labelling of FPO applications following the VWC training, and some of the state prosecutors trained became more assertive in ensuring that charges were laid and progressing cases.^{xxviii} Each time this occurred in a community it had a powerful

impact on both women and men, because it demonstrated that there were consequences for violent behaviour, and that it was actually possible for girls and women of all ages to take action to stop the violence from recurring.

All the changes mentioned above also resulted in more referrals to the VWC Network from police, Chiefs, Area Councillors, Provincial Government staff, and other community leaders who would not previously have trusted VWC. This impacted equally on women of all ages and contributed to the overall increase in client numbers, including younger clients. In addition to referring women to the VWC Network and accompanying them in person to the centres or to CAVAW members, often for the first time, there were more men who were also prepared to provide protection to women trying to flee from violence by providing temporary sanctuary in their homes. Some pastors who were trained by VWC in faith-based workshops preached about the problem of violence against women and children to their congregations, and provided information on VWC services, although this did not occur in all cases. A few men made public renunciations and apologies to their wives, families and communities for their past violence. All these breakthroughs occurred in the lead up to 2015/2016.

The period before 2015/2016 was also when it became the norm for male leaders trained by VWC to accompany VWC and Branch staff on community awareness/prevention visits, which helped to reinforce the authority of VWC's messages with local male leaders. A few chiefs and pastors also assisted VWC to make breakthroughs into new organisations and communities that previously had rejected VWC's requests to visit.

While it is impossible to quantify the individual impact of each of the changes and strategies discussed above, they were all milestones in VWC's efforts to change attitudes and responses to violence against women and children, and they were interpreted and documented as such at the time with a solid evidence base. In VWC's current pathway of change, improved responses to cases of violence from other agencies – such as chiefs, police, prosecutors and faith-based leaders – is as an essential step in enabling women of all ages to seek help and access to protection and justice.

Other factors contributing to the high proportion of young women clients were mentioned by staff in the data analysis workshop. One is that VWC has gradually increased the number of young women working at the centre, both in counselling and other roles. Many of VWC's and SCC's volunteers since 2009 have been young women who received training and exposure to VWC's messages, which they share with their peers and family members. Moreover, awareness visits to schools have been part of VWC's approach since its establishment, although it is not possible to assert that girls exposed to VWC's messages in this way are more or less likely to seek help, either as girls or as young women; this would require additional qualitative research. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that VWC and all the branches participated in the "Just Play" program in the lead-up to 2015/2016. The VWC Network was invited to collaborate in this initiative by Oceania Football, and this involved targeting VWC's core messages of women's and girls' rights to coaches, students and teachers.

VWC has gradually increased the number of young women working at all centres.

[Why did some VWC branches have a higher percentage of young women than others?](#)

[Milestones in Tafea province](#)

Workshop participants discussed in detail how the percentage of new clients and repeat sessions varies by location and age. Because of the range of factors that may influence whether or not a woman or girl returns for counselling, it is difficult to draw conclusions without also considering the range of different type of problems that young women and girls are seeking help with (section 5.1.2). Nevertheless, looking back over the breakthroughs in outreach that occurred at the provincial level in

the years leading up to 2015/2016 provides some insight into to why TCC and TOCC had higher proportions of young women than other branches, and also sheds light on the data from MCC which showed a lower proportion of young women clients.

Prior to and following the national prevalence research, VWC had focused intensively on Tafea province, to assess the effectiveness of elements of its overall community education and prevention approach. This included advocacy and targeting of all male community leaders to accept VWC to deliver awareness workshops of varying durations. While this could not be described as a “site-based saturation approach”^{xxix}, there was nevertheless a deliberate and intensive focus on Tafea, with a view to learning lessons over the long-term for establishing new branches in other provinces, including Malampa and Penama. This work led to several milestones in the lead up to 2015/2016, which help to explain the higher proportion of young women clients seen at TCC:

- VWC held its first 5-day training with a Council of Chiefs in Tafea province in 2013 – the Nikoletan Council of Chiefs. This milestone helped to achieve the other breakthroughs listed below, in addition to paving the way for VWC to successfully advocate to hold 5-day training workshops with several other Councils of Chiefs (Ambae, Maewo, Pentecost, Efate, Simanlo of Erromango, and North Tanna).
- VWC held a 5-day workshop with Provincial Councillors of the Tafea Provincial Government in November 2015 (after many years of advocacy), and this was followed up by the formal participation of the Provincial Government for the first time in TCC’s 16 Days of Activism and 15th May National Women’s Day campaigns. The good working relationships and trust established with the Tafea Provincial Government have continued.
- Following several trainings of a male advocate pastor in the Presbyterian Church, VWC was invited to train pastors at the Southern Islands Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church on Tanna, also in 2015. While not all pastors who were trained changed their responses to violence against women and children, the training had a province-wide impact by contributing to a process of gradual change in recognising violence as a real problem in the province. Community education had also been done with some leaders of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the province, and VWC’s first training with a Provincial Council of Churches also took place in Tafea in mid-2015.
- There was a training of members of the Tafea Police Patrol in 2015. A VWC-trained male advocate police officer from the Tafea Family Protection Unit began to visit TCC several times a week from 2015 to provide ongoing assistance and follow-up on cases, including through the serving of FPOs, and this close collaboration and support has continued.
- Finally, Tafea was also the province where VWC trialled the practice of having key trained male advocates and police accompany branch staff on all community awareness and mobile counselling visits to rural communities, and where this strategy was implemented most consistently before 2015/2016. In addition to adding authority to VWC’s core messages on violence, this also enabled speedy follow-up of cases that were reported to VWC and TCC during these visits to remote rural areas.

“The President of Tafea Provincial Council officially opened the 16 Days of Activism campaign and emphasized the importance of women in our communities, and the need to work against violence against women. The Police Inspector spoke about police work on domestic violence and other issues affecting women. He stressed that Tafea has a high rate of domestic violence compared to other Provinces. He also stressed that Police will take action if a crime is committed and involves domestic violence. The march was led by Seventh Day Adventist church members.”
(VWC Progress Report, December 2016: 23)

It is not possible to quantify the impact of these breakthroughs and trainings on decisions made by young women to seek help, and this should not be overstated. Nevertheless VWC's experience indicates that public statements and actions by key male leaders can assist with challenging and changing prevailing norms, particularly where consistent messages on women's and girls' rights are portrayed by a range of leaders, and repeated. Impact is increased when these statements are reinforced by actions, such as the referrals by police to the VWC Network for counselling, prosecutions by law and justice sector agencies for sexual assaults, successful claims for child maintenance, and the serving of FPOs. All these features were in place in parts of Tafea province before and during the year of the current study.

Strategies in Torba province

The high proportion of young women clients seen by TOCC is more difficult to explain; while they also had several breakthroughs in the lead-up to 2015, so did the other branches. However, there was closer collaboration with the Australian-funded Technical and Vocational Education Training program in Torba than other provinces. Over the years, VWC found that introducing the topic of violence against women and girls in the education sector has been particularly challenging. It was unusual for Provincial Education Offices to facilitate VWC or Branch involvement in awareness-raising on violence against women and children in schools, but this did occur in both Sanma and Torba provinces prior to 2015/2016. In addition, the Education Department Curriculum Unit involved TOCC in its family life education program with teachers focused on teenage pregnancy, and VWC advocated for this to be linked to content on violence against women and children.

During its mobile counselling and community awareness/prevention visits to remote locations, TOCC included visits to local schools to have discussions with student and teachers about women's and children's rights wherever possible. While this is not unique to TOCC, this strategy was applied more consistently in Torba than in other provinces prior to 2015/2016. TOCC also began to introduce separate sessions targeting young women and men in its community awareness activities from 2014. This strategy was implemented because young men and women didn't ask questions or even talk much in community-based sessions with mixed sex and age groups, so TOCC began to negotiate with Chiefs to have separate groups with men and women, and separate groups by age. This strategy was also not unique to TOCC, but it was introduced earlier and again applied more consistently than other branches prior to 2015/2016.

Milestones in Malampa province

MCC had the lowest proportion of counselling sessions with young women, compared to the other centres. MCC was in its first year of operation during 2015/2016, but it is worth noting that the overall number counselling sessions with young women and girls was similar to TOCC and TCC (see Annex 1 sections 3 to 5).

Public statements by key male leaders assisted with challenging and changing prevailing norms – particularly when messages were consistent, portrayed by a range of leaders, and repeated – and backed up by actions taken by law and justice sector staff.

VWC's national prevalence research in 2009/2010 demonstrated that Malampa province had the highest percentage of domestic violence in the country: 75% of women in Malampa had experienced physical or sexual violence by husbands and partners, compared with a national prevalence rate of 60%. This difference was found to be statistically significant, and due to Malampa province having fewer CAVAWs, and less community education/prevention and counselling work prior to the fieldwork for the prevalence study, compared with other provinces and areas. Emotional

violence by husbands and partners was also far higher in Malampa province (80% in Malampa compared with 68% for the country as a whole).^{xxx}

The national prevalence research findings spurred VWC on to establish a new branch in Malampa province as soon as donor funding was available. The establishment of the new branch was preceded by a significant investment by VWC in preparing the ground for the successful operation of the new branch, by investing in several consultations and trainings with community leaders, including provincial government staff and Area Councillors, Chiefs, police, church, youth and women's leaders. VWC's approach was based on the learning and documented impacts from Tafea province (discussed above).

One reason for undertaking this current research on young women was an assumption by some donors that VWC had not focused adequately on its outreach to young people, and there was a perception that VWC's services were mainly accessed by older women, especially in Malampa province. This assumption has been challenged by the findings from the research. On the contrary, they show that MCC had good outreach to young women and girls in its first year of operation (Boxes 15 and 16), and a comparable proportion of young women clients to that seen in other locations (Boxes 10-13). Moreover, the high number of clients seen in its first year of operation provides further evidence of the effectiveness of VWC's comprehensive and integrated model of prevention and response (Annex 2).

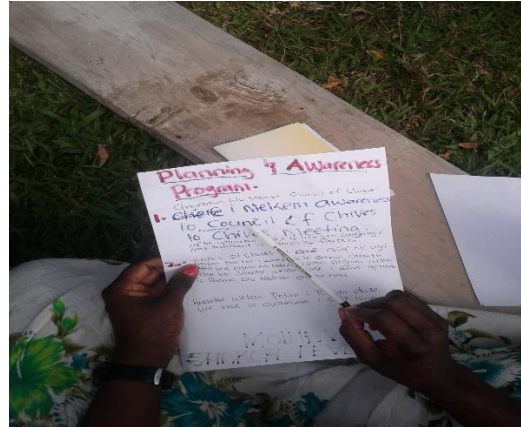
Case study 1: MCC, community members, local police and VWC work together to protect a client at great risk

Vivian is 27 years and has 6 children. She lives with the father of her 4 youngest children. He badly mistreated her in many ways. One day when her partner was at the gardens, an old woman asked why she was crying so often, day after day, and the client told her everything.

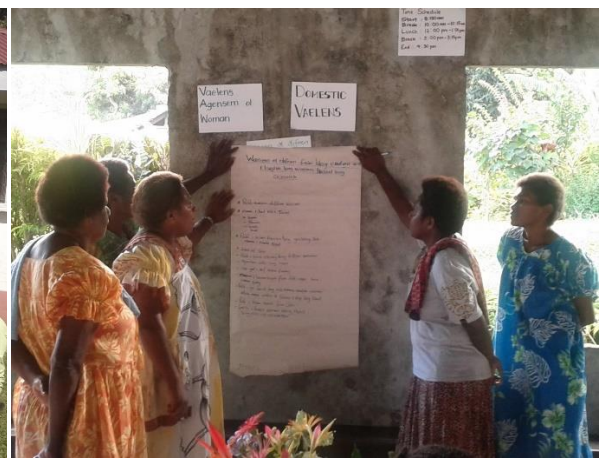
The old woman quickly went back to her home and brought back a brochure which she had received when 2 MCC staff had first visited their area. She told Vivian to read the brochure and asked her why she had not come to the MCC awareness. Vivian told her that her partner never allowed her to go to any community activities and insisted that she never see anybody. The old woman advised her to do something immediately about her dangerous situation.

Vivian phoned MCC, and staff called her back for phone counselling. Vivian told the counsellor that she is from another island, and explained all the emotional and physical violence she had been through since she came to live with her partner 5 years ago, as well as financial abuse. After the phone counselling, Vivian decided to apply for an FPO immediately, and told the counsellor that she wanted to go back to her home island. MCC alerted the police, and early the next day, a police officer served the FPO to the partner and helped Vivian to leave with all her children. An MCC counsellor stayed with them in a safe-house overnight while VWC supported them to get a flight back to her island.

VWC 5-day community awareness workshop on Paama Island, 2016



Small group feedback, and the planning outcomes from one small group on the final day.



Both women and men attended the 2016 workshop, and participated in separate small group sessions.

And one example of many follow-up sessions



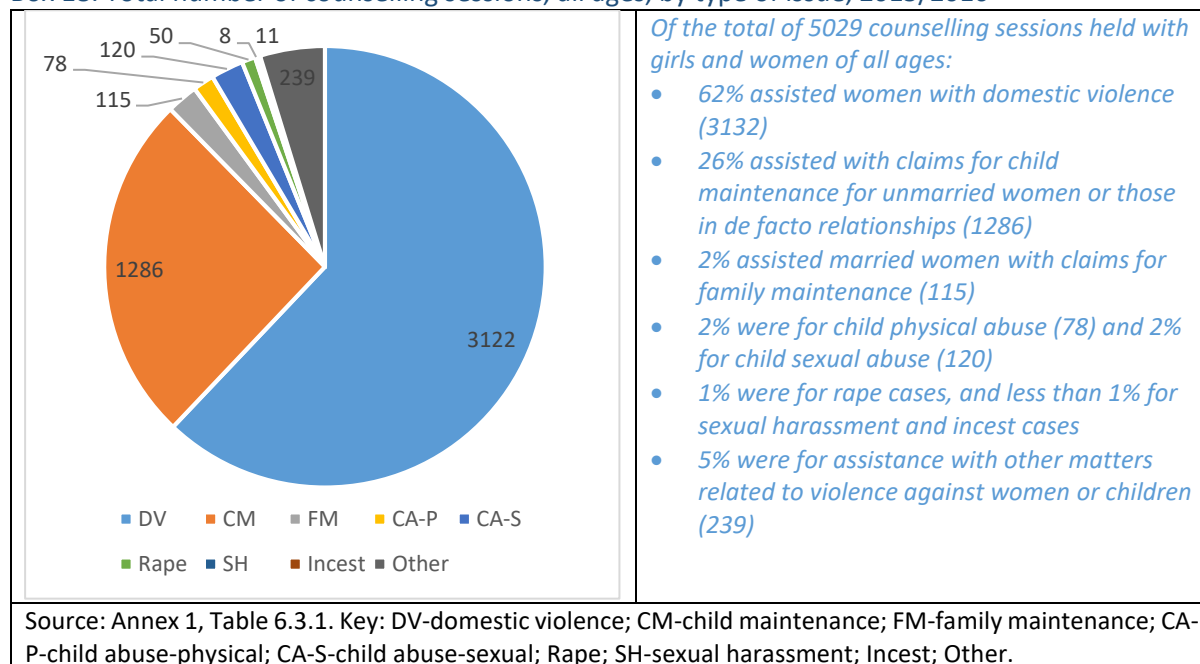
Malapma Counselling Centre Project Officer (right) at a follow-up 1-day session on Paama in 2017, attended by young and adult women, men and children.

5.2 What types of issues do young women and girls seek help with from the VWC Network?

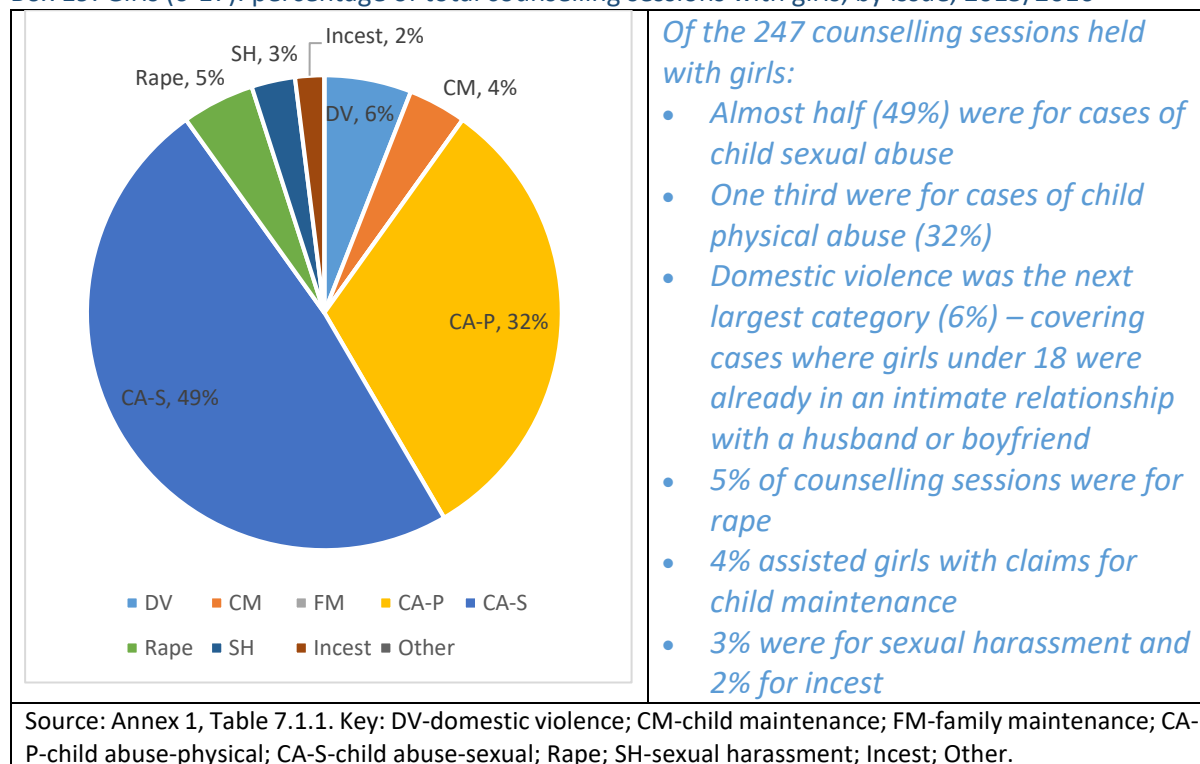
5.2.1 Total counselling sessions by type of issue and age

Domestic violence cases made up the majority of counselling sessions undertaken across the VWC Network, accounting for 62% of all counselling undertaken in 2015/2016. Assistance with child maintenance claims was the second highest area of need overall, at 26% (Box 18).

