



Mo'ui Ke Fiefia

WOMEN AND CHILDREN CRISIS CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Creating a Kingdom that is Violence free

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Malo e Leleli!

'Ofakilevuka Guttenbeil Likiliki - WCCC Director

As part of their work, our WCCC counsellors conduct home visits to women and children referred by the community health clinics. These home visits are critical because many of these women have no means of getting to the main centre in Fanga either because of fear, no funds to access public transport, simply just not knowing that there is support out there or because their daily schedules are so full that they can hardly find the time to seek support.

Apart from all the above reasons, one of the biggest challenges still is that seeking support and counselling is still a very foreign concept in Tongan culture. To talk to someone about your problems let alone your rights being violated is not something usually practiced in Tonga. As Tongans we are expected to take it all in, *'kataki'i'* handle it quickly and move on.

If you seek help, especially from someone outside of your family or church circle then you are inviting embarrassment among yourself. You are seen as a weak indi-

vidual, a trouble-maker and a nuisance to the family. This is particularly true of domestic violence cases, sexual assault and rape cases.

When we carry out our awareness programs we try to break down the myths and misconceptions around seeking help and support and encourage women and girls and all members of the community to seek help and access the support services that are available.

It is so critical, particularly with the increase in suicide rates, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted dis-

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Statistics Jul & Aug 2011

In July and August 2011

40 Women

18 Men

6 Children

= a total of 64 clients sought refuge from violence at WCCC

Infants and Children absent from Development

There has been an increase in reports of children not attending school which has been picked up by our WCCC counselors during their home visits. Most of these cases have been referred to the WCCC by the community health centers. Most of these children are aged between 5 years of age and 12 years of age. When asked why they are not attending school, the most recurring response is due to lack of finances to support the child(ren) to attend school. This involves school uniforms, lunches, school materials and where applicable school fees. Moreover, many babies and infants suffer from malnutrition and do not have access to the right nutrients to keep their bodies developing at a healthy pace due to an increase on the number of single mom, separated families and teenage pregnancies.

"We need to look at how we can help these families, not just the WCCC but also the government, churches, the private sector...we all need to look at solutions because the problem is getting bigger and bigger..." says WCCC Counselor, Leti Siliva.

Part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to ensure that all children have access to universal primary school education. "We need to be reporting correctly against these goals and to measure exactly how we have or have not been achieving this goal, it's one thing to say that we have plenty of schools throughout the country but it's another issue altogether when it comes to talking about quality of education and access to education....



which families can afford to send their children and which families cannot afford, how do we effectively address this?", asks WCCC Director 'Ofa Guttenbeil-Likiliki.

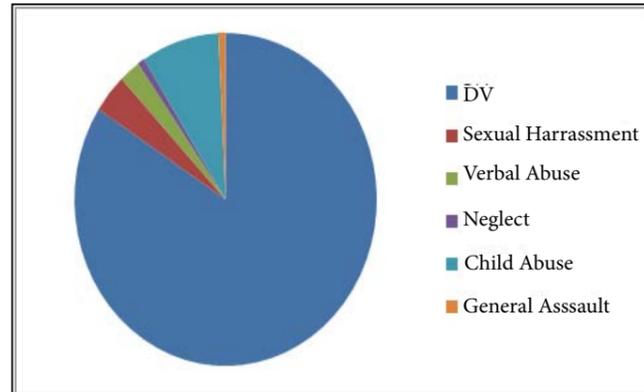
Part of the MDGs is also to eradicate extreme poverty

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WCCC statistics review for the first half of the year 2011

For the 1st half of the year a total number of 132 clients sought the centre's support services, including women, children and male clients. Domestic violence continues to be the most common source of support provided by WCCC, although reported cases of child abuse in 2011 have increased as have sexual violence cases including higher incidences of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

It has only been a year and a half since the centre has been established yet WCCC's statistics reflect the broader society trend in which more people are reporting incidences of violence against women.



| Case Type | No. of Cases |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Domestic Violence | 111 |
| Sexual Harrassment | 5 |
| Child Abuse 1 Neglect 11 | 12 |
| Verbal Abuse | 3 |
| General Assault | 1 |

The high peak season is noted between the months of Jan- April and slightly decreasing in May-June which is noted as the low peak season. Family obligations impact on the time and availability of women to report, which sees a dip in reporting during the beginning of the school year and also during church events of the year, where women often feel that obligations placed on them peak during this time, which they will priorities these obligations to their family and church obligations before their own welfare.

Clients can be referred from many sources. The majority of clients are referred to WCCC from the Ministry of Police Domestic Violence Unit, the Ministry of Health Hospital referrals and other NGOs and relevant entities, such as district nurses. Clients also come in of their own

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Case Study: "My marriage life was like living in Hell"

A firsthand account of reporting domestic violence from a client at WCCC.

I have been married for thirteen years. I was fifteen and he was seventeen. He wasn't my first man but he knew it before we got married. His family didn't want him to marry me but he insisted so they let him.