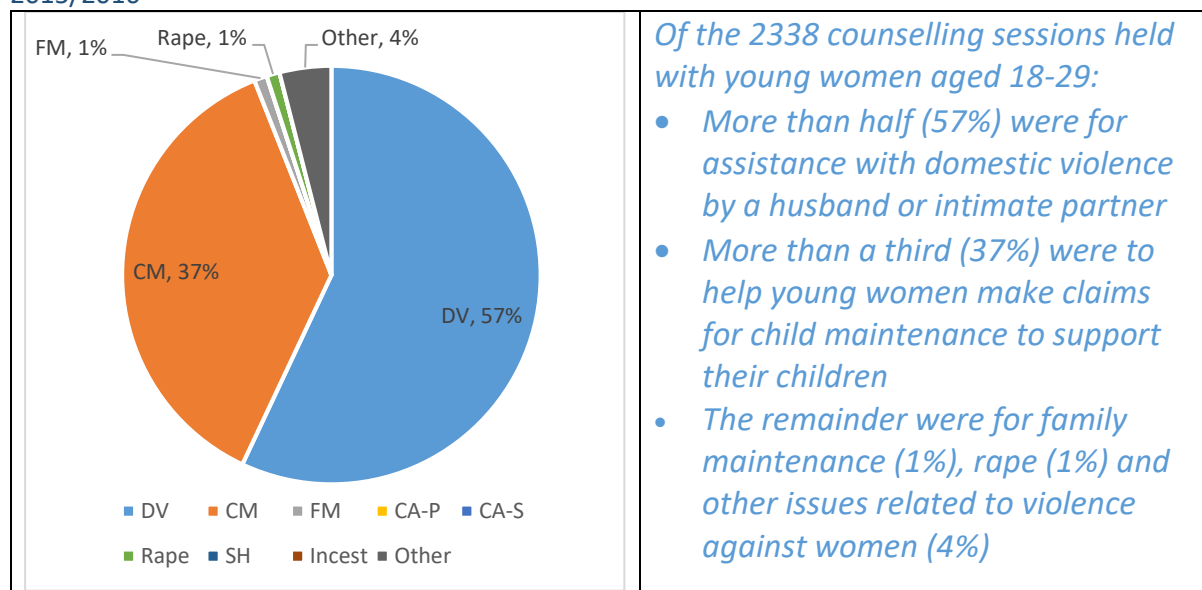
Box 18: Total number of counselling sessions, all ages, by type of issue, 2015/2016



Box 19: Girls (0-17): percentage of total counselling sessions with girls, by issue, 2015/2016



Box 20: Young women (18-29): percentage of total counselling sessions with young women, by issue, 2015/2016

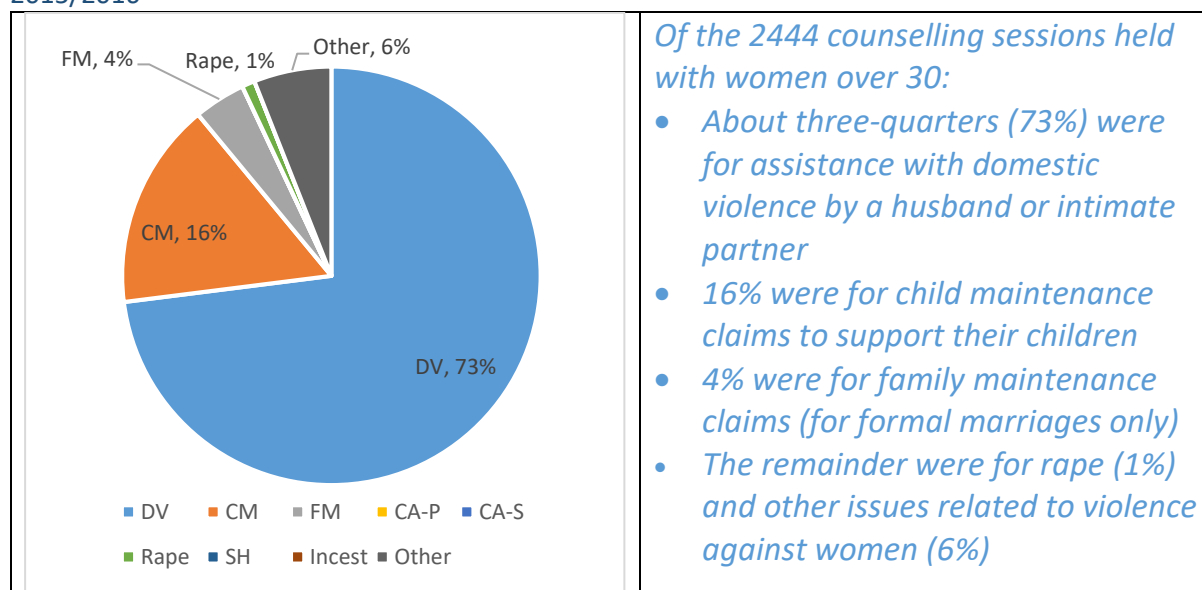


Of the 2338 counselling sessions held with young women aged 18-29:

- More than half (57%) were for assistance with domestic violence by a husband or intimate partner
- More than a third (37%) were to help young women make claims for child maintenance to support their children
- The remainder were for family maintenance (1%), rape (1%) and other issues related to violence against women (4%)

Source: Annex 1, Table 7.1.2. Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance; FM-family maintenance; CA-P-child abuse-physical; CA-S-child abuse-sexual; Rape; SH-sexual harassment; Incest; Other.

Box 21: Women (30+): percentage of total counselling sessions with women over 30, by issue, 2015/2016



Of the 2444 counselling sessions held with women over 30:

- About three-quarters (73%) were for assistance with domestic violence by a husband or intimate partner
- 16% were for child maintenance claims to support their children
- 4% were for family maintenance claims (for formal marriages only)
- The remainder were for rape (1%) and other issues related to violence against women (6%)

Source: Annex 1, Table 7.1.3. Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance; FM-family maintenance; CA-P-child abuse-physical; CA-S-child abuse-sexual; Rape; SH-sexual harassment; Incest; Other.

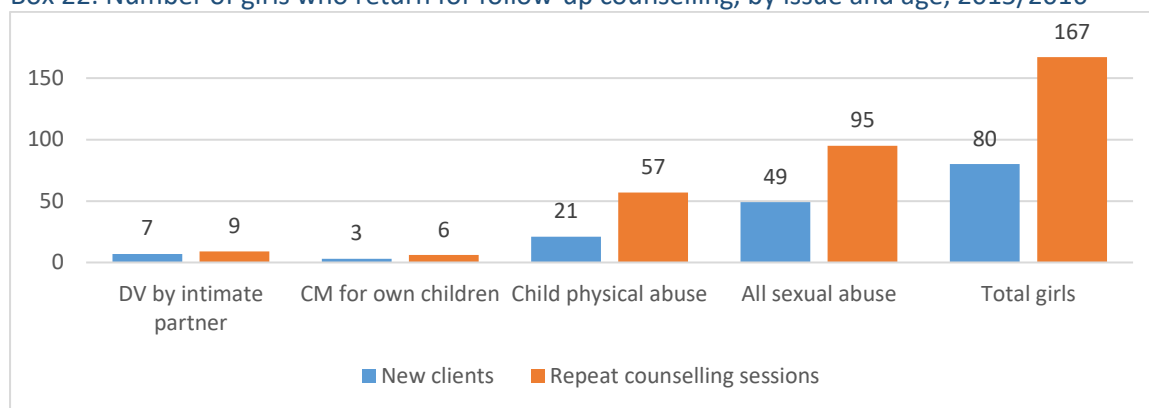
5.2.2 Breakdown of new clients and repeat counselling sessions by type of issue and age

Age is a key factor that determines why women and girls come to seek help from the VWC Network in the first place, and how likely they are to follow up with further counselling:

- *Girls mainly seek help with child sexual and physical abuse, which makes up over 80% of counselling with girls.*
- *71% of **new** young women clients come for help with domestic violence.*
- *81% of **new** clients over 30 also come for domestic violence issues.*
- *Both younger and older women needed to make frequent follow-up visits to have child maintenance claims dealt with.*
- *Older women are more likely than young women to follow up with repeat counselling sessions to address domestic violence and other related issues.*

For girls aged 0-17, the vast majority of counselling sessions are for child physical and sexual abuse. Examining differences between new clients and repeat counselling sessions shows that more than half of new girl clients (51%) sought help for sexual abuse (including child sexual abuse, rape, sexual harassment and incest), and more than one-quarter for physical abuse (26%) by family members or others. Child physical abuse cases tend to be followed up by repeat counselling sessions slightly more often than child sexual abuse cases. Domestic violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (husband or boyfriend) is the third largest category where girls seek help (6% of total counselling sessions), and 4% are for claims of child maintenance for girls under 18 – these girls have already either been abandoned with a child by a boyfriend, or have a child as a consequence of sexual abuse (Boxes 19 and 22).

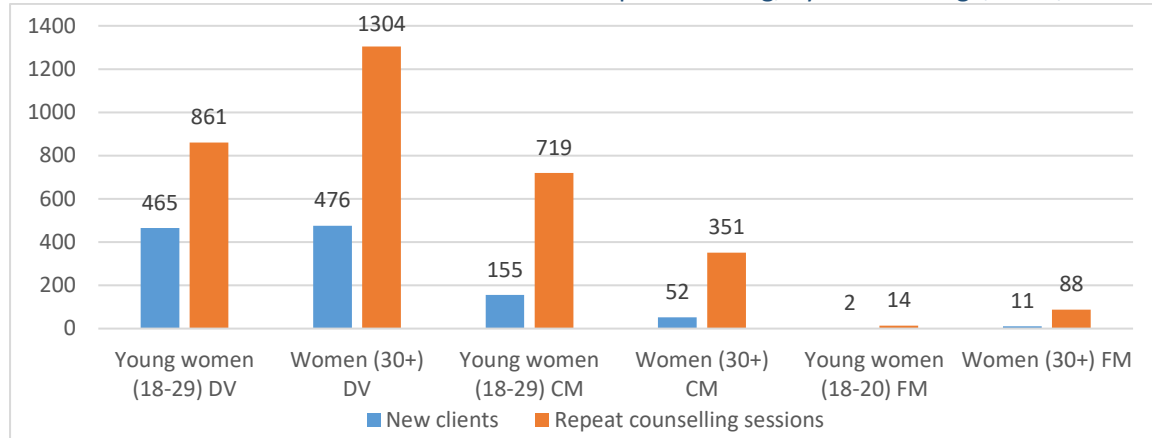
Box 22: Number of girls who return for follow-up counselling, by issue and age, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1, section 6. Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance.

For young women aged 18-29, over half of the total counselling sessions are for domestic violence (57%), and more than one-third (37%) are for child maintenance, with all other categories making up the remaining 6% (Box 20). Comparing the breakdown between new clients and repeat counselling sessions reveals that young women are more likely to make follow-up visits to deal with child maintenance cases than domestic violence. There were 465 new young women clients who sought help with domestic violence, compared with 861 repeat counselling sessions. This compares with 155 new clients whose presenting issue was for child maintenance claims, and 719 of repeat counselling sessions on this issue (Box 23).

Box 23: Number of women who return for follow-up counselling, by issue and age, 2015/2016



Source: Annex 1, section 6. Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance; FM-family maintenance.

Most counselling sessions with women over 30 are for domestic violence (73%), with 16% for child maintenance claims and the remainder for family maintenance and other issues (Box 20). There were 476 new domestic clients over 30, and 1304 repeat counselling sessions. This compares with 52 new child maintenance clients, and 351 repeat visits.



Sanma Counselling Centre (SCC) Project Officer presenting on challenges and achievements during VWC's November 2019 reflection workshop



Participants in VWC's 5-day community awareness workshop on Epi Island march against violence against women, May 2016

5.2.3 Discussion of findings: differences in new and repeat counselling sessions with women by age and presenting issue

Young women are less likely than older women to return for follow up counselling, regardless of the problem that they seek help with in the first place. VWC staff identified a range of factors to explain this trend; this analysis draws on their extensive counselling experience with clients, and is reinforced by the case study evidence (see section 5.4.2 for a discussion of what prevents girls from seeking help).

As the national prevalence study demonstrated, many women are reluctant to confide in anyone or seek help to deal with the violence, until it comes to crisis point. Once the first difficult step has been taken to seek help from VWC or apply for an FPO, staff have observed that some young women are more likely to be persuaded by relatives to reconcile with their partners. Parents, in-laws and other relatives may place a great deal of pressure on them to withdraw an application for an FPO, and to drop a charge of physical or sexual assault (see case study 5 for an example). Although this can occur at any age, VWC staff have observed that women over 30 are often more likely to be assertive and empowered enough to continue with counselling and the search for their own solutions to end the violence and abuse.

Women of all ages often say that they don't want their relationship to end, and begin counselling sessions by describing their love for their partners – but they do want the violence and abuse to stop. It can often take many years for women to accept that the violent, abusive and coercive behaviour, or unfaithfulness by the partner, are unlikely to improve. Concern for having enough money day-to-day, property, status in the community and the rights of children can also play a role in a woman's decision regarding whether to follow up with further counselling, particularly if she is faced with separation as the only viable option to end the violence.^{xxxix} On the other hand, counsellors and other staff also agree that there has been an increase in recent years in the number of both young women and those over 30 who have already decided that they want an FPO or to end the relationship, before they even come for counselling for the first time.

One of the major issues raised in the data analysis workshop was the delay experienced by all women in getting their cases for child maintenance heard and satisfactorily resolved by the Island Courts. This explains the high proportion of repeat counselling sessions on this issue in 2015/2016, regardless of the age of the client. Some staff said that Island Court processes have improved considerably in recent

Why are younger women less likely to come back for repeat counselling than women over 30?

- *"If she still believes the man will change, then she won't come back."*
- *"They are in love when they are young. It also depends how well they understand that domestic violence follows a cycle – an act of violence, followed by apology and a time of calm, before it all happens again."*
- *"For domestic violence cases, their relatives often try to convince them to reconcile, especially after an FPO has been issued."*
- *"Gender based discrimination and control is there from the very beginning for girls and young women. Their parents have a lot of control over them when they are young, so they see it as normal when their boyfriends and partners do the same thing. So they are more vulnerable than women over 30."*
- *"Sometimes when women (over 30) come back to follow up, it was SO long ago that they cannot even remember when they came."*
- *"Some women over 30 are more settled, assertive and empowered. They have had enough of it by then, and they realise he is not going to change. Then they want to do something about it."*

(VWC data analysis workshop, March 2019)

years – however this is not so in all provinces, and appears to depend a great deal on the court clerk and the extent to which these cases are given priority. Enforcing child maintenance decisions is another issue that requires repeated follow-up visits; many women simply lose hope and give up due to the difficulty of enforcing child maintenance decisions made by the courts.

Several reasons were mentioned regarding why more young women make their first visit to the centre for child maintenance, compared with older women; there were 155 new young women clients who first sought help with this, compared with 52 women over 30 (Box 22). Some young women are encouraged to apply by their parents, who have become aware of women's rights due to exposure to VWC's messages. When VWC undertakes community awareness sessions, staff make it clear that child maintenance is for women who are not yet married.

In some islands such as Tanna where girls are still "swapped" for marriage between families at a young age, and in other areas where marriages are arranged, very young women and girls can be abandoned with children very early after they have been impregnated. Whether or not the union has been arranged, forced, or voluntary on the part of the young woman or girl, the qualitative database indicates that there is a trend of young women and girls being deserted soon after they become pregnant or their child is born. Staff commented that this is a common occurrence among young women clients seeking help (case study 7 is an example; see also section 5.4.3).

Older women also apply for child maintenance once their partner has abandoned them. If she has a child by a former partner, fear of abandonment by her current partner can deter her from applying. By law, a woman can only claim for child maintenance if the baby is less than a year old, and she may not have given up on the relationship during that time. However, in recent years Island Courts in some places have become more lenient and allowed women to apply if they can prove that they have been in a long-term relationship with the father, and if he was supporting his children before the separation.

An issue that affects women of all ages is that applications for child maintenance must be made in the jurisdiction where the father is currently living. This is a huge burden when either partner has moved – either to escape violence in the woman's case, or for any reason in the man's case. This gender-blind rule prevents many women from accessing the support they need to care for their children.

Family maintenance claims are only available for women who have a registered marriage, with either a custom, civil or religious ceremony: they accounted for only 13 of the new clients in 2015/2016, but 88 of the repeat counselling sessions (Box 23). There are very long delays to have these cases resolved through the courts, as they require prosecution of the husband first as per the Maintenance of Family Act, before a maintenance order is ordered by the Magistrate Court.

Staff analysed what type of cases fit into the "others" category: there were 22 new young women clients recorded in this category in 2015/2016, and 75 repeat counselling sessions (Annex 1). These are mainly cases where other family members (non-partners) have physically abused or exerted unreasonable and coercive control over young women. All centres indicate that they receive these types of cases. In some situations, young women who seek assistance for abuse by other family members also choose to apply for FPOs to protect their rights.

5.3 What have we learned about the experiences of young women and girls living with violence?

5.3.1 Summary of the qualitative database by type of issue and age

Of the 54 case studies documented on young women and girl clients from July 2016 to May 2019, 50% were focused on domestic violence cases, 28% on child sexual assault, 6% on incest, 6% on child maintenance, and the remainder on other issues (Box 24).

Box 24: Qualitative database by type of issue and age of client, July 2016 – May 2019

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total	% by age
Girls (0-17)				1	15			2	1	19	35%
Young women (18-24)	10	3						1	2	16	30%
Young women (25-29)	17								2	19	35%
Total	27	3	0	1	15	0	0	3	5	54	100%
% by presenting issue	50%	6%		2%	28%			6%	9%		100%

Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance; FM-family maintenance; CA-P-child abuse-physical; CA-S-child abuse-sexual; Rape; SH-sexual harassment; Incest; Other.

Case studies on girls are over-represented (35%) compared with the number of girl clients seen annually, with 19 case studies in this age group. There were 35 case studies focused on young women; 30% of the sample were aged 18-24, and 35% were 25-29 (Box 24). Case studies were evenly distributed within each age range, with the youngest girl aged 7 years (a victim of sexual assault by her step-father). See section 4.2.2 for details on selection criteria for case studies, and Boxes 18 to 21 for a comparison with the quantitative database.

The majority of the case studies are extremely confronting; they usually begin with a summary of the types and intensity of violence experienced by young women and girls, and the length of time that they have suffered from violence, abuse and control by partners, boyfriends, trusted family members and guardians. Many describe acts of extreme violence perpetrated frequently and with impunity, until they receive help from the VWC Network, with many young women and girls experiencing multiple forms of violence concurrently. The most shocking and confronting examples of violence perpetrated against young women and girls are not selected for inclusion in this report. These include rape using a range of objects, and extended periods of humiliating physical and sexual torture, often accompanied by deprivations of liberty.

Many cases document extreme forms of sexual violence, as well as physical and emotional abuse and coercive control - including over women's movements, use of phones, and ability to see family and friends.

- *Staff indicated that the extreme forms of violence demonstrated in the case studies were common and typical of their caseloads.*
 - *More than 1 in 4 (28%) of the young women and girls endured the violence for over 5 years before being able to seek help.*
-

5.3.2 Over-arching themes and further evidence of VWC's positive impact

Regardless of the type of case and the age of the victim/survivor, there are several overall trends that emerged from the qualitative database. Each is discussed briefly before focusing separately on specific themes emerging from the case studies of girls and young women. Over-arching trends are:

- the very long time that many young women and girls had lived with the violence;
- evidence that VWC's prevention outreach was effective, with a positive link established between young women and girls seeking help and specific VWC Network activities;

- the types of events that prompted young women and girls to seek help, and how long they took to do this following some contact with the VWC Network; and
- strong evidence of positive impacts from VWC’s integrated approach to providing both prevention and response services throughout the country.

How long are women and girls living with violence?

Over half of the victims/survivors (57%, 31 of the 54 case studies) experienced violence for over a year before being able to seek help from the VWC Network. More than a quarter (28%, 15 case studies) suffered for 5 years or more; 28% (15 case studies) sought help within the first year of abuse. The duration of the violence before they sought assistance was not recorded in the remaining 8 case studies.^{xxxii} The longest case was for around 16 years (a child abuse case involving physical violence and neglect, followed by sexual abuse).

Links between community awareness/education outreach and preventing further violence

The case studies provide strong evidence of the impact of VWC’s range of community awareness activities at preventing further violence. Of the 54 case studies in the database, 34 clients (63%) either attended a community awareness event themselves, or were referred to a centre or CAVAW or accompanied by someone who had previously engaged with the VWC Network in some way. In some cases the person who helped them was a chief, male advocate or police officer trained by VWC. In others, it was a family member who attended a community awareness activity. There were 2 cases where a young woman’s boss encouraged her to take action, and a few where she was assisted by a friend, acquaintance or neighbour who had previous contact with VWC. There was one case of child sexual assault that emerged during a mobile counselling visit to a community (case study 4).

There were 3 cases where the VWC Network (PECC and TCC) were successful at initiating community awareness outreach to places where they had not been before, after receiving a new girl client who had been sexually violated. (Clusters of new clients from a particular area is one of several criteria used in targeting locations for mobile counselling and other prevention outreach.)

Why did young women and girls seek help, and how long did this take after hearing about VWC?

The information and discussion during VWC Network awareness and prevention sessions can help girls and women of all ages to recognise and reassess what is happening to them, and to others in the community. Whether it occurs immediately or over some time, it helps women and girls living with violence to hear that they should not and do not have to put up with it, and that it is an abuse of their legal and human rights. For young women clients who had attended a community awareness event themselves, the gap between when they attended the awareness event and when they sought help varied greatly: some sought help immediately or after a few weeks, whereas others took years before being able to approach the VWC Network for help. The longest delay before seeking help was 6 years after the first contact with the VWC Network.

Seeking help from VWC was sometimes precipitated by a crisis – a life-threatening series of events in a few cases, or a serious escalation in the intensity of the violence. In other cases young women were worn down by the violence over time. There were a few cases where the woman took an unexpected opportunity to escape from the perpetrator when he wasn’t watching her as closely as usual. For some (where there are no

Why and how did young women and girls get help?

- *Her life was threatened, or the violence suddenly got worse*
 - *She was worn down by the violence*
 - *She managed to escape*
 - *Someone who attended a VWC Network activity or training helped her*
 - *VWC, a Branch or CAVAW visited her area*
-

CAVAWs), the delay in seeking help was partly due to remoteness, and because they had no financial means to communicate with or travel to a centre. This highlights the importance of VWC’s strategy of focusing on intermediaries such as chiefs and other community leaders in community awareness and training; as discussed above, these people play a key role in assisting women to either phone or travel to a CAVAW or centre.

There was one case where a young women visited SCC for counselling following a community awareness event, even though she had already separated from her partner. This woman had been subjected to extreme forms of coercive control, emotional and physical violence since the outset of the relationship, including during pregnancy, and was able to seek counselling following her separation to deal with the trauma.

There were three cases where adult survivors of child sexual abuse sought help – two were 18, and the other 19. All had lived with violence for several years before they had been able to seek help, and in each case the community awareness outreach by the VWC Network was the first step that enabled her to escape from the perpetrator. Two sought help directly from CAVAWs, and the other was assisted to report to a branch by her grandparents, who had attended a community awareness in 2015.

Positive outcomes from VWC Network counselling and legal advocacy

Another trend that emerges from an overview of the database as a whole is that 74% of the 54 case studies document positive impacts from VWC’s counselling and legal advocacy. The database may not be a fully representative sample of counselling work, given that many staff are selecting case studies to demonstrate positive outcomes. However, staff are instructed to give equal weight in their selection of case studies to documenting the enormous challenges associated with assisting women living with domestic violence, and with protecting children from sexual assault (see sections 4.2.2-4.2.3).

The case studies confirm that VWC’s pathways of change (see Glossary) are an accurate representation of the steps that need to be taken to address violence against women and girls, and that VWC’s integrated approach to counselling, prevention and advocacy is yielding positive results for individual clients (see Annex 2 for a summary of the approach). The database demonstrates positive responses by the law and justice sector in dealing with cases quickly and with diligence due to VWC Network interventions and training, particularly in the case studies involving sexual abuse of girls. More details on the specific types of outcomes achieved for young women and girls, including counselling outcomes, are discussed below.

Box 25: Positive impacts from VWC’s integrated prevention and response approach

VWC Network community outreach/prevention directly led to the client getting help (63% of all case studies)	
Positive outcomes for young women and girls due to counselling and legal advocacy by the VWC Network (74% of all case studies)	
Positive responses from the law and justice sector, due to training and advocacy by VWC Network staff (37% of all case studies)	
Former clients help other young women to get assistance from the VWC Network (7% of case studies on young women)	

Source: Qualitative database

5.3.3 Case studies on girls – themes, outcomes and analysis

Who are the main perpetrators of sexual violence towards girls?

There were 18 cases of sexual violence towards girls under 18, including 3 cases of incest and 3 cases reported by adult survivors aged 18-19. **The largest group of child sexual assault offences (39%) occurred when girls were living in informal adoptive families** away from birth parents. In some cases the girls had been living with their adoptive families for many years. In others, they had moved there more recently to attend school, help their relatives with child care, domestic and gardening work, or other reasons not stated in the case study.

Perpetrators of child sexual assault in the case studies:

- *Male guardians in adoptive families (39%)*
 - *Step-fathers (22%)*
 - *Grandfathers and fathers (17%)*
 - *Other men, not relatives (22%)*
-

Stepfathers were the next largest group of perpetrators (22%), followed by incest by closer relatives such as a father or grandfather (17%). The remainder were other community members who were not relatives (22%). VWC's 2009 national prevalence survey found that 55% of perpetrators of child sexual assault of girls under 15 years were male family members, including all the relatives listed above. The different age ranges used in the current study (under 18) means that the findings are not directly comparable. Furthermore, it was not possible to identify perpetrators in the national prevalence study who were male guardians entrusted to care for their victims in informal adopted families.^{xxxiii}

The high proportion of abuses in adoptive families – where girls are living away from both the birth mother and father – is an important and disturbing finding. Staff in the VWC data analysis workshop confirmed that this is fairly typical of the child sexual assault cases that they see. This is an important area for future qualitative and quantitative research, and should be explored in future national prevalence studies.

Impacts – psychological trauma, threats to kill and factors affecting disclosure

In addition to the deep psychological trauma associated with any incident of child sexual assault, sexual violence against girls is often accompanied by threats of physical violence or threats to kill if the girl tells anyone. This is demonstrated in the case study database, with 28% of the case studies on child sexual assault documenting these types of threats, reinforced in most cases by incidents of physical violence associated with the attacks. In other cases the violence was either preceded or followed by grooming behaviours, such as bribing the girl with money or other types of special treatment. Where male family members were the perpetrators, another method used to gain the silence of the victim in a few cases was to assure her that it was normal for men to introduce girls of her age to sex in this way, to prepare her for her future husband.

Sometimes, the sexual violence was brought to light because the perpetrator was disturbed during an abusive act, or by the girl being able to leave the household and village for long enough to tell someone she trusted what was happening to her, often another relative. It is noteworthy that for 3 cases, disclosure did not occur until the girls were much older. It will be interesting to see whether adult disclosures of child sexual assault becomes a bigger trend in future, as girls in schools now are more likely to be exposed to awareness raising by VWC and other agencies about their rights not to be harmed in this way; this is another potential area for future research.

However, the database also reveals that disclosure to someone trusted such as a mother, sister or other relative does not always guarantee that the girl will be supported (such as in case study 2). The database demonstrated that mothers and sisters are often also subjected to the power wielded by the perpetrator, including threats of violence or death if the secret is told to anyone. In some cases, it

is clear that mothers also fear for the livelihood of her other children if her partner or husband is jailed for any length of time.

The database confirms that where communities have not yet been exposed to VWC's community awareness raising on women's and girls' legal rights, custom processes may be used to resolve serious sexual assaults against children, such as payment of compensation to the victim's family, without follow-up action taken to assist the child to heal, or to ensure her safety in future and the safety of other potential victims that the perpetrator may have access to. However, there is also evidence that this process can be changed through VWC's community education, prevention and outreach activities, including in remote communities (see case study 4).

Positive outcomes from VWC Network interventions

The legal outcomes achieved from cases of sexual violence towards girls are a testament to the effectiveness of the advocacy and training work done over many years by VWC with police, prosecutors and chiefs. Of the 18 cases of child sexual assault documented, all but one demonstrate timely and diligent responses by the police to investigate, arrest and remove a perpetrator. Some perpetrators received jail sentences, although the length of the sentence varied enormously; in many cases, the outcomes of court cases are still pending.



Police in Port Vila prepare a banner for the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in November-December 2015

Case study 2: Counselling in local language enables 12-year old Norah to speak the truth in court

Norah was 12 years old, in grade 6, and living with her mother and step-father. One afternoon after school, her mother asked her to baby sit her two brothers while she went shopping. While her mother was still in town, her step-father arrived home. Norah fed the baby, who drifted off to sleep while her other younger brother was out playing. Suddenly her step-father came from behind her and started touching her breasts and between her legs. Norah was very surprised and scared and tried to pull away. He told her to be quiet, that everything was all right, and gave her 200vt and some snacks. Norah was shaking and crying. After that, he did the same things when her mother was not around the house and gave her 200vt, warning her not to tell her mother or anyone else.

One day the step-father raped her vaginally and orally. She was still crying and shaking when her mother came home. Her mother noticed that she couldn't walk properly, but she said she was ok and the step-father said he didn't know what was wrong with her. Three days later, when her step-father was out, she finally told her mother why she could not walk properly. Her mother took Norah to her grandmother's house. Soon after, her grandmother and uncles brought Norah to VWC for counselling.

Norah was very afraid to speak at first. The counsellor took it slowly and gave her time to play and speak in her own language. The counsellor is also from her mother's island, and being able to speak in her own language helped Norah to talk more freely about everything that had happened. The counsellor talked about good touches and bad touches, and her right to stay safe at all times. Eventually she allowed the counsellor to accompany her to the hospital for a medical examination, where VWC has worked closely with staff to ensure that such cases are dealt with quickly, privately and sensitively. An application was filed for a family protection order and a police report was made, resulting in immediate arrest and jail of the step-father until his court hearing.

Norah came back for counselling several times until her case was taken to the Supreme Court. She was accompanied to the court by her counsellor. The judge had received letters from Norah's mother, with Norah's signature, asking for the step-father to be released and not to proceed with the case. The judge asked Norah whether it is true that she wanted her step-father released. With support from her counsellor, Norah admitted that her mother had insisted that she sign the letters.

The judge ruled that the case should proceed, the step-father pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 5 years jail. Norah is now living with her grandparents on their home island, has settled in well, and is attending school again.

The positive outcome demonstrated in case study 2 is due in large part to the empathic and non-judgemental counselling provided by her counsellor. Being able to communicate with girls in their local language can assist counsellors to gain their trust and help them speak honestly about what happened, particularly where they lack confidence to speak in *Bislama*. This contrasts starkly with a previous case, where VWC was asked to provide counselling for the first time on the very same day that a girl appeared in court; in this case, the police and prosecutor had not referred the client for counselling beforehand, and the girl refused to testify. (Follow-up advocacy by VWC's legal team with police and prosecutors stressed the importance of early referral, in order to build trust between the child and her counsellor, and this point has also been made in trainings with law and justice sector staff.)

Other outcomes and the processes to achieve them demonstrate the integrated nature of VWC's approach, and how this is essential to achieve positive results. For example:

- Action taken on several cases of child sexual assault and close collaboration with local police resulted in some chiefs following up with the VWC Network by trying to learn more about the

issue and how to manage it. One example of this is in case study 3 from TCC, and there are similar cases from other centres.

- The mental trauma due to sexual assault by an adult in a position of trust and power over the victim cannot be under-estimated. All the case studies demonstrate this fear and trauma, and some show how skilled counsellors are able to help girls deal with these feelings. This is demonstrated in case studies 2 and 3.
- The link between quality counselling, positive client outcomes and future prevention is demonstrated in several case studies, including another from TCC. This shows how the parents of a child raped at age 11 became committed to advocating against violence against women and girls in their community, after their child was assisted to work through her trauma by TCC counsellors.
- Case study 4 demonstrates the importance of mobile counselling efforts undertaken by VWC and the branches. This can have a snowball effect in many different ways and is a good demonstration of the value of VWC's comprehensive and integrated approach. It demonstrates the importance of always having all prevention work accompanied by someone with counselling skills, to be on hand to deal with the cases that often arise. Although case study 4 concerns child sexual assault, disclosures of violence against women and requests for urgent assistance or follow-up are often made in the context of all types of VWC Network community awareness, prevention and training activities, throughout the country. Having these cases dealt with professionally, confidentially and justly in a timely manner is a powerful demonstration to other community members that has significant prevention impacts, including those demonstrated in case study 3.



Tafea Counselling Centre (TCC) was invited to give a public talk at Namilo marketplace in Southwest Tanna on National Women's Day in May 2020. The talk was attended by about 180 women, men and children. The team of TCC staff, a male advocate, and Tanna police each gave a talk. Many questions were asked after the session. The Chief Representative stated that his people have heard about TCC but have never heard about the services they are providing. He said the talk was an eye opener to the community living around Namilo area, and said that TCC will have to go back for more awareness on domestic violence.

Case study 3: Effective police action and counselling leads to more opportunities for prevention work

Dora is 15 years old and no longer attends school, because her parents find it difficult financially. Dora's big sister asked if Dora could live with her and help her while she is pregnant. Dora's parents agreed and she went with her sister who lives far from Dora's village. After a month, her sister's husband asked Dora to help him feed the pigs. Once they reached the pigs, he said they needed to walk about an hour further into the deep bush where there were more pigs. That is when she started to feel scared. Suddenly her brother in law threatened her with a knife. Dora started to run but he grabbed her from behind. She kicked and screamed and he held the knife to her throat. He raped her twice. She was weak and bleeding, and he threatened again to cut her throat open if she told anyone.

She was ashamed, blaming herself, confused, and scared of her parents and her brother in law. It was already dark when she reached her sister's house, and she was still crying. She told her sister everything. The brother in law overheard them talking in the kitchen. He brought in an axe, cut a pot into pieces, and cut the ground near Dora and her sister. He threatened to kill them both if they report him to the police.

The next day, Dora was taken back to her parents' house by her sister, who asked Dora to promise not to tell their parents, because she is pregnant and doesn't want her husband to go to prison. But Dora was still suffering from her injuries and she was very weak and traumatised. It took Dora 2 weeks to tell her mother, as she was also afraid of what her mother may think of her. But her mother was very understanding, didn't blame her, and reported it to the chief. The chief, Dora's parents and Dora all went to the police who brought Dora to TCC for counselling. Although 2 weeks had passed, the doctor was still able to document evidence of the rape. She was kept in a safe house until the brother in law was arrested and taken to the correctional centre in Vila to await his court hearing.

Dora had to have several medical check-ups and medications, and came to weekly counselling sessions for over several months. Slowly she began to overcome the fear, guilt, shame and other feelings that were making her suffer. Her mother, father and the chief could see how long it took for her to recover, and expressed their gratitude to TCC for helping to heal her.

This case was an eye-opener for the people in this part of Tafea province, because both the chief and the police took immediate action to protect Dora and her sister. The chief has since spoken in his *nakamal* against violence against women and girls, and requested TCC to come to the community so that everyone can understand the issue better.



Sanma Counselling Centre (SCC) staff provided mobile counselling at Sauriki village on the West Coast of Santo in May 2020 after Tropical Cyclone Harold. In this photo, some participants are holding VWC posters and information leaflets on violence against women during disasters, provided during the visit.

Case study 4: Mobile counselling results in a change to a damaging custom practice

The first day of each VWC Network mobile counselling visit always includes community awareness sessions providing information about the issues of violence against women and girls, and their human and legal rights, with ample opportunities for people to ask questions. Counselling and further information is provided over the next 2 days, giving community members time to reflect and take a private opportunity to approach the staff.

It can sometimes take many approaches and considerable advocacy by VWC and Branch over several years for community leaders to allow staff to enter the village to conduct mobile counselling and other community awareness and prevention events. SCC liaised with a male advocate to help advocate for and organise a mobile counselling visit to a rural community, which had turned down several requests for SCC and other NGOs to enter the village. The male advocate lobbied and got the approval of the chief.

One man who attended SCC’s awareness talk on the first day asked for more legal information on sexual violence. He knew about an incident in another village, where a class 6 girl had been impregnated by her step-father. The other village was far away from the community where the mobile counselling was being conducted. Nevertheless, on the same day of the talk, he came across the victim’s uncle, and heard that the perpetrator was going to perform a custom reconciliation ceremony in the near future. He was able to convince the girl’s uncle not to proceed with the planned reconciliation, and he arranged for the uncle to meet with the two SCC staff to talk about his niece’s situation while they were still in the area for mobile counselling. The girl’s uncle was relieved to receive legal information from SCC staff. He later assisted his niece to go to the SCC office for counselling, and supported the police investigation of the case. The girl was 14 years old and 3 months pregnant. She is still attending school.