I really don't know why they don't like me but it made my marriage life like living in hell. My husband beat me up a lot because of what my in-laws told him about me, even my father in-law and his brothers, they had beat me too. I felt like a second class citizen just because I came to the marriage not a virgin.

The nightmare starts on the second week of our marriage. He had continued to beat me up ever since, sometimes with his fist, sometimes with an object. There's a scar on my right chin, he threw a spade at me while I was talking with another person.

We've been separated so many times, but when it came to his apology I always went back to him. The black marks on my face shadow my eyes like its normal. I never made a complaint to the police, but I always told him that once I made a complaint, it will be the one.

Finally, I decided to run away to Ha'apai with my two children to my sister who live there with her family. He called me once to send some money and I told him to send it to my sister so that he knows that I have nothing to do with the money, it just for the kids. The second time he called to send money I told him that I can take care of the children and I don't need the money. The

very next day he showed up at my sister's place and asked to take the kids with him for the night, so I let him.

The next day was a Sunday and my sister and her husband went with their kids to church, all of a sudden he showed up with the children and demand that we have sex, when I say no, he drag me into the room and try to force me to have sex. He didn't care about our children standing there, he started to beat me up, I grabbed the phone and dialed my sister's number before he punched me and the phone went off my hand.

My eight year old daughter was running down the road crying and my six year old son was standing there watching us. Luckily my sister heard me screaming before he smashed my head on the side of the side-board which made me unconscious.

Few minutes later my sister got home with her family. He just stopped and left. He tried to contact me but we knew that's the end of our marriage.

I stayed with my sister for a short time before I decided to go back to Tongatapu. I was shocked to find that we were on the same boat with him. We talked most of our time while on the boat and we both agreed that we should file for divorce.

When we got to Tongatapu we both went our separate ways, but very shortly he was like my shadow again fol-

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WCCC Trustee Leads The Way In Changing Laws For Women



Lepolo Taunisila, one of WCCC's Trustees.

As the Country Focal Officer (CFO) of the *Changing Laws, Protecting Women* project, the meeting looked at

Excerpts for this article taken from the media release National consultation on Changing Laws, Protecting Women accessed from <http://www.tongaeducation.gov.to>

In August, Lepolo Mahe Taunisila, one the Trustees of the WCCC, played a critical role in the facilitating of the *National consultation on Changing Laws, Protecting Women* hosted by the Women's Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture (WAU/MEWAC) of which she is based.

the options of having a separate Domestic Violence legislation in relation to the civil, criminal and the family law aspects of the draft documents.

According to Mahe Taunisila, the consultation involved presenting draft legislations and best practices from various countries so that the participants from Government ministries and the non-government sector could discuss the elements of suitable domestic violence legislation for Tonga. Lepolo said that this type of consultation was very much needed because at the moment Tonga does not have any legislation that specifically addresses domestic violence. Domestic violence complaints, Lepolo said, is currently addressed under the criminal assault laws. There is a tendency sometimes for law enforcement authorities to refrain from pursuing a case under the criminal assault legislation, because it is seen simply as a family matter to be resolved only within the family. But the alarming rise in the statistics on complaints about domestic violence, and the increase in the number of women and children that seek refuge in the two operating women centers in Tonga, according to Lepolo, point to the woefully inadequate ability of the criminal assault law to address this very serious issue.

[Full story](#)

WCCC to commence awareness to all Government Schools

The Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture (MEWAC) has officially approved WCCC awareness programs to be carried out to all Government schools in the country. This is a major milestone and a step forward for the work of the WCCC who only just established themselves in November 2009.

"Building our credibility to prove that we could carry out the awareness programs professionally and efficiently has been the core goal of the Community Education team of the WCCC for the past two years," says Community Education Trainer Team Leader, Lesila To'ia.

There are 52 government primary in Tongatapu and 13 government secondary schools in Tonga. To'ia will be spending the latter part of 2011 planning and dialoguing with the Principals of these schools to develop a cohesive timetable for the WCCC programs to reach the classrooms. There are two main programs that the WCCC has developed for the schools and are appropriate for their intended levels. The Primary School program is called *Stay Safe* and it teaches children at the primary school level about their personal security and safety. The program developed for the Secondary School level *Mo'ui Ke Fiefia* is a program based on information dissemination on the cores issues that the WCCC address mainly violence against women and girls, domestic violence and sexual abuse. These programs are delivered separately to both genders because of our culture of faka'apa'apa between brother and sister, and we do take this into account when

we address our audiences. Our main goal is to get the information out there in order to empower the young and older children - giving them critical information that may one day save their lives or the lives of their friends and family members," says To'ia.

The WCCC *Stay Safe* Program and the *Mo'ui Ke Fiefia* Program will first be rolled out on the main island of Tongatapu with a pilot program



Minister of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture, Dr. 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki.

[Full story](#)