SEKSUEL VAELENS
R E P SEKSUEL HARASMEN

SEKSUEL ABIUS LONG OL PIKININI

**INOGAT RISPEK MO LAV
HEMI SPOELEM LAEF BLONG OL WOMAN MO PIKININI
HEMI BREKEM LOA**

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Australian AID

No. 1 rul blong stap sef
No. 2 rul blong stap sef
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No. 4 rul blong stap sef
No. 5 rul blong stap sef
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VWC's poster on sexual violence, including child sexual abuse

VWC's set of 8 stickers with safety rules for children, handed out during community awareness sessions

5.3.4 Case studies on young women – themes, outcomes and analysis

Types of violence and their severity

Of the 35 case studies focused on young women, there are 27 on domestic violence. In 85% of these cases, women were subjected to 3 or more different types of violence, and the remainder mentioned one or two types. The violence was often frequent and shockingly severe. This is not a surprising finding for VWC Network staff, since it is very common throughout the client caseload. More than a quarter of the cases (26%) indicate that women are also subjected to threats of violence, including the threat to kill them or their loved ones (8 of the 27 cases).

Other types of violence mentioned were:

- 70% describe various types of physical violence (19 of the 27 case studies);
- 56% describe emotional violence (15 cases);
- 52% describe various forms of coercive control, restricting women’s access to family and friends or other community members, including close monitoring or restriction of the use of mobile phones (14 cases);
- 41% describe sexual violence (11 cases);
- 15% describe financial abuse or exploitation (4 cases); and
- 11% describe incidents of cyber-crime (3 cases), where a partner or former partner engages in image-based abuse, by sharing naked photos of the woman, or videos of them performing sex together on social media.

Case studies show that a pattern of violence and abuse begins very early in relationships, with most young women subjected to several different types of violence, abuse and coercive control.

Infidelity by the husband/partner also begins very early, and often soon after the first pregnancy.

- *Desertion of young women soon after pregnancy or the birth of the first child is a common trend in the VWC Network caseload, including in custom marriages.*
-

The case studies show strong evidence that a pattern of violence begins very early in relationships, and that infidelity by the husband/partner is very common, with 56% of cases having this feature. Infidelity also appears early in the relationship, and often soon after pregnancy. There were 2 cases where men were unfaithful while on overseas work visas in New Zealand or Australia (see case study 7). Staff in the data analysis workshop indicated that all these trends are commonly seen in the client caseload.

There were 2 cases where only one form of violence was documented in the case study. One was a PECC case where a 23-year old was thrown out of her partner’s house immediately following the birth of her baby, with his family keeping the baby; it is reasonable to assume that this would have been preceded by emotional abuse, even if the client did not report it as such. One was a case of image-based abuse on social media reported to VWC after a woman had separated from her former partner.

Among the child maintenance and domestic violence case studies (30 in total), 13% were examples of desertion very soon after pregnancy or birth (4 cases), particularly where the marriage had been arranged according to custom (case study 7). Desertion of young women with young children is seen quite commonly by staff, although custom arrangements vary markedly.

Of the 35 case studies on young women, there are five in the “others” category. Most are examples of young women requesting help to deal with violations of their rights by relatives other than their partners or husbands. In one of these cases, this concerned a young woman who did not want to submit to an arranged marriage.

Among the case studies on young women, 2 concerned women living with disabilities, both from SCC. One describes a woman disabled by illness associated with childbirth, although she is still able to run a small shop. She was assaulted and then abandoned by her husband who removed their children. The second concerned a woman living with frequent epileptic seizures who was caring for an aged and disabled grandmother, and who was assaulted by her uncle after asking him for food. This client is the only one in the database who was referred to the VWC Network by an authorised person under the FPA (the authorised person had previously been trained by VWC and is a long-term active and effective male advocate).^{xxxiv}

Impacts of violence against young women

The impacts of the various forms of violence against women had long been under-estimated by stakeholders before the publication of the national prevalence study by VWC – although not by VWC Network staff and members, who observe the range of serious consequences day-to-day on women’s physical and mental health, including their sense of self-esteem. Many of the incidents of physical and sexual violence and emotional abuse described in the case studies are extremely serious and no reader could be left with any doubt about them having a long-term damaging impact, not to mention the ongoing fear that can accompany threats to kill.

Case studies document the severe mental health impacts of violence by husbands and partners.

- *Young women either attempted or contemplated suicide in 11% of the case studies*
 - *15% documented impacts on the children of young women living with male violence*
-

Some case studies describe the impacts in detail. For example, 44% of the domestic violence case studies (12 case studies of 27) document signs of depression arising from severe forms of physical and mental trauma; 11% document either suicide attempts or suicidal thoughts. These percentages are fairly consistent with those found in VWC’s national prevalence study, which demonstrated an increased risk of suicide for women experiencing physical, sexual or emotional violence. The prevalence research also established – as other studies have done internationally – that the risk of suicidality increases substantially when women experience more than one form of violence: 25% of women living with physical and sexual violence had thought of committing suicide, and 14% had attempted it. Unlike most other national prevalence surveys, VWC’s study investigated the correlation between emotional violence and suicidal thoughts and actions; this showed that 20% of women living with emotional violence had contemplated suicide, and 11% had attempted it. Women experiencing any of these 3 forms of violence also demonstrated a higher number of symptoms of emotional distress including signs of depression than those who were not living with this violence. All these findings were statistically significant with P values of less than 0.0001.^{xxxv}

It is noteworthy that each of the 3 case studies of image-based abuse on social media resulted in serious consequences for the young woman, including suicidal thoughts for one, and resigning from her job due to her sense of shame in another. While it is not unusual for women’s work to be affected by all forms of violence (see case study 5, for example), including when men come to the workplace to perpetrate acts of violence or threaten to do so, VWC’s prevalence study found resignation from a job is far less common in Vanuatu.^{xxxvi}

Physical health consequences were not consistently documented in the case study database, except in the most severe cases of sexual violence (such as repeated vaginal rapes, rape using objects, and anal rape by husbands/partners). Nevertheless, these have also been well-documented in the national prevalence study, which found that 37% of women living with violence have serious and sometimes permanent physical injuries as a consequence of the violence, including a higher risk of

miscarriages.^{xxxvii} There was one case documented in the database of serious physical violence against a 25-year old woman in late pregnancy (case study 9); in the national prevalence study 15% of women experienced physical violence at some time during their pregnancy and most of these cases included serious assaults targeting the stomach.^{xxxviii}

Of the 27 case studies on domestic violence, 15% (4 case studies) documented impacts on the children of young women living with violence. The most extreme case was where the husband of an arranged custom marriage forced their 3-year old son to be in the same room during a violent attack involving anal rape, in addition to witnessing other instances of physical and sexual assault. When she found the courage to leave and seek help from a local CAVAW, her husband refused to allow the child to go with her. The case was referred to VWC, which led to intervention by police who travelled to her island to remove the child and return him to his mother.

The trauma and potential for long-term consequences for the 3-year old boy in the example above are obvious, due to the extreme nature of this particular case. Nevertheless, the damaging consequences of violence against women for their children are under-represented in the case study database; this is not surprising since the case studies are focused on the trauma experienced by the client, and action taken to assist her. The national prevalence study found that 57% of children whose mothers experience physical violence either saw or heard their mother being assaulted, and 17% of children were also beaten during a violent incident. The long-term effects on children and their behaviours were also very clear and statistically significant, such as evidence of more aggressive behaviour and nightmares, and a much greater likelihood of repeating school or dropping out of school than their peers.^{xxxix} On the other hand, there is also one case in the database of a young woman who decides to leave her emotionally abusive and unfaithful partner despite the fact that she had 2 children with him, because she had made a resolution as a girl not to face the same type of emotional abuse that she witnessed when she was growing up with her own mother.

Positive outcomes from VWC Network interventions

How counselling contributes to positive outcomes for individual clients

Many positive outcomes are documented in the case study database. VWC's pathways of change (see Glossary) explicitly highlight the importance of the counselling process to achieve several outcomes to support women to take their own decisions about dealing with the violence in their lives. These steps include helping women to understand their rights, believe in themselves, believe that it is possible to actually take steps to end the violence, and build the confidence to make their own plans and decisions. This requires supporting clients to be able to reflect on their situation and the options available to them, and to recognise the cyclical nature of the violence over time. In order to make their own decisions and plans, the role of VWC counsellors is to support women to re-build their self-esteem, including the belief that they are valuable human beings who do not deserve to be subjected to violence. This is particularly important when they have been living with violence over many years, and often since their childhood. These internal changes are critically important when women choose to take any legal measures, such as applying for an FPO.

The database documents a range of outcomes and choices made by women after counselling:

- *Many different considerations and pressures influence their decisions about whether or not to take legal options to try to end the violence.*
 - *Every VWC centre has several examples of former clients who become advocates or community mobilisers, or who assist other women to get help from the VWC Network.*
-

Outcomes on Family Protection Orders (FPOs)

Although more women now come to the VWC Network already knowing about FPOs, and some have already decided that they need one to protect themselves, the majority still need basic information about their human and legal rights in order to think through the options available to them. Many still struggle with the decision to take out an FPO, and some withdraw their applications after they have returned back home. There were 3 such cases in the database (11% of the 27 cases of domestic violence), and in each case there was considerable pressure placed upon them to withdraw the application by relatives. This remains a serious constraint across the national caseload (case study 5 is a representative example). This highlights the need for ongoing community awareness/prevention work by the VWC Network to change the social norms that accept and tolerate violence against women, including among the attitudes and behaviours of community members, family and friends. It also illustrates the long and difficult journey that many young women need to take before they can take assertive action to protect themselves and end the violence in their lives.

Among the 27 domestic violence case studies in the database:

- *63% made applications for FPOs after or during their first counselling session – and many more continue with their FPO applications now compared with 5 years ago*
- *15% had taken out repeated FPO over several years*
- *11% returned for counselling several times before deciding to apply for an FPO, and sometimes this counselling occurred over several years*
- *11% made a decision to apply for an FPO during counselling, and then withdrew the application after pressure from their relatives*

Many women now continue with their FPO application following their counselling, and far more apply on the same day of their first counselling visit compared with 5 years ago; this is seen in the case study database with 63% of the 27 cases of domestic violence making applications for FPOs during or immediately after their first counselling visit. Some women return for counselling periodically and take out several FPOs; this is seen in 15% of the cases in the database. However, for others it can take several counselling sessions to come to this decision, or even years; this makes up the remaining 11% of the case studies documented.



Sanma Counselling Centre (SCC) staff arrived at Luganville market at 5.30am for the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 2018. They began with a half-hour talk that was completed before the women had to start selling their crops. They stayed for the morning. Many women came to the booth for information.

Case study 5: A young woman takes steps to end the violence, but gives him another chance

Sally used to work for an airline company as a sales person, while studying part time at USP, where she met Tim. When Tim's parents told him that they could no longer pay for his course fees, she gave up her own studies and paid for Tim's instead, and he moved in to live with her. Tim spent 6 months with Sally before he was offered a scholarship to study overseas. By this time Sally was pregnant and he told her to go to his home island to live with his parents. Since moving there, she has not seen her own parents for 5 years, because Tim forbade her to leave. Sally was fortunate to find a job and continued to support Tim financially, while also building a home in town.

During her 6 months living with Tim before his study overseas, Sally was often verbally abused, assaulted and threatened, in addition to being isolated from her friends and relatives. When Tim returned from his study, he demanded sex but Sally refused. She knew that he was having sexual relationships with women while he was away, and she wanted him to have a medical check-up first. But she had to give in, because she felt so afraid of him.

Sally came for counselling after more than after 5 years of living with violence and abuse. Tim had threatened to go to her work place and access her personal files on the company's computer. He assaulted her, sent her out of his parents' home, removed the key to the house she had bought with her own earnings, and threatened to move into that house with another woman. Sally's boss encouraged her to come for counselling, because she knew about SCC's work.

Sally was very emotional through several counselling sessions. It was the first time she had told anyone the full extent of her suffering. She decided to get an FPO and planned to come to SCC the next day to collect her application and register it in court. But she did not turn up. A day later, she came in again for counselling. Her mother-in-law had convinced her to give Tim one last chance, and her father-in-law was worried about the family's reputation. However, although she had changed her mind about the FPO, she provided SCC with her medical report from the most recent assault, and asked for it to be kept in her file. She said if she encounters any more violence from her partner, she knows her file is with SCC, and she said she would return and process her FPO.

In some cases, taking out an FPO leads to the violence stopping, either temporarily or in the longer-term. There are 2 examples in the database where this results in young women becoming vocal advocates for VWC Network services in their communities, and assisting others to seek counselling when they need it. Both cases happen to be from TOCC, but every centre has several examples of former clients becoming advocates and community mobilisers.

In one of these TOCC cases, the couple has remained together after FPOs were issued in 2011 and again in 2017. This is an interesting case because the client has stayed with the husband because bride price was paid, and she sees the bride price as "giving him the right to control me". Although it is still early days to be predicting that her husband has reformed his behaviour, her view now is that "the FPO sent him away, and that is what changed him" (see case study 12 in section 5.4.3). The second example is of a woman who separated from her partner following counselling (case study 6). These 2 cases – where both women suffered from multiple forms of violence over several years – demonstrate the different ways that women may choose to use legal procedures to try to end the violence in their lives, based on their own life experiences, values and beliefs, and the type of community support they have access to. They are also representative examples of the way that effective and empowering counselling can reinforce VWC's prevention messages and activities in local communities.

Case study 6: Survivor and community mobiliser!

Lian is 22. She started her relationship with Pridan in December 2015 and they were engaged in the same month. Lian went to live with Pridan at a village very far from her own on the other side of the island. Lian went through all forms of domestic violence in her life with Pridan. She had no freedom to walk around, and was not allowed to talk to other people. She was assaulted many times and had bruises all over her body. In March 2016 she was assaulted again and had a black eye. Lian's parents heard about this assault and arranged for a boat to bring her back to her village.

Her parents knew about TOCC from a visit and talks in their village and surrounding areas back in 2014, and they encouraged Lian to get help. Lian phoned TOCC and the centre returned her call and provided counselling over the phone. During counselling, she was also given information on her rights, including the FPA and FPOs. She asked for an FPO and with the assistance of the counsellor, her application was sent to Santo and was granted by the Magistrates Court. Her order was granted but it took more than 2 weeks for it to be served by the police who had to travel to the other side of the island. During that time, she came back to the centre more than 7 times, and told the counsellor that Pridan wanted to come and take her back.

After her FPO was served to Pridan, Lian came back again for further counselling several times. She never went back to Pridan. She is now living back with her family, and she talks a lot about what happened to her with the girls in her area. She encourages women and girls to come to the centre if they have problems. When TOCC revisited her area again in 2017 for follow-up awareness and prevention talks and mobile counselling, Lian's work resulted in record numbers of new clients seeking help, including 2 girls and 10 women of various ages.

Breaches of FPOs by partners and husbands are not uncommon, but it is still rare for breaches to be followed up assertively by police and courts. The database documents the first time that this happened on Tanna in 2018, 10 years after the FPA was passed. This provides further evidence of the impact and effectiveness of VWC Network community awareness and mobilisation efforts, coupled with the positive impacts of police and male advocacy training. Community members who witnessed an attack on TCC's client immediately called the police – something that would not have happened in this area in the past. The police followed up immediately and came to the village to arrest the offender the same evening, and the next day the offender was sentenced to 8 months jail.

Outcomes: separations and reunions

Of the 35 case studies on young women, the database shows that 66% had separated from partners or husbands (23 clients) at the time that the case study was written; 17% made a decision to remain with their husbands and partners (6 clients); and there was one client (3%) where the outcome of the relationship was unclear. In the remaining 14% (5 cases), this was not applicable to the case (because the violence was not perpetrated by a husband or partner).

It is important to note that these data may over-represent the proportion of women who choose to separate permanently across the VWC Network caseload, since some case studies document clients' experiences where counselling is still ongoing. Furthermore, it is not unusual for women to re-unite with husbands and partners after a period of separation due to an FPO or a crisis due to violence (see case study 12 for example). VWC's national prevalence study found that 51% of those experiencing physical or sexual violence had never left the home due to the violence; of the 49% who did leave, only 4% had left permanently. The reasons women gave for returning to the husband/partner were varied and included: she forgave him and loved him or thought he would change, she didn't want to leave her children, family members had told her to return (most women stay with other family members during temporary separations), belief in the sanctity of marriage, the fact that bride price had been paid, and concern for children, including an inability to support them.^{xi} Many of these

reasons are directly related to women's financial dependence on husbands/partners and their families: separation requires repayment of bride price by her birth family, and even where bride price has not been paid, risks children losing their customary rights to property; advice to return to an abusive partner by the woman's birth family may be due to both custom and financial constraints. More research is needed to determine whether these reasons apply equally to younger and older women; a comparable prevalence study (using the same methodology as VWC's first national study) would be needed to assess whether views and behaviours have changed on separations.

Among the young women in the case study database who were separated from partners and husbands, some had been abandoned immediately after pregnancy or childbirth as noted above, and some before they came for counselling. Three child maintenance claims resulted in men re-uniting with the mother of their children, after having previously deserted her to have a relationship with another woman. One client was aged 21 and another was 22, with the desertion and infidelity occurring immediately after pregnancy. The third woman was 29 and had 2 children with the father, and had also suffered from several forms of violence. In each case the man returned after he was made aware of the fact that he had to pay child maintenance; in the first 2 cases it was after the court order for the payment of maintenance was served; in the third it was due to intervention by the chief informing him of his legal obligations. In each case, the client was reported as being satisfied with the outcome, despite the infidelity and abandonment (case study 7 provides some insight into why women may have this response). By making a claim for child maintenance, each of these women established her legal rights to support for her children. While this is a positive outcome, it is not known whether or for how long these men stayed with their partners, whether the infidelity ceased, or whether they actually fulfilled their legal obligations to provide financial support to their children over the medium to long-term. Enforcement of child maintenance court orders is also extremely difficult for women of all ages (see section 5.2.3).

[Outcomes: access to work and financial autonomy](#)

A positive trend seen in the database is women either returning to work following counselling, or setting up new and successful small businesses or farming enterprises (case studies 7 to 9). This was documented in 22% of the domestic violence cases (6 case studies of 27). Staff confirm that this trend is also seen across the national caseload, and assert that this was rarely seen even 5 years ago.

This is an enormously positive trend not only for the individual women concerned, but because of its powerful and much wider preventative impacts. It demonstrates that the violence can be stopped when young women seek help from the VWC Network, and that young women are capable of looking after themselves and their children if they decide to take the very difficult step of separating, in a context where financial abuse and lack of financial autonomy is common in the national caseload. The 2009 national prevalence study found that 56% of currently-partnered women could not afford to feed or house themselves and their children for 4 weeks, and that 78% could not raise enough money to pay back the bride price; very few women nationally own any assets, and only 18% nationally had savings in the bank.^{xii}

The primary and secondary prevention impacts of these types of cases in small rural communities and in urban settlements should not be under-estimated. For the individual women, it is a sure sign that they have been empowered by VWC's non-judgemental

The case study database shows that some young women return to work after counselling, or set up successful small business enterprises:

- *This demonstrates that counselling has assisted them to recover their sense of self-esteem and agency.*
 - *It contributes powerfully to challenging damaging social norms on gender equality and violence against women of all ages.*
-

approach, which enables them to make their own decisions, in their own time. It demonstrates that they have recovered their sense of self-esteem and agency, despite significant and sometimes long-term trauma. For the children of these women, it removes them from harm at an earlier age, and thus from the long-term impacts of witnessing and experiencing these damaging behaviours themselves.

In summary, all these impacts contribute powerfully to changing social norms on gender equality – by challenging and transforming the expectations, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of women and men, and the family and community members who support the women trying to deal with the violence.

Case study 7: From “custom road” to a small business

Anna is 22. Her mother died when she was very young and she grew up living with her grandparents. She went to school until she was 18, when a marriage was arranged for her and a boy from another village. Anna disagreed and begged her grandparents not to force this on her. Her grandparents said it’s a custom road and she must marry this boy Harry. With tears she was forced to marry Harry and they took her to her husband’s home.

After some time Harry decided to go overseas as a seasonal worker. At the beginning he was sending money and their communication was good, but then suddenly when Anna called Harry he would turn off the phone and no longer wanted to talk with her. At the time she was pregnant with their baby. He stopped sending money and communicating with Anna, so Anna had to go back and live with her grandparents because she had no food or finance to support her and her child. Her grandparents also tried to call Harry but they couldn’t get through to him.

When the baby was born, the grandparents looked after them both, because Anna was jobless. When Harry returned from overseas, he went to live with another woman and ignored Anna and their baby. When Anna called him to remind him of his responsibilities to them both, he threatened to kill her and the baby with a knife if she ever called him again.

After attending an awareness talk by TCC at a nearby village, she came to the office for counselling and decided to apply for an FPO and child maintenance, and both orders were quickly served by the police. When she first came for counselling, she was worried about her broken family and her baby’s future, and undecided about whether she wanted him to return. After all the counselling sessions, she said that she felt that there was light at the end of the tunnel, despite the difficulties and hardships. She made plans to set up a small business once the child maintenance payments come through. Anna still comes to see TCC from time to time. She now has a poultry business and earns money to look after herself and her child.



Case study 8: No longer feeling helpless: a new job as shop supervisor

Joana is 25 and was living with her de facto partner and 2 children. Her partner works most of the time on fishing boats. In 2018 he arranged for Joana and the children to live with his brother while he is overseas. Her partner's brother mistreated her and the children. They were not allowed to share the brother's food or water, and the children were not allowed to use anything in the house. The brother often swore at the children and Joana. He accused her of having an affair and would not provide any money for schools materials. She and the children were very deeply affected by this emotional abuse and neglect. Her partner supported his brother's actions, and blamed and accused Joana. She decided to come to VWC to ask for information, because she had attended an awareness talk by a CAVAW when she was still living on her own island. She came in to the centre feeling very weak and helpless, because she was also jobless.

In addition to providing information about her rights, the counsellor helped her to identify her strengths and the actions that she could take to improve her situation. VWC put Joana and her children into a safe house while the counsellor assisted her with an FPO and a job application, and with finding a house to rent. Three days after her first visit to VWC, she was accepted to work at a local shop and had found a new place to live. Six months later, she was promoted to the position of supervisor due to her reliability and hard work. Her husband continued to call her from the boat, threatened her and ordered her return to the brother, so she returned for counselling to discuss and decide on her options when he comes back. She plans to apply for a new FPO and a child maintenance claim when he returns, because these orders cannot be served while he is overseas.

Case study 9: Still on the journey of healing, but able to support herself now

Judith is 25 and married with 3 children. They were married in 2011 when she was 17. The marriage was arranged through custom by the chief and her parents. She had no choice. At first she thought she would be ok with him, but she was subjected to many forms of severe violence over the years. She was not allowed to see her family, friends or any community members and was ordered to stay in the house at all times. When she was about to deliver their first baby, she visited the Health Centre and met an old friend by chance. Her husband saw this, and when she got home, she knew that something was going to happen to her. He poured a pot of hot soup over her, and beat her up with an umbrella wire. She went into labour the same evening. After her second baby was born, he forced her to have sex with another man, threatening her with a knife and a piece of wood. She suffered a lot emotionally and physically until she gave birth to their third baby. She always wanted to run away but she was very sacred and felt helpless and powerless to do anything in case he killed her. There was also little opportunity.

In 2018 they moved house so their children could attend school. One day he saw her picking up dry wood not far from where some boys diving. He took her home and beat her up and then went out again. That was when she escaped. She had to walk for 4 hours in the dark to get to her father's village. In the morning her father assisted her to talk with a counsellor at VWC over the phone. He knew about VWC services because he is a chief, and had attended some awareness sessions by a CAVAW in 2008 when they visited his area. She received an FPO, and with support from VWC, 2 Police officers travelled to the husband's village to serve the court order and remove the 3 children.

Judith is living with her parents now. She is a kava farmer, and successfully supporting her children. She keeps in touch with the VWC counsellor by phone, but is not ready yet to petition for divorce, because both families are now in dispute and threatening each other with court cases. She is also not ready to follow up with charges against her husband or the stranger that he brought to the house to rape her. She is still fearful of her husband and his family – but she feels safer now. She thanks the counsellor for helping her to regain enough confidence to do farming and care for her children.

[Other legal outcomes](#)

In addition to facilitating FPOs, several other positive legal outcomes and ongoing constraints were seen in the database. Each reflects trends seen across the national caseload:

- The process for granting a divorce is extremely time-consuming, and can sometimes take many years. Cases are not always successful due to the legal limitations of what constitutes grounds for divorce, and requirements that are difficult for many women to fulfil (see case study 10 for an example).
- There were very positive responses by police for 2 cases of cyber-crime where men uploaded videos of their former partners performing sex on social media. In both cases police acted assertively to have the postings removed from social media sites. In one case the former partner was studying overseas and police took action to phone him to remove the material after advocacy by VWC. In the second case the man was working as a seasonal worker overseas and both the police and the Department of Labour responded positively to VWC interventions on her behalf to protect her rights.
- While it is still very difficult to reunite women with their children in many places and cases, this is an area where responses have improved in recent years. Police trained by VWC have acted assertively to assist women to remove their belongings from a husband's/partner's household when necessary, and have helped to reunite women with their children (see case study 9). There are 3 cases that demonstrate this positive outcome in the database (11% of 27 cases). This is a very important trend for its own sake, and because of its impact on the prevention of further violence against women (secondary prevention), in addition to minimising the impacts on children living in violent situations.
- There are many cases where VWC support ensured that women were protected from further violence and assisted to access justice. These include cases where emergency safehouse facilities were provided, in addition to providing support with transport costs to help remove women's belongings, recover children, and serve FPOs (see case studies 6, 8 and 9 for examples).

[Case study 10: Divorce cases demonstrate the need for family law reform](#)

Of 2 case studies in the database where women petitioned for divorce, one was granted. The first is a 28 year old woman pressured to marry by her parents after her child was born, who suffered from physical and emotional violence, coercive control over her social life, and the infidelity of her husband. While the divorce case itself was not complex, she was required to serve copies of the divorce petition to her husband within a month. He had moved to another island (a common occurrence in cases of infidelity), and this was beyond her means. Cooperation between VWC, SCC and VWC-trained police resulted in the petition being served, even though police are not obliged to act in civil matters, and the divorce being granted.

The second case concerns a 24 year old woman who has also suffered from multiple forms of abuse including adultery after their child was born. The Matrimonial Causes Act restricts petitions for divorce within 2 years of marriage. Although she has been empowered through counselling to take the difficult step of divorce against the wishes of family members, the provisions of the Act delay justice and her ability to take a new direction in her life.

5.4 What have we learned about how young women and girls learn about VWC’s services, and what prevents them from seeking help?

5.4.1 How young women and girls learn about and seek help from the VWC Network

Quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrates that VWC’s *combination* of prevention and response strategies is crucial for effective outreach and impact (see sections 5.1 and 5.3). Nevertheless, there are some factors that appear to be more effective than others at helping young women and girls to hear prevention messages, and to take the difficult step of seeking help. Box 26 summarises VWC’s evidence base for different strategies by age group, drawing on the evidence already presented above, and highlighting those that are worthy of further monitoring and research to explore the primary and secondary prevention impacts for young women and girls. This is followed by a discussion of selected prevention strategies not discussed above.

Box 26: Summary of VWC’s evidence on effective outreach and prevention strategies

Strategy	Effectiveness by age	Strength of evidence
Comprehensive and integrated approach to prevention and response targeting a range of stakeholders using multiple strategies, including those below, among others (see Annex 2 for a summary of the approach)	Women of all ages	Strong# primary prevention evidence
Response strategies that contribute to prevention		
Positive counselling and legal outcomes for clients prompts other women to seek help through the following ripple effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former clients assist other young women Older women assist younger women to stop the violence earlier Male and female relatives of former clients assist new clients of all ages Community leaders from villages of former clients assist new clients of all ages Young women clients whose lives have improved become effective advocates and community mobilisers and increase the reach of prevention messages to other young women 	Women of all ages May be greater for young women when former young women clients refer others and become advocates & mobilisers	Promising evidence for secondary prevention. Preliminary evidence on the impact of young women clients as mobilisers requires further research and monitoring.
Positive, timely and effective responses from the law and justice sector, particularly with the implementation of Family Protection Orders (FPOs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This varies according to individual cases, including on the support provided to clients by family members, and the responses by individual police and other law and justice personnel There is little evidence relating to cases where FPOs are breached; this requires further research 	Women of all ages	Strong evidence for secondary prevention. However, positive impacts would be undermined if breaches are not assertively followed up by police.
Targeted prevention strategies		
Targeting of community awareness/prevention at <u>whole communities and community leaders</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influences leaders and community members to recognise gender based violence and assist victims/survivors, including by taking action to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> protect girls from further sexual violence assist women living with domestic violence 	Women of all ages Young women Girls	Strong evidence for secondary prevention for young women. Preliminary evidence of impact for girls, requires further research.
Specific targeting of community education/prevention outreach to young women	Young women	Promising evidence from quantitative

Strategy	Effectiveness by age	Strength of evidence
		and qualitative database.
Regular annual campaigns such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and other campaign events – when used in combination with other comprehensive and integrated outreach and prevention strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases in new clients and repeat counselling sessions is observed in the months following major campaign activities such as the 16 Days campaign and marches 	Women of all ages	Promising evidence from the quantitative database for this research, and from VWC’s M&E data.
Information booths at annual or key community events, staffed by VWC Network members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly increases the number of young women, girls and boys who request information about violence against women and girls, and legal information including about Family Protection Orders (FPOs) Seeking information about violence against women and girls is an early step on VWC’s pathway of change with expected primary and secondary prevention outcomes 	Young women Girls Boys	Strong evidence from VWC’s M&E data that this strategy enables youth and children to access information; not explored in the current research.
Short community awareness sessions undertaken by Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAWs) in remote rural areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young women and girls use CAVAWs as a first point of contact to seek help in remote areas 	Young women Girls	Preliminary evidence that requires further research and monitoring.
<p>Sources: The quantitative and qualitative database from this research, supplemented by other VWC sources outlined below.</p> <p>Primary and secondary prevention: see section 4.1 and Glossary for definitions.</p> <p>Rating scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong#: evidence from the current research is reinforced by statistically significant findings from VWC’s national prevalence study.^{xlii} Strong: evidence from the current research reinforced by all the following: VWC’s national caseload, other VWC M&E data collected for VWC progress reports, and VWC reflection workshop analyses. Promising: evidence from the current research reinforced by one or two of the additional sources above. Preliminary: evidence from the current research which warrants further monitoring and research to learn more lessons for effective prevention and outreach. 		

CAVAW community awareness sessions

Although the participants at VWC’s workshop asserted that CAVAWs are reaching out and assisting young women, it was not possible to validate this from the quantitative data.^{xliii} In the qualitative database, 14% (5 case studies of the total of 35 on young women) were referred by CAVAWs or showed direct evidence of young women under 29 seeking help due to CAVAW community awareness/prevention activities. While staff acknowledge that children do not approach CAVAWs for assistance, it is noteworthy that of the 3 adult survivors of child sexual assault, two directly approached CAVAWs soon after they turned 18.

Regular annual campaigns

The data analysis process included review of monthly data for both new clients and repeat counselling sessions, to identify any fluctuations or trends in accessing services across the 12 months. This showed that there was a peak in the number of new clients at all centres in December and January, during and following the 16 Days of Activism campaign that VWC, branches and CAVAWs hold annually throughout the country from November 25th (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) through to 10th December (Human Rights Day).^{xliiv}

VWC's annual analysis of monitoring and evaluation data has demonstrated this peak in previous years, even before other local and international stakeholders began their own regular activities during the 16 day campaign period – so it was not unexpected to see this peak in the current research. However, the quantitative data indicates the impact of the campaign was similar for women of all ages, and did not result in substantial increases in younger women or girls seeking assistance, compared with women over 29. Nevertheless, this phenomenon reinforces other evidence about the positive impact of VWC's prevention/community awareness activities at enabling women to seek help.

A similar trend has been observed following public marches in Port Vila. These are often followed up by young women coming to VWC for assistance, either by seeking information or for counselling for the first time.

Information booths at public events

Box 24 notes that holding information booths at annual or key community events is an effective strategy for reaching young women and girls. For example, VWC has frequently set up booths at the "Christmas in the Park" events run by the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), and one was held during the 16 Days of Activism campaign during the year of study, in December 2015. Branches have also used this strategy, sometimes in local market places or associated with key provincial events.

VWC's annual analysis of internal monitoring and evaluation data has confirmed that booths of this type contribute to a significant increase in girls, boys, and young women accessing *information* about VWC's services, by picking up brochures from the booths and by chatting to the staff on duty. Staff workshops have also confirmed that booths are a safe way for younger women and men as well as boys and girls to access information, because children and youth are likely to be unable or unwilling to travel to a centre.

Seeking information is identified as an essential short-term outcome on VWC's pathway of change. In a context where gender inequality and gender based violence is tolerated and normalised, it is an important initial step that can sometimes lead to young people following up by visiting a centre, either by themselves or with a family member or friend. However the length of time between receiving VWC's information and taking the further step of seeking counselling can vary enormously.

As with all the specific strategies listed above, it is questionable (or at least unknown) if any of them alone would be as effective without the overarching comprehensive and long-term approach that VWC has taken since its establishment. This means that some caution is required regarding replication. The international evidence base also indicates that the sum of such strategies is much greater than its individual components, and that combining and targeting them appropriately to different stakeholders and vulnerable groups over the long-term is a key to effectiveness.

5.4.2 What prevents girls from seeking help?

Case studies on child sexual assault demonstrate that a key factor preventing girls from seeking help is their dependence on adults to recognise the symptoms of abuse and the serious long-term consequences, and assist them to seek help, despite the shame and fear felt by both the girl and those who seek to protect her. The context in which much of the violence against girls takes place is an obvious constraint; this includes threats to kill and threats of further violence made to both the victim and her confidante, ongoing physical violence and emotional abuse, and financial and emotional dependence on the perpetrator by both the girl and her confidante (see case studies 2 and 11). For example, there were a few cases in the database where child sexual abuse came to light only because the mother herself became a client, due to her own experiences of violence by the same or another perpetrator (case study 11).

Case study 11: Five years of sexual abuse before help comes to Anna

Sari had already been an SCC client for some time when she heard that her birth daughter Anna had been sexually abused by her sister's husband Silas for several years. Sari's sister had adopted Anna when she was 3 months old. Sari was furious and nervous that Anna would suffer further abuse in the adoptive family. When Anna came to visit Sari for a few days, Sari decided she must come to SCC for help.

When Sari brought Anna for counselling, Anna revealed that she had been repeatedly abused since she was 12 years old. Her adoptive father had threatened to whip her if she told anyone, and forced her to pretend that everything was fine. The abuse continued even after Sari's sister discovered Silas raping Anna one evening, and it took 5 years for Sari's sister to tell Sari what was happening, due to Silas's threats.

Police arrested Silas after 3 attempts because he was always hiding. Silas is now at the correctional centre awaiting his trial. Anna is now more relaxed, because he is in jail. She is now back at school and living with her biological mother.

Not surprisingly, most cases of child abuse of both boys and girls in the national caseload (physical and sexual) come to light because someone else brings the child to the VWC Network for help and support. In addition to birth parents, this may include other relatives, male advocates, chiefs, women's leaders, or former or current adult clients. As noted above, three of the 19 cases of sexual violence against girls were reported to VWC only once the girls had reached 18 (section 5.3.2 and 5.3.3); this accounts for 16% of the total of 19 case studies in the database concerning violence against girls.

VWC staff have observed that some teachers assist children by helping them to report child sexual abuse, or reporting it themselves on their behalf. This is a recent trend in the national caseload, and a very positive sign of change. Although staff report that some teachers are still fearful to report, and others are insensitive due to lack of understanding of the issues, a very recent case (not included in the database) concerns abuse by a principal; the fact that this abuse was reported is also a positive sign. VWC has an evolving partnership with the education sector and has observed positive messages in seminars and workshops that the Education Department will not tolerate teachers perpetrating sexual abuse. It is also very positive that pregnancy does not appear to be a stigma preventing girls from continuing with their education, either at a policy or community level; VWC Network staff shared several examples of girls returning to school after the baby is born, from several different locations.

Most cases of child abuse of girls and boys come to light because an adult brings the child to the VWC Network for help and support. This often occurs after they attend a VWC Network community awareness/prevention event.

It is also very positive that pregnancy does not appear to be a stigma preventing girls from continuing with their education, either at a policy or community level; VWC Network staff shared several examples of girls returning to school after the baby is born, from several different locations.

The constraints discussed above also prevent girls who have experienced child sexual assault from coming back for follow-up counselling, in addition to those girls facing other issues of violence (such as domestic violence and physical abuse). Another factor is location and the lack of specialised counselling services in remote areas. While she remains a child, and often well after she turns 18, she remains dependent on the adults in her life, who may be reluctant to invest in getting help, may not realise that there are services to assist and that long-term counselling is needed for any of the types of problems that affect girls, or who may not see the value of this, particularly if it involves incurring travel or other costs.

5.4.3 What prevents young women from seeking help?

Patterns of gender inequality, violence against women and coercive control

Some of the constraints to women seeking help have already been mentioned in section 5.2.3, since they are similar to those which prevent women from returning for further counselling after their first visit. These affect women of all ages to varying degrees and include:

- a reluctance to confide in anyone or seek help until it gets to crisis point;
- pressure to reconcile with husbands and partners by family members; and
- a reluctance to leave their abusive partner because they love him, or for a variety of other reasons such as financial dependence, concern for their children's welfare, and reasons related to customary and religious status.

Several other factors emerged from the database that constrain young women from seeking help. Like those noted above, many are inextricably linked to patterns of violence against women and the social norms (attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices) that reinforce violent behaviour and the pervasive gender inequality which is its fundamental cause.

Coercive control by husbands and partners including control over women's mobility – preventing contact with family, friends, community members, and attendance at community awareness/prevention events initiated by VWC (and other educational and community-based activities by a range of other agencies) – were common in the case study database. In more than half of the case studies on young women, husbands and partners exercised very strict control over their movements. These patterns of control and deprivations of liberty typically began very early in their relationships. They prevent women from knowing about their human and legal rights, regardless of how these messages are transmitted or by whom. They also prevent or constrain them from being able to share what is happening to them with anyone close, let alone a service-provider such as the VWC Network, a health service, or any other agency.

In addition to preventing young women from knowing where they can get information about the VWC Network and other services (see case studies 1, 5, 6, and 9 for examples), these patterns of control reinforce acceptance of the violent behaviour until it becomes either unbearable or life-threatening. As VWC staff at the data analysis workshop pointed out, coercive control, unequal power, and gender inequality are already well-established during childhood; control of young women's lives by husbands and partners often follows on from strict control by parents and guardians, and often conditions girls to tolerate and accept violent and abusive behaviour.

Analysis of the case study database identified desertion as an issue for young women soon after pregnancy or childbirth, including in some custom marriages, (see section 5.3.4 and case study 7). In some provinces such as Tanna, it is not uncommon for men to "block" or claim a young woman who has been betrothed to him in an arranged marriage (for example in a swapping arrangement between families or other type of arranged marriage) by having sex with her, but then deserting her. In other parts of the country (such as Big Bay Bush in Sanma province) where "swapping" of girls also occurs, staff assert that it is widely known that men have sex with the girls at a very early age after the promise of marriage is made. Where these young women and girls are bound by custom and living in areas that have not accepted VWC Network requests to conduct community

Coercive control by husbands and partners is a major issue which prevents young women from being able to hear about services and access help to protect herself from violence:

- *"Control by partners and husbands is expected, because she is controlled from childhood and comes to expect this. Then the man steps in and continues the control over all aspects of her life."*

(VWC Data Analysis Workshop, March 2019)

awareness activities, it is unlikely that they would be able to come forward when they are living with violence or unsupported with a child.

Findings from the national prevalence research demonstrated that the impact of custom and bride price is highly complex, and concluded that further research is needed to determine which aspects of custom and bride price play out for and against women's rights, the factors that inform women's and men's views on this, and how these views are changing. It found that 32% of all married women did not choose their husband, including 21% who also said that they were not forced to marry despite not choosing themselves, and 11% who said they were forced to do so. Of these, almost half (46%) were arranged marriages, 13% were swapping arrangements between families, 5% were married as part of a compensation arrangement between families, as settlement for a land dispute, or were passed on to another man in her former husband's family after his death; 34% were arranged for other reasons that were not specified.^{xiv} The FPA does not include forced marriage as a form of violence against women.

The current database reinforces the need for research on custom, marriage arrangements and violence against women, including how young women themselves view these arrangements, and what factors and experiences inform those views. The database shows varied responses by young women to arranged marriages and other marriage customs (ranging from compliance to opposition), as well as different responses when custom and arranged marriages involve violence and abuse: these include instances of women gaining support from family to leave the custom union following incidents of violence (case study 7), protracted conflict and legal disputes which prevent women from moving on to fully resolve their cases (case study 9), and instances where women assert or accept that bride price confers levels of control by the husband, but nevertheless use FPOs to ensure their physical safety (case study 12).

Case study 12: "Bride price gave him power"

Melanie was 24 when she started her relationship with Joel. After 3 months, there was daily emotional abuse and the first physical assault occurred soon after. She had bruises all over her face, and a swollen black eye that resulted in blurred vision. She heard from someone about TOCC and got her first FPO which resulted in Joel being away from her for 3 months. Every now and again, Melanie would come back to the centre whenever she was hurt.

In July 2016, Melanie and Joel got married. After the wedding, life got worse. When Joel was angry with Melanie, he always mentioned that the bride price was too high and that this gave him the power to control her. So whatever Joel said, Melanie obeyed. She did whatever Joel ordered her to do, because she also believed that bride price gave him this power. Joel told her that her life is in his hands. If she doesn't do what he says, he would chop off her head with a big knife anytime. Melanie was so hurt and frightened that she could not work properly. She felt that her life was in danger.

After some time, Melanie applied for another FPO which required Joel to live with his family. While he was away from Melanie, he was unhappy, sometimes he was hungry and he regretted his actions. After the FPO lapsed he apologised to her and now he tells other men that having the FPO and living away from his wife is so hurtful and a "pain in the ass". He encouraged the men in his village not to treat women badly "because there is a centre that assists them". Melanie says his behaviour has changed, and she tells many other women about how TOCC helped her. Some of TOCC's new clients said they heard information from Melanie, and that is why they came to TOCC for help.

On the other hand, choosing a "love marriage" can also prevent young women from seeking help. Both the national caseload and the research case study database points to incidents where young women feel they cannot seek help to deal with a violent partner or return home to safety, when their

parents were against the relationship from the very beginning, particularly when the young women were forbidden by their parents from having the relationship. In these cases, young women tend to blame themselves, may be unwilling to admit how bad their situation is, and fear that their family will not support them, after having rejected parents' advice and chosen the "love marriage" in the first place.

Another important finding from the prevalence study that is reinforced by this research is that women themselves minimise the impact of all forms of violence on their own physical and emotional health and spiritual well-being. This constrains them from seeking help until they reach crisis point, despite well-documented physical injuries including disabilities as a result of the violence, and it reinforces the tendency to put up with cycles of violence for longer. The prevalence study confirmed that this is a coping strategy extensively used by women living with men's violence, reinforced by community and institutional acceptance of patterns of gender inequality which are the drivers of violence against women and girls.^{xlvi}

Both the quantitative and qualitative database confirm that this coping behaviour is used by many young women who have already lived with the violence for years, despite their young age. The case study evidence also clearly demonstrates that this coping strategy is reinforced by a lack of knowledge of their options, poor self-esteem due to the ongoing violence, and lack of family and community support to take consider new options. One after another, the case studies describe young women who continue to love, continue to forgive, and hope for change, while trying to avoid and prevent further violence.



Participants at a mobile counselling visit to Mota Island in October 2019 by the Torba Counselling Centre (TOCC) hold up VWC posters and leaflets on violence against women and children. 23 women, 10 men, 5 girls and 6 boys attended the mobile counselling public talk. TOCC staff provided individual one-to-one counselling and followed up on requests for information over the following 2 days.



Participants at VWC's Malampa Health staff training in 2018.

Inappropriate responses by law and justice officials

Despite the great progress made in improving police and other law and justice responses to cases of violence against women, it is still not uncommon for there to be delays in the processing of FPOs by police and courts, and in the follow-up of cases that require action. Unfortunately, some police officers continue to hold “roundtable meetings” where an application has been lawfully made for an FPO. In these meetings, both the victim/survivor and the perpetrator are brought together face-to-face and advised by the police to reconcile their differences – with no consideration given to the power differences between victim/survivor and perpetrator, nor to international learning and experience regarding the risks that this may place on women. VWC’s national prevalence study demonstrated that women tend to delay disclosing violence either until their life is threatened, or they cannot take it anymore. In this context, delays in issuing FPOs and roundtable meetings can pose a serious risk to both women and children.

Roundtable meetings initiated by the police are contrary to the requirements of the FPA, in addition to those of the Vanuatu Police Force Standard Operating Procedures and Family Violence Policy. In some cases, this practice still occurs among police officers who have received training by VWC. When VWC has raised this during police training sessions and with individual police, officers usually explain and justify their actions as fulfilling their legal responsibilities to keep the peace under the Police Act.

“Roundtable meetings” between the perpetrator and victim/survivor continue to be initiated by some police, despite the fact that this is contrary to the requirements of the Family Protection Act, the Vanuatu Police Force Standard Operating Procedures and Police Family Violence Policy.

It is not possible to assess how frequently this happens when the VWC Network is not involved in the case.

However, it is clear that this would undermine young women’s confidence to come forward again. It is also likely to deter relatives, friends and community members from taking timely action with police to protect themselves or their loved ones from a violent attack, regardless of their age.

There was one case in the qualitative database where a counsellor from one of VWC’s branches assisted a young woman to apply for an FPO. However, a Police Officer intervened in the case by calling the branch, and arguing that the child of the relationship needed to stay with the father. In this particular case, the police officer was related to the perpetrator. These types of interventions by police are relatively rare, and the majority of police trained by VWC do not intervene in this way. However, when they do occur, they are a serious additional impediment that prevent women of all ages from seeking help and claiming their legal rights. It is reasonable to assume that when such illegal interventions occur, they would become well-known in the communities of the victim/survivor and perpetrator.

Sexual harassment

There were no cases of sexual harassment in the qualitative database, and only 2 new clients and 6 repeat counselling sessions in the quantitative database for 2015/2016. Of the new clients, one of these was a girl under 18 and the other a woman over 30; all 6 of the repeat counselling sessions were with girls (Annex 1, section 6).

A review of VWC’s national legal caseload since 2015/2016 shows that there was one case of legal action taken by VWC on a client’s behalf since 2015/2016 which involved workplace sexual harassment. For this case, the sexual harassment was committed by a man in a supervisory position against an employee, and was immediately followed by overt discrimination and a physical assault when the client did not comply with the harasser’s expectations for sexual favours; the assault was

the key factor that enabled VWC to assist the client to seek legal redress. With no national legislation on workplace sexual harassment, it is not possible for VWC to take sexual harassment cases to court unless the perpetrator's actions also include physical assault, or the perpetrator's action is classified as within the meaning of indecent assault in the Penal Code.

Sexual harassment is normalised in Vanuatu society, as are other forms of violence and abuse of women and girls; this accounts for the very low numbers of clients seeking help with this issue. Low levels of reporting of sexual harassment make it difficult to accurately assess the likely prevalence of this problem in Vanuatu, but it is reasonable to assume that the rates are very high. For example, recent Australian research on the prevalence of sexual harassment shows that 85% of women regardless of age have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their lifetime, 39% have experienced it at work in the last 5 years, but only 17% have ever reported it to anyone in authority. Of those who have experienced workplace sexual harassment, prevalence is much higher for women under 29 and girls aged 15 to 17. Data from several international sources confirms that the prevalence of sexual harassment is a pervasive problem, especially among young women.^{xlvii}

Although it is not surprising, it is concerning that action is not yet being taken on incidents of sexual harassment by young women. It took decades for VWC's advocacy on physical violence to be taken seriously as an abuse of women's human and legal rights, despite the serious and often visible consequences – the issue was often seen as being over-stated, or minor in its incidence, extent and impacts. The national prevalence study undertaken in 2009 helped to turn that around, but to date, sexual harassment has not received the same type of public attention.

To date, sexual harassment has also not been given prominence in VWC Network community awareness, campaigning and training activities to the same extent as other forms of violence and abuse such as emotional and financial and coercive control by husbands and partners. Moreover, it is difficult to deal with this issue without laws to enable women to be free of such behaviour in the community and in the workplace. Nevertheless, VWC recognises that preventing violence against women and girls requires addressing all expressions of gender inequality. Normalised sexual harassment of young women and girls is a major expression of gender inequality; it reinforces acceptance and tolerance of other forms of gender based discrimination, mistreatment and violence towards women of all ages.



6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research provides strong evidence that VWC's strategies to target young women have been effective at reducing further violence against them. It also provides further evidence – building on the statistically significant findings from the national prevalence study undertaken in 2009 – that VWC's comprehensive and integrated model of multi-stakeholder prevention and response is effective at reducing violence against women (see Annex 2 for a summary of VWC's approach).

While these findings are positive, VWC recognises that there remains much more to be done to reduce the prevalence of violence against young women and girls. It is important for periodic research to be undertaken by VWC to ensure that outreach strategies to young women continue to be effective in a rapidly changing social media environment, and to explore the effectiveness of messaging to young men.

This research provides strong evidence that VWC's comprehensive and integrated multi-stakeholder approach is effective in reaching out to young women and preventing further violence (secondary prevention).

It also reinforces the statistically significant findings of the 2009 national prevalence research that VWC's model is effective at reducing the overall prevalence of violence (primary prevention).

Thirty recommendations were made to other agencies in VWC's landmark 2009 national prevalence study, covering key actions that needed to be taken to prevent violence against women from ever occurring in the first place (primary prevention), strengthen support services for victims/survivors, strengthen the legal and policy framework, and to ensure that the inputs and funding provided by donor agencies are evidence-based. While some of these recommendations have been progressively implemented since the research report was published in 2011 and much good progress has been made by a range of national and local stakeholders, many are still relevant and require further effort to speed up progress towards eliminating violence against women and girls from Vanuatu. Similarly, a report published in 2016 by UN Women on *Women's and Children's Access to the Formal Justice System in Vanuatu* made over 50 specific recommendations; many of these also need to be followed up more assertively by law and justice sector agencies.^{xlviii} All the recommendations below are made because they emerge as priorities from the findings of the current research. However, some are adapted from the 2 research reports cited above, where relevant to the current findings, and in need of either urgent or wider implementation.

Prevention and response programs

The responses of government agencies, donor agencies, civil society organisations, chiefs, church and other community leaders need to be based on the following fundamental principles:

- violence under any circumstances is a crime;
- violence or abuse against women and girls can never be justified or condoned on the basis of any tradition, culture or custom (including bride price);
- women and girls have a right to live without violence;
- women and men are equal under Vanuatu's Constitution; and
- women and children can never be "owned" by men or parents.^{xlix}

In addition to the principles above, a human rights and gender equality approach to the prevention and response of violence against women means that all training, prevention and response services must be clear about the causes of violence against women, versus the situations that may trigger

violent incidents. Violence against women is caused by gender inequality in Vanuatu society; and violence reinforces the unequal power and control that many men have over their wives, partners, daughters, and other children under their care.

As an increasing number of local and international organisations are funded by donors to prevent and respond to violence against women, including many targeting young women and girls, the recommendations below are of the highest importance. They are relevant to all sectors, including faith-based organisations, INGOs, youth, sporting and community-based programs, and initiatives in the health, education, law and justice sectors, and the media, in addition to bilateral and multilateral donors and UN agencies implementing programs in Vanuatu. It is very positive that so many organisations are now engaged in preventing violence against women and children – and this in itself is an important outcome of the decades of work by VWC and other women’s civil society organisations in the Pacific region. However, it is noteworthy that to date, the VWC Network still receives very few direct referrals of girls, young women or adult women from several of the programs implemented by other agencies; this is a cause for concern and merits investigation by these agencies themselves.

Recommendations

1. *All community awareness/prevention, education, training and response programs to address violence against women and girls, by all stakeholders, must be explicitly based on a human rights and gender equality approach, and firmly grounded in the evidence base of what works to prevent and respond to gender based violence.*
2. *All initiatives and organisations which aim to raise awareness or conduct community education and training to prevent violence against young women and girls, including those which carry out research, must ensure that there are clear referral protocols in place for young women, adult women and girls and boys who seek help during each prevention activity.*
 - *Victims/survivors should be referred to the national VWC Network, rather than to people or agencies who are not specifically trained to provide counselling and assistance on violence against women, and who are not receiving ongoing counsellor supervision.*

The findings of this research have confirmed that sexual violence against girls is still hugely under-reported, and that some girls are living with repeated and multiple forms of violence over many years until and after they turn 18, with little way of reporting and getting help unless they are assisted by a trusted adult. The findings also demonstrate that patterns of violence and inequality begin very early in relationships between young women and men, and that many young women live with extreme and multiple forms of physical, sexual and emotional violence and coercive control for many years before they are able to take action to seek help. Understanding the problem of violence against women and children, the capacity to recognise the key signs, and an openness to disclosure are essential for family members, friends, and potential support people in educational institutions to provide appropriate help to victims/survivors to stop the violence as early as possible.

The potential impacts on children of violence against their mothers is an area where more attention is needed. VWC’s national prevalence study demonstrated several psychological/emotional and educational impacts that may have long-term consequences for children, and some of these potential impacts have also been observed in the current research. Recent collaborations between the Ministry of Education and VWC – including a panel discussion for 2019 National Women’s Day – are a positive sign in relation to the recommendations below.

Recommendations

3. *Youth training and other programs specifically targeting young women and men should include a focus on women’s and girls’ human rights and gender equality, sexual harassment,*

evidence of the high prevalence of violence against young women and girls in Vanuatu, its key features, and its devastating consequences for victims/survivors, their families, communities and the nation as a whole.

4. *Training to recognise signs of violence against girls and young women and to respond appropriately should be provided at all levels of the education system, with referral protocols in place, including refresher training as needed for both new and longer-term staff.*
 - *This should include: Ministry of Education officials; Provincial Education Offices; principals and teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors; parents and teachers associations; and school counsellors.*
 - *Training to recognise the signs in children (boys and girls) and youth who are impacted by violence against women at home should also be provided, with appropriate referral protocols in place.*
5. *Male and female students must also have age-appropriate regular opportunities to learn about gender equality, human rights and violence against women and children, including the services that exist to help victims/survivors and their support networks.*

Strengthening the legal and policy framework and access to justice

Both the national caseload and the case study database for the current research reveals inconsistent application of the FPA in some cases, despite the best efforts of many police and other law and justice personnel trained by VWC. The research also highlights the many difficulties associated with assisting children, and a failure to adequately protect children from ongoing and persistent sexual abuse, including in adoptive families.

The current research and VWC's current caseload indicate that there are ongoing delays with accessing child maintenance, and inconsistencies in dealing with breaches of child maintenance orders. Some legal requirements associated with child maintenance, family maintenance and divorce law are gender-blind in practice, and these compound the difficulties faced by young women and adult women alike in accessing justice and claiming their rights.

Recommendations

6. *The Vanuatu Police Force should, as a matter of urgency and in consultation with the VWC, review the practice of roundtables in cases of violence against women of all ages.*
 - *This is essential to ensure that the Vanuatu Police Force 2015 Family Violence Policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are applied consistently in every case.¹*
 - *Clear directions need to be given to all police officers that the Police Act does not override the provisions of the FPA and the SOPs.*
7. *The Vanuatu Government should consider instructing the Law Reform Commission to undertake an urgent review of all aspects of marriage and family law matters, in order to develop a comprehensive family law that takes into account the prevalence, severity and impacts of violence against women and children. Different types of family situations should be considered as part of this review, including:*
 - *The current difficulties faced by women in de facto relationships with accessing child maintenance and in ensuring that these orders are enforced.*
 - *The current difficulties faced by married women who claim for family maintenance and who are separated from their husbands, as the husband has to be prosecuted first under the Maintenance of Family Act. This is a lengthy process for women, who must report to the police, and await investigation and prosecution, rather than being considered as an outright civil claim.*
 - *All other matters pertaining to marriage and family law, including relating to formal and informal adoption.*

8. *The Vanuatu Government should consider introducing a national policy and law on sexual harassment, including workplace provisions.*

Further research on violence against woman and girls in Vanuatu

VWC's next research project is a qualitative study on the links between custom, bride price, women's human rights and bride price. This will further explore the findings in this area from both the 2009 prevalence study and the current research. VWC has advocated for funding to undertake a follow-up to the first national study on the prevalence of violence against women by 2024, to provide comparable data on prevalence and changes in attitudes, with the first survey conducted by VWC in collaboration with the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) in 2009. VWC and VNSO used the WHO methodology and survey tool, which was slightly adapted for the Vanuatu context. VWC believes that a repeat of this same tool (with some further minor adaptations and updates) would provide the most reliable and valid evidence of changes in prevalence since the 2009 baseline study; no funding has been secured to date.

Many lessons were learned in the adaptation of the WHO survey tool and VNSO's sampling strategy, which included 8 survey sites (the 2 urban areas and 6 provinces, including all major islands). This strategy was designed to ensure that the survey findings would have credibility with national, provincial and local island leaders, and enabled VWC to target key groups at the provincial level with its community education and advocacy messages (see section 5.1.4). Having VWC lead the survey – a local women's organisation with a long track record and consistent approach to providing prevention and response services in an integrated and multi-faceted fashion – had a profound effect on the extent to which the survey findings were accepted and acted upon nationally, provincially and at the community level. The WHO methodology was widely used throughout the Pacific in the first round of prevalence studies undertaken through SPC (the Pacific Community), UNFPA and other national women's organisations with Australian Government aid support.

The findings of the current research on cases of child sexual abuse in adoptive families – where girls are living away from both the birth mother and father – are also seen in VWC's national caseload, and require further investigation. This is an important area for future qualitative and quantitative research and could be explored in future national prevalence studies, with only minor adaptations to the WHO methodology used by VWC in the 2009 study.

Finally, the very low level of reporting of sexual harassment among young women deserves further investigation. In addition to a quantitative study to explore prevalence, a qualitative study would also assist to spread light on newer forms of sexual harassment and image-based abuse through social media, the links between sexual harassment and the various forms of violence against women and girls and coercive control, and its impacts on victims/survivors – and on national efforts by a range of agencies to promote gender equality and reduce violence against women and girls.

Recommendations

9. *Donors should consider funding VWC, in collaboration with VNSO, to undertake a follow-up study on the prevalence of violence against women by 2024, using the WHO methodology that was adapted for the baseline Vanuatu study undertaken in 2009.*
10. *Further research is also needed on the findings of this research regarding the high proportion of child sexual abuse cases occurring in adoptive families, and the implications of this finding for Vanuatu's child protection provisions. This should ideally be explored in future national prevalence studies.*
11. *Consideration should also be given to undertaking research on the prevalence of sexual harassment by age, and its impacts on young women and girls.*

Annex 1: Quantitative data¹

1. VANUATU WOMEN'S CENTRE: NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

1.1.1 Tally on new VWC clients, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1	2	0	14	14	1	0	1	0	33
Young women (18-24)	152	52	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	210
Young women (25-29)	113	33	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	148
Sub-total young women and girls	266	87	2	14	14	3	0	1	4	391
Women (30+)	283	25	8	0	0	2	1	2	23	344
Totals	549	112	10	14	14	5	1	3	27	735

1.1.2 Percentage of new VWC clients, by age and category, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0.2%	2%	0%	100%	100%	20%	0%	33%	0%	4%
Young women (18-24)	28%	46%	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	0%	15%	29%
Young women (25-29)	21%	29%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%
Sub-total young women and girls	48%	78%	20%	100%	100%	60%	0%	33%	15%	53%
Women (30+)	52%	22%	80%	0%	0%	40%	100%	67%	85%	47%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

1.2.1 Tally on repeat counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	3	3	0	50	39	6	0	1	0	102
Young women (18-24)	217	134	0	0	0	2	0	0	17	370
Young women (25-29)	238	102	7	0	0	0	0	0	4	351
Sub-total young women and girls	458	239	7	50	39	8	0	1	21	823
Women (30+)	733	136	17	0	0	4	0	3	50	943
Totals	1191	375	24	50	39	12	0	4	71	1766

¹ All percentages in this annex are rounded to the nearest digit. Key: DV-domestic violence; CM-child maintenance; FM-family maintenance; CA-P-child physical abuse; CA-S: child sexual abuse; SH-sexual harassment.

1.2.2 Percentage of repeat VWC counselling sessions, by age and category, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0.3%	1%	0%	100%	100%	50%	0%	25%	0%	6%
Young women (18-24)	18%	36%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	24%	21%
Young women (25-29)	20%	27%	29%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	20%
Sub-total young women and girls	38%	64%	29%	100%	100%	67%	0%	25%	30%	47%
Women (30+)	62%	36%	71%	0%	0%	33%	0%	75%	70%	53%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

1.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat VWC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	4	5	0	64	53	7	0	2	0	135
Young women (18-24)	369	186	0	0	0	4	0	0	21	580
Young women (25-29)	351	135	9	0	0	0	0	0	4	499
Sub-total young women and girls	724	326	9	64	53	11	0	2	25	1214
Women (30+)	1016	161	25	0	0	6	1	5	73	1287
Totals	1740	487	34	64	53	17	1	7	98	2501

1.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL VWC counselling sessions, by age and category, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0.2%	1%	0%	100%	100%	41%	0%	29%	0%	5%
Young women (18-24)	21%	38%	0%	0%	0%	24%	0%	0%	21%	23%
Young women (25-29)	20%	28%	26%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	20%
Sub-total young women and girls	42%	67%	26%	100%	100%	65%	0%	29%	26%	49%
Women (30+)	58%	33%	74%	0%	0%	35%	100%	71%	74%	51%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

2. SANMA COUNSELLING CENTRE: NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

2.1.1 Tally on new SCC clients, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	4	1	0	4	11	1	0	0	0	21
Young women (18-24)	55	25	0	0	0	2	0	0	7	89
Young women (25-29)	26	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	40
Sub-total young women and girls	85	36	0	4	11	3	0	0	11	150
Women (30+)	74	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	12	99
Totals	159	47	2	4	11	3	0	0	23	249

2.1.2 Percentage of new SCC clients, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	3%	2%	0%	100%	100%	33%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Young women (18-24)	35%	53%	0%	0%	0%	67%	0%	0%	30%	36%
Young women (25-29)	16%	21%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	16%
Sub-total young women and girls	53%	77%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	48%	60%
Women (30+)	47%	23%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	52%	40%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%

2.2.1 Tally on repeat SCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	3	3	0	1	27	1	0	0	0	35
Young women (18-24)	75	144	3	0	0	3	0	0	12	237
Young women (25-29)	75	157	1	0	0	0	0	0	22	255
Sub-total young women and girls	153	304	4	1	27	4	0	0	34	527
Women (30+)	293	157	70	0	0	0	0	0	29	549
Totals	446	461	74	1	27	4	0	0	63	1076

2.2.2 Percentage of repeat SCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	1%	0%	100%	100%	25%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Young women (18-24)	17%	31%	4%	0%	0%	75%	0%	0%	19%	22%
Young women (25-29)	17%	34%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	35%	24%
Sub-total young women and girls	34%	66%	5%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	54%	49%
Women (30+)	66%	34%	95%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	46%	51%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%

2.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat SCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	7	4	0	5	38	2	0	0	0	56
Young women (18-24)	130	169	3	0	0	5	0	0	19	326
Young women (25-29)	101	167	1	0	0	0	0	0	26	295
Sub-total young women and girls	238	340	4	5	38	7	0	0	45	677
Women (30+)	367	168	72	0	0	0	0	0	41	648
Totals	605	508	76	5	38	7	0	0	86	1325

2.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL SCC counselling sessions, by age and category

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	1%	0%	100%	100%	29%	0%	0%	0%	4%
Young women (18-24)	21%	33%	4%	0%	0%	71%	0%	0%	22%	25%
Young women (25-29)	17%	33%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	30%	22%
Sub-total young women and girls	39%	67%	5%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	52%	51%
Women (30+)	61%	33%	95%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	48%	49%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%

3. TAFEA COUNSELLING CENTRE: NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

3.1.1 Tally on new TCC clients, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0	0	0	2	6	1	0	1	0	10
Young women (18-24)	22	17	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	44
Young women (25-29)	22	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	34
Sub-total young women and girls	44	27	0	2	6	4	0	1	4	88
Women (30+)	45	6	1	0	0	2	0	0	7	61
Totals	89	33	1	2	6	6	0	1	11	149

3.1.2 Percentage of new TCC clients, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	17%	0%	100%	0%	7%
Young women (18-24)	25%	52%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	27%	30%
Young women (25-29)	25%	30%	0%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	9%	23%
Sub-total young women and girls	49%	82%	0%	100%	100%	67%	0%	100%	36%	59%
Women (30+)	51%	18%	100%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	64%	41%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

3.2.1 Tally on repeat counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Young women (18-24)	22	35	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	66
Young women (25-29)	26	41	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	73
Sub-total young women and girls	48	76	3	0	4	1	0	0	11	143
Women (30+)	53	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	9	70
Totals	101	82	4	0	4	2	0	0	20	213

3.2.2 Percentage of repeat TCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Young women (18-24)	22%	43%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	40%	31%
Young women (25-29)	26%	50%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	15%	34%
Sub-total young women and girls	48%	93%	75%	0%	100%	50%	0%	0%	55%	67%
Women (30+)	52%	7%	25%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	45%	33%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%

3.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat TCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0	0	0	2	10	1	0	1	0	14
Young women (18-24)	44	52	0	0	0	3	0	0	11	110
Young women (25-29)	48	51	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	107
Sub-total young women and girls	92	103	3	2	10	5	0	1	15	231
Women (30+)	98	12	2	0	0	3	0	0	16	131
Totals	190	115	5	2	10	8	0	1	31	362

3.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL TCC counselling sessions, by age and category

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%	13%	0%	100%	0%	4%
Young women (18-24)	23%	45%	0%	0%	0%	38%	0%	0%	35%	30%
Young women (25-29)	25%	44%	60%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	13%	30%
Sub-total young women and girls	48%	90%	60%	100%	100%	63%	0%	100%	48%	64%
Women (30+)	52%	10%	40%	0%	0%	38%	0%	0%	52%	36%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

4. TORBA COUNSELLING CENTRE: NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

4.1.1 Tally on new TOCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	8
Young women (18-24)	19	6	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	30
Young women (25-29)	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	18
Sub-total young women and girls	36	7	0	0	6	3	1	1	2	56
Women (30+)	28	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	35
Totals	64	13	0	0	6	3	1	1	3	91

4.1.2 Percentage of new TOCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	2%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	9%
Young women (18-24)	30%	46%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	67%	33%
Young women (25-29)	25%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	20%
Sub-total young women and girls	56%	54%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	67%	62%
Women (30+)	44%	46%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%	38%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

4.2.1 Tally on repeat counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1	0	0	0	5	0	6	0	0	12
Young women (18-24)	55	27	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	88
Young women (25-29)	56	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	105
Sub-total young women and girls	112	68	0	0	5	6	6	0	8	205
Women (30+)	71	19	0	0	0	1	0	0	9	100
Totals	183	87	0	0	5	7	6	0	17	305

4.2.2 Percentage of repeat TOCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	4%
Young women (18-24)	30%	31%	0%	0%	0%	86%	0%	0%	0%	29%
Young women (25-29)	31%	47%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	47%	34%
Sub-total young women and girls	61%	78%	0%	0%	100%	86%	100%	0%	47%	67%
Women (30+)	39%	22%	0%	0%	0%	14%	0%	0%	53%	33%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%

4.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat TOCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	2	0	0	0	11	0	7	0	0	20
Young women (18-24)	74	33	0	0	0	9	0	0	2	118
Young women (25-29)	72	42	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	123
Sub-total young women and girls	148	75	0	0	11	9	7	1	10	261
Women (30+)	99	25	0	0	0	1	0	0	10	135
Totals	247	100	0	0	11	10	7	1	20	396

4.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL TOCC counselling sessions, by age and category

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	5%
Young women (18-24)	30%	33%	0%	0%	0%	90%	0%	0%	10%	30%
Young women (25-29)	29%	42%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	40%	31%
Sub-total young women and girls	60%	75%	0%	0%	100%	90%	100%	100%	50%	66%
Women (30+)	40%	25%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	50%	34%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	0%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

5. MALAMPA COUNSELLING CENTRE: NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

5.1.1 Tally on new MCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1	0	0	1	4	1	0	1	0	8
Young women (18-24)	16	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	19
Young women (25-29)	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Sub-total young women and girls	41	1	0	1	4	2	0	1	1	51
Women (30+)	46	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	52
Totals	87	5	0	1	4	3	0	1	2	103

5.1.2 Percentage of new MCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	0%	0%	100%	100%	33%	0%	100%	0%	8%
Young women (18-24)	18%	20%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	50%	18%
Young women (25-29)	28%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	23%
Sub-total young women and girls	47%	20%	0%	100%	100%	67%	0%	100%	50%	50%
Women (30+)	53%	80%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	0%	50%	50%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

5.2.1 Tally on repeat counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	2	0	0	6	4	1	0	1	0	14
Young women (18-24)	51	37	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	89
Young women (25-29)	46	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	48
Sub-total young women and girls	99	38	0	6	4	2	0	1	1	151
Women (30+)	154	33	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	191
Totals	253	71	0	6	4	5	0	1	2	342

5.2.2 Percentage of repeat MCC counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	0%	0%	100%	100%	20%	0%	100%	0%	4%
Young women (18-24)	20%	52%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	26%
Young women (25-29)	18%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	14%
Sub-total young women and girls	39%	54%	0%	100%	100%	40%	0%	100%	50%	44%
Women (30+)	61%	46%	0%	0%	0%	60%	0%	0%	50%	56%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

5.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat MCC counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	3	0	0	7	8	2	0	2	0	22
Young women (18-24)	67	38	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	108
Young women (25-29)	70	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	72
Sub-total young women and girls	140	39	0	7	8	4	0	2	2	202
Women (30+)	200	37	0	0	0	4	0	0	2	243
Totals	340	76	0	7	8	8	0	2	4	445

5.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL MCC counselling sessions, by age and category

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	0%	0%	100%	100%	25%	0%	100%	0%	5%
Young women (18-24)	20%	50%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	24%
Young women (25-29)	21%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	16%
Sub-total young women and girls	41%	51%	0%	100%	100%	50%	0%	100%	50%	45%
Women (30+)	59%	49%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	50%	55%
Totals	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	100%	100%

6. TOTAL VVC NETWORK NEW AND REPEAT COUNSELLING SESSIONS

6.1.1 Tally on new VVC Network clients, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	7	3	0	21	41	4	1	3	0	80
Young women (18-24)	264	101	0	0	0	10	0	0	17	392
Young women (25-29)	201	54	2	0	0	1	0	1	5	264
Sub-total young women and girls	472	158	2	21	41	15	1	4	22	736
Women (30+)	476	52	11	0	0	5	1	2	44	591
Totals	948	210	13	21	41	20	2	6	66	1327

6.1.2 Percentage of new VWC Network clients, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	1%	0%	100%	100%	20%	50%	50%	0%	6%
Young women (18-24)	28%	48%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	26%	30%
Young women (25-29)	21%	26%	15%	0%	0%	5%	0%	17%	8%	20%
Sub-total young women and girls	50%	75%	15%	100%	100%	75%	50%	67%	33%	55%
Women (30+)	50%	25%	85%	0%	0%	25%	50%	33%	67%	45%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

6.2.1 Tally on repeat VWC Network counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	9	6	0	57	79	8	6	2	0	167
Young women (18-24)	420	377	3	0	0	13	0	0	37	850
Young women (25-29)	441	342	11	0	0	0	0	0	38	832
Sub-total young women and girls	870	725	14	57	79	21	6	2	75	1849
Women (30+)	1304	351	88	0	0	9	0	3	98	1853
Totals	2174	1076	102	57	79	30	6	5	173	3702

6.2.2 Percentage of repeat VWC Network counselling sessions, by age and category of assistance, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	0%	1%	0%	100%	100%	27%	100%	40%	0%	5%
Young women (18-24)	19%	35%	3%	0%	0%	43%	0%	0%	21%	23%
Young women (25-29)	20%	32%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	22%	22%
Sub-total young women and girls	40%	67%	14%	100%	100%	70%	100%	40%	43%	50%
Women (30+)	60%	33%	86%	0%	0%	30%	0%	60%	57%	50%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

6.3.1 Tally on TOTAL new and repeat VWC Network counselling sessions, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	16	9	0	78	120	12	7	5	0	247
Young women (18-24)	684	478	3	0	0	23	0	0	54	1242
Young women (25-29)	642	396	13	0	0	1	0	1	43	1096
Sub-total young women and girls	1342	883	16	78	120	36	7	6	97	2585
Women (30+)	1780	403	99	0	0	14	1	5	142	2444
Totals	3122	1286	115	78	120	50	8	11	239	5029

6.3.2 Percentage of TOTAL VWC Network counselling sessions, by age and category

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
Girls (under 18)	1%	1%	0%	100%	100%	24%	88%	45%	0%	5%
Young women (18-24)	22%	37%	3%	0%	0%	46%	0%	0%	23%	25%
Young women (25-29)	21%	31%	11%	0%	0%	2%	0%	9%	18%	22%
Sub-total young women and girls	43%	69%	14%	100%	100%	72%	88%	55%	41%	51%
Women (30+)	57%	31%	86%	0%	0%	28%	13%	45%	59%	49%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

7. TOTAL VWC NETWORK NEW, REPEAT AND TOTAL COUNSELLING SESSIONS WITH EACH AGE GROUP, BY TYPE OF ISSUE²

7.1.1 Percentage of VWC Network counselling sessions (new and repeat) with GIRLS under 18, by type of issue, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
New girl clients (N=80)	9%	4%	0%	26%	51%	5%	1%	4%	0%	100%
Repeat counselling sessions (N=167)	5%	4%	0%	34%	47%	5%	4%	1%	0%	100%
Total counselling sessions (N=247)	6%	4%	0%	32%	49%	5%	3%	2%	0%	100%

7.1.2 Percentage of VWC Network counselling sessions (new and repeat) with YOUNG WOMEN (18-29), by type of issue, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
New young women clients (N=656)	71%	24%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0.2%	3%	100%
Repeat counselling sessions (N=1682)	51%	43%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	4%	100%
Total counselling sessions with young women (N=2338)	57%	37%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	4%	100%

² See Tables 6.1.1, 6.2.1 and 6.3.1 for tallies used to calculate percentages.

7.1.3 Percentage of VWC Network counselling sessions (new and repeat) with WOMEN 30+, by type of issue, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
New women 30+ clients (N=591)	81%	9%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	7%	100%
Repeat counselling sessions (N=1853)	70%	19%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	100%
Total counselling sessions with women 30+ (N=2444)	73%	16%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	6%	100%

7.1.4 Percentage of VWC Network counselling sessions (new and repeat) with CLIENTS OF ALL AGES, by type of issue, July 2015 – June 2016

Age	DV	CM	FM	CA-P	CA-S	Rape	SH	Incest	Other	Total
New clients (N=1327)	71%	16%	1%	2%	3%	2%	0.2%	0.5%	5%	100%
Repeat counselling sessions (N=3702)	59%	29%	3%	2%	2%	1%	0.2%	0.1%	5%	100%
Total counselling sessions (N=5029)	62%	26%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0.2%	0.2%	5%	100%



VWC counsellor training, March 2020

One of VWC's new young women counsellors presents the outcomes from small group work on the impacts of domestic violence on children, drawing on the findings of the 2009 national prevalence study



VWC staff assembling for a march in support of West Papua in 2019

VWC supports and advocates for the human rights of all women, men, girls and boys

Annex 2: Summary of Vanuatu Women's Centre's national program and approach

VWC's goal is to eliminate violence against women and children throughout Vanuatu. In order to achieve this goal over the long-term, VWC's program aims to implement effective prevention and response strategies to address the problem. VWC has always seen the prevention of violence and responding to it as closely linked and mutually reinforcing, particularly when engaging with local communities.

Over the years, VWC's strategies have been developed and reviewed with the following key principles in mind:

- Learning from the experiences of women and children living with violence in Vanuatu, and reflecting on these to develop and refine counselling, prevention, advocacy and research strategies.
- Learning from regional feminist experience and good practice on how to address and prevent the problem of violence against women. This includes sharing experiences and reflections with the Pacific Network Against Violence Against Women and its Secretariat, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, and reviewing the experiences and practices of the international women's movement to address the problem.
- Tailoring and developing new home-grown strategies for the Vanuatu context, while adhering to best practice principles.

VWC has an integrated, comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to preventing and responding to violence against women and children:

- The program is designed to challenge and change the fundamental and underlying causes of violence against women and children, which are founded on gender inequality – unequal relations between women and men. It does this by explicitly **promoting women's and children's human rights through all its strategies and activities**.
- VWC's **crisis counselling** is based on a human rights framework, and underpinned by a strong code of ethics, in addition to legal advocacy on individual cases to increase access to justice.
- The program is **integrated**, meaning that it **aims to both prevent and respond to the problem**, with multiple and reinforcing strategies designed to achieve both aims. VWC's approach is grounded in women's and girls' day-to-day experiences of all forms of violence. VWC's counselling experience informs and strengthens all its prevention activities, and its approach to research.
- The program is **comprehensive** because of its national focus on both prevention and response, and because several different strategies are used simultaneously to target **multiple stakeholders** over the long-term, and to hold them to account for their responses to survivors, and the messages that they convey in their own prevention efforts about the causes and consequences of violence against women and children.
- VWC's approach to prevention is **comprehensive and multi-faceted** because it uses a range of different types of community awareness-raising, education, training and advocacy activities that enables it to reach and collaborate with a variety of different groups, and which reinforce each other over the long-term. This ranges from special event campaigns, radio programs, television advertising, newsletters, information-based community education materials, short talks that primarily aim to increase awareness and knowledge of the problem and promote a

desire to learn more, and intensive 5-day community education workshops and trainings that are designed to change attitudes and behaviours. This approach enables VWC to **match prevention approaches to the readiness of target groups to receive them**; achieve both national coverage for the main key messages, as well as intensive targeting of key stakeholders and communities; and use different types of prevention activities to follow up with communities and organisations to reinforce behavioural and attitudinal change.

- The program is **evidence-based because VWC's national prevalence study has been used to target the major duty-bearers** who have the greatest influence over preventing violence and responding to women in communities. The survey found that 43% had never told anyone about the violence, and 57% had never asked for help. When women do seek help from outside their family, they go mainly to chiefs (24%), church leaders (23%), health agencies (15%) and police (10%).³ Based on this data, VWC has made concerted efforts over many years to form and consolidate partnerships with these key stakeholders to work in collaboration with them to extend the reach of prevention messages and improve their responses to survivors.
- VWC's approach **holds men to account for their violent behaviour**. VWC's male advocacy program is based on the model of intensive training developed by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre through the Pacific Regional Network Against Violence Against Women. Men receive several week-long stages of training, and are selected for follow-up male advocacy training based on their commitments and actions to ending all violence against women and children. Accountability of trained male advocates to the women's movement is a key feature of this approach, as is ongoing monitoring by VWC.

VWC's national prevalence study provided sound evidence that VWC's integrated, comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach was effective. Places where VWC had been most active since its establishment had statistically significant lower rates of physical and sexual violence by husbands and partners than places where VWC had been less active:

- The combined impact of VWC's integrated community education/ prevention, advocacy, campaigns and counselling work reduced women's risk of violence.
- For example, women in Malampa province – where VWC had done less outreach and had fewer CAVAWs – were twice as likely to experience violence as those in areas where VWC had been working over many years.⁴

³ Vanuatu Women's Centre (VWC) and the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) 2011, *Vanuatu National Survey on Women's Lives and Family Relationships*, VWC, Port Vila: 19, 148-162.

⁴ VWC/VNSO 2011: 20-21, 174-176.

Endnotes

ⁱ This poem was written as part of the “Beneath Paradise” project, a collective initiative of the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC), the Vanuatu Women’s Centre (VWC) and 12 other member organisations of the Pacific Women’s Network Against Violence Against Women, funded and facilitated by the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) to prepare for the 1995 NGO Forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Huairou, Beijing. It was first published in Beneath Paradise, an anthology of Pacific women’s poetry prepared for the NGO Forum.

ⁱⁱ Vanuatu Women’s Centre (VWC) and the Vanuatu National Statistics Office (VNSO) 2011, Vanuatu National Survey on Women’s Lives and Family Relationships, VWC, Port Vila.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid: 14.

^{iv} Ibid: 17, 103-104.

^v Ibid: 17, 95-96. The survey did not interview girls under 15 years of age.

^{vi} Ibid: 17.

^{vii} All the data in this section is quoted from: Dipatmen Blong Koreksonal Sevis 2017 Offending Against Morality in Vanuatu - Sexual Offenders: A Demographic Profile, 2017, Vanuatu Correctional Services, Port Vila.

^{viii} The year July 2015 - June 2016 was the fourth and final year of VWC’s last funding phase with the Australian Government; a new funding phase commenced in July 2016. The original intention was to compare findings with a year in the current funding phase, which ends in June 2021.

^{ix} Definitions in the text box are adapted from the following: VWC 2016 “Vanuatu Women’s Centre Program Design Document, July 2016 – June 2021”: 31; Carmody, M., Evans, S., Krogh, C., Flood, M., Heenan, M., and Ovenden, G. 2009 Framing best practice: National Standards for the primary prevention of sexual assault through education, National Sexual Assault Prevention Education Project for NASASV, University of Western Sydney; and Our Watch 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, VicHealth and ANROWS.

^x VWC’s counselling services are provided to women of all ages, and to girls and boys under 18 years. The VWC Network provides information services to men and women and girls and boys regardless of age, but no counselling is offered to men 18 years and over.

^{xi} VWC 2017 “Vanuatu Women’s Centre Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: Program Against Violence Against Women, July 2016 – June 2021”, VWC, Port Vila.

^{xii} Other qualitative indicators in VWC’s M&E plan include: initiatives taken by community leaders and members to prevent and address violence against women and children and promote equal rights; outcomes relating to the involvement of male advocates trained by VWC and their engagement in VWC, Branch and CAVAW prevention and response activities; evidence of changes in policies, law reform, protocols and actions from VWC Network partnerships with government and non-government agencies; and several related to staff capacity building.

^{xiii} These include annual VWC Progress Reports to the Australian Government Aid Program from 2012 to 2016, and VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”, where evidence of key milestones and quantitative and qualitative outcomes was consolidated for the previous 4 years.

^{xiv} VWC has had aspirations to undertake larger and more in-depth qualitative research projects including the collection of data from primary sources since the national prevalence study was published in 2011. However with limited finances from donors, VWC had to prioritise the delivery of counselling and community awareness/prevention services over undertaking further research projects and consequently has only been able to undertake research using internal data sources.

^{xv} For examples of the risks and ways to address them, including the rationale for a “qual-quant” approach (which quantifies selected sets of qualitative data) see Chambers, Robert and Linda Mayoux 2003 “Reversing the Paradigm: Quantification and Participatory Methods”, Paper submitted to the EDIAIS Conference on “New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development”, University of Manchester, United Kingdom (UK), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247406698_Reversing_the_Paradigm_Quantification_and_Participatory_Methods, accessed 17 July 2020; and Chambers, Robert 2001 “Qualitative Approaches: Self Criticism and What Can Be Gained from Quantitative Approaches” in Ravi Kanbur (ed.) 2001 Qual-Quant – Qualitative and Quantitative Poverty Appraisal: Complementarities, Tensions and the Way Forward, Contributions to A Workshop Held At Cornell University, March 15-16, 2001, http://publications.dyson.cornell.edu/research/researchpdf/wp/2001/Cornell_Dyson_wp0105.pdf, accessed 17 July 2020. Note that quantification of the qualitative findings in this report is not intended to imply that

they could or should be analysed statistically, given the small sample size and their collection for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

^{xvi} See VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit: 148-164.

^{xvii} Data and analysis in this section draws from the data analysis workshop with VWC and branch staff in March 2019, the workshop/meeting with Port Vila staff in September 2019, and VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”, where short-term and medium outcomes were documented.

^{xviii} VNSO 2017 Vanuatu 2016 Post-TC Pam Mini-Census Report, Vol 1, Basic Tables, VNSO, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management, Port Vila: 9.

^{xix} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit: 60; and 168-176. Both uni-variable and multi-variable analysis used lifetime prevalence data from the survey, rather than prevalence in the previous 12 months.

^{xx} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit: 20-21; and 172-176. Multi-variable analysis of risk and protective factors identified 14 variables that were the strongest predictors of women experiencing physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, after controlling for all other factors. There were 14 factors of 3 different types: 5 risk factors in the partner’s/husband’s behaviour; 7 risk factors related to background characteristics of the women; and 2 factors relating to location. The association between location and partner violence was less significant than most other factors discussed above (with a P value of 0.04). Nevertheless, after adjusting for all other variables, location emerged as a protective factor: women who live in Port Vila and Shefa province were much less likely to experience partner violence in their lifetime than women in other provinces (odds ratios of 0.41 and 0.33 respectively). These findings strongly suggest that the influence of VWC’s counselling and community education work over the previous 19 years had contributed to reducing women’s risk of violence in Port Vila and Shefa, because these two places have no other significant differences with other locations where the survey was carried out. Women who lived in Malampa and Sanma provinces (excluding Luganville) were about twice as likely to experience partner violence, after adjusting for all the other factors (odds ratios of 2.44 and 2.02 respectively). Malampa is the province where VWC had the least CAVAWs at the time of the study, and had done the least community education. Island and enumeration area also emerged as a factor indicating that some locations had a significantly higher or lower prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by husbands and partners than the national rate. However, it was not possible to identify which islands and enumeration areas demonstrated this effect.

^{xxi} For example, see the following sources: Department for International Development (DFID, United Kingdom) 2012 A Theory of Change for Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, CHASE Guidance Note Series, Guidance Note 1; Ellsberg, Mary, Diana J Arango, Matthew Morton, Floriza Gennari, Sveinung Kiplesund, Manuel Contreras, and Charlotte Watts 2014 “Prevention of violence against women and girls: what does the evidence say?” in www.thelancet.com, published online, 21 November 2014; Arango, Diana J., Matthew Morton, Floriza Gennari, Sveinung Kiplesund and Mary Ellsberg 2014 Interventions to Prevent or Reduce Violence Against Women and Girls: A Systematic Review of Reviews, The World Bank, Women’s Voice and Agency Research Series 2014, No. 10; Fulu, Emma, Alice Kerr-Wilson and James Lang 2014 Effectiveness of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls, WhatWorks to Prevent Violence, www.whatworks.co.za; Heise, Lori, and Emma Fulu 2014 What works to prevent violence against women? State of the field of violence against girls: What do we know and what are the knowledge gaps?, WhatWorks to Prevent Violence; Jewkes, Rachel 2014 Effectiveness of response mechanisms to prevent violence against women and girls: A Summary of the Evidence, WhatWorks to Prevent Violence; WHO 2010; Michau, Lori, Jessica Horn, Amy Bank, Mallika Dutt, and Cathy Zimmerman “Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice” in www.thelancet.com, November 21, 2014; WHO 2010 Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence, WHO and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Geneva; Equality Institute 2018 Piecing Together the Evidence on Social Norms and Violence Against Women, Equality Institute; and Jewkes, Rachel, Erin Stern and Leane Ramsomar 2019 Preventing violence against women and girls, community activism approaches to shift harmful gender attitudes, roles and social norms: Evidence review, WhatWorks to Prevent Violence.

^{xxii} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 40-41, 51.

^{xxiii} VWC records whether community awareness/prevention *activities* are held with a new group, community or organisation for the first time, or whether it is a follow-up to the same area, group or organisation. However, with the very large numbers of participants, it is not possible to record whether each participant has attended a VWC prevention activity before (and they may have attended in another village, group or organisation).

^{xxiv} VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 35-36; VWC 2016 “Progress Report 1, July-November 2016”: 146; and VWC 2012 “Final Activity Completion Report, July 2007 – June 2012”: 75-76.

^{xxv} VWC 2014 “Progress Report 2”, Annex 1B; VWC 2014 “Annual Plan for year 3”, Annex 1B; and VWC 2015 “Annual Plan for year 4”, Annex 1.

^{xxvi} See VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 25-26, 118. Note that there is no double-counting of these data; this represents 417 different people trained, with many receiving follow-up support and monitoring in addition to those who received more than one training.

^{xxvii} UN Women 2016 Women and Children’s Access to the Formal Justice System in Vanuatu UN Women: 10.

^{xxviii} VWC 2016 “Activity Completion Report July 2012 – June 2016”: 26.

^{xxix} VicHealth 2016 Generating Equality and Respect: A world-first model for the primary prevention of violence against women: Full evaluation report, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne: 1 describes “site-based saturation” as a primary prevention approach that has breadth across different settings as well as depth, by focusing on a single location with concurrent, mutually reinforcing activities across multiple settings. The approach in Tafea province cannot be described as a saturation approach because there were many other calls on VWC’s and TCC’s community education and training staff, the size of the province, and diversity of its population; nevertheless, it was as intensive a focus as possible on the province in the context of limited resources and growing calls on all VWC’s prevention and response services.

^{xxx} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 20-21, and 174-176.

^{xxxi} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 148-159.

^{xxxii} The duration of the violence is recorded by Counsellors in their case files; however for 8 cases these details were not written up as part of the case study.

^{xxxiii} Ibid: 103, 231. The WHO survey tool current at the time of the survey did not distinguish between male guardians in adoptive families and other close male relatives such as step-father, father, or grandfather. “Other male family members” – which could include adoptive male guardians, uncles or other male relatives – made up 33% of the perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

^{xxxiv} The Family Protection Act (FPA) provided for the appointment of authorised persons empowered to issue Temporary Protection Orders in remote areas where women cannot access police services or a magistrate. This provision was not implemented until 2018, although the FPA was passed in 2008. Three VWC male advocates were appointed as authorised persons.

^{xxxv} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 116-121; and World Health Organisation (WHO) 2005 WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women: 55, 61. Suicidality refers here to either contemplating, planning or attempting suicide

^{xxxvi} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 139-140. The study found that 30% of women who were working and experiencing intimate partner violence had their work disrupted, usually by partners/husbands interrupting her work at the workplace. However, of this 30% whose work was disrupted, only 13% said that they had to stop work because they were unable to continue, including due to sick leave, and 11% said that her partner actually stopped her or forced her stop working. This represents around 4% of those women who were working and experiencing intimate partner violence.

^{xxxvii} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 109-125.

^{xxxviii} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 125.

^{xxxix} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 131-135.

^{xl} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 155-159.

^{xli} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 136-141.

^{xlii} See note xxii above for details of the findings from the 2009 prevalence study.

^{xliii} As explained in section 4.2.1, it was not possible to include CAVAW data in this research.

^{xliv} The 16 Days of Activism Campaign was initiated in 1991 by the first Women’s Global Leadership Institute, held by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) at Rutgers University. See <https://16dayscampaign.org/about-the-campaign/> accessed 13 November 2019.

^{xlv} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 143-147.

^{xlvi} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 109-116.

^{xlvii} Australian Human Rights Commission 2018 Everyone’s business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, AHRC, Sydney, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/publications/>. Data from a range of other countries also shows high levels of prevalence of sexual harassment, especially among young women. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures> (accessed 15 November 2019) which cites the following: 23% of female undergraduate university students reported having experienced sexual assault or sexual misconduct in a survey across 27 universities in the United States in 2015; 1 in 10 women in the European Union report having experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15, with the highest risk among those aged 18-29; in a multi-country study from the Middle East and North Africa, between 40-60% of women said they had ever experienced street-based sexual

harassment; and 65% of women parliamentarians who participated in a study conducted by the Inter-parliamentary Union in 39 countries across 5 regions had been subjected to sexist remarks, primarily by male colleagues in parliament and from opposing parties as well as their own.

^{xlviii} VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.: 184-189; and UN Women 2016 Women's and Children's Access to the Formal Justice System in Vanuatu: 25-37.

^{xlix} This text and recommendation 1 is adapted from VWC and VNSO 2011 op. cit.:184.

^l This recommendation is adapted from UN Women 2016 op. cit.: 29.

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<p align="center">Tafea Counselling Centre Isangel, Tanna</p> <p align="center">Tafea CAVAWs Williams Bay Port Narvin Aniwa Midmauk Imaki Aneityum Kamnai, North Tanna</p>	<p align="center">Penama Counselling Centre Lavatu, Pentecost</p> <p align="center">Penama CAVAWs Gaiovo Lavui North Ambae East Ambae South Ambae Nduindui Loltong Melsisi/Melbrin Pangi</p>
<p align="center">Sanma Counselling Centre Luganville, Santo</p> <p align="center">Sanma CAVAWs Matantas South Santo Winsao Big Bay Bush Olboi Vunarei</p>	<p align="center">Shefa CAVAWs (call 161 toll-free for assistance or 25764 during working hours) Lamen Island Varsu Burumba Tongoa Emae</p>