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# USAID BERSAMA Project: Examining Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Eastern Indonesia (Case Study: Sentani District, Papua)

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## ABSTRACT

Almost all countries have undertaken a host of policies, public education, and action programs to reduce Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including Indonesia. This article aims to illustrate how GBV occurs in Indonesia's Papua province, particularly in Sentani district; and how a project funded by USAID manages to create awareness in the area. This paper used a qualitative approach. The data collected from books, journals, web pages on the internet, as well as the author's personal observation when becoming an assistant field officer of a local civil society organization partnering with the USAID BERSAMA Project. This article found that the Project has raised awareness of GBV in Sentani, and potentially resulted in behavior change. This can be seen from the commitment of some participants in the FGDs to change the way they treat each other; not to mention the grass-roots support from chiefs in the respective villages. Nevertheless, the project has weaknesses in implementation process: the modules used by CSOs did not suit the Papuan context in certain circumstances, the FGDs were in the short-run, and changing behavior was not an easy task. This study also found that social norms marketing could be the alternative approach to make changes concerning GBV in Sentani district.

## KEYWORDS

Gender-Based Violence; Sentani; USAID

## INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality issues have received global attention in research and development over the last few decades. This can be seen through United Nation's action in Millennium Development Goals 2015 and Sustainable Development Goals 2030 targeting the issue to be addressed in their agenda. Women experience gender inequality more often than men. Even so, men and members of the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) community can also experience gender-based violence (Sherriff & Zeeman, 2020; Erickson-Schroth et al., 2020; Wirtz et al., 2018). Women, in this context, often faced discrimination in almost every sector, including political and leadership, socio-economic, education, health, and day-to-day activities.

The World Health Organization (2021) estimates that around 1 in 3 (30%) women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. The report on the Sustainable Development Goals also showed progress in gender equality targets; for instance, underage marriage and female genital mutilation cases. However, the overall number of the other gender equality targets shows a slow progression (United Nations, 2019).

In Indonesia, Article 28 J of the 1945 Constitution implicitly enacts law regarding human rights, "obliged to respect the rights of others and subject to the restrictions set forth in the law" (Yudhanti et al., 2017). Indonesia also has a regulation about domestic violence, Act

No.23 of 2004 that was regulated to protect family members from innumerable forms of violence. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that gender-based violence cases still occur in Indonesia.

Gender-based violence (GBV) tends to be underreported in Indonesia because of its diverse culture, religion, social behavior, norms, and other daily practices in each society (Fanani, 2008). Indeed, the Office of Women Empowerment and Child Protection (*Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak/ PPPA*) Papua Province confirmed that the number of cases of violence against women and children in Papua remains quite high, but there was no accurate data because of the frequent double recording of each incoming (Pemerintah Provinsi Papua, 2016).

Research conducted by the Papua Institute of Science and Technology (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Teknologi/ LIPTK*) also shows that violence against women and children in Papua Province is increasing. The chairman of LIPTK, Marlina Flassy, revealed that in 2017, there were 98 cases of violence against children and women in Papua. This figure then skyrocketed in 2018 to 331 committed by men, and 219 by women (Kuwado, 2018). This means that Papua cannot still tackle gender-based violence effectively and need more tools, actors, and stakeholders to address this issue.

There have been numerous action projects that government, non-profit organizations, groups, and individuals undertaking thus far. BERSAMA Gender-

Based Violence Prevention Program in Eastern Indonesia is one of the awareness projects funded by USAID (the United States Agency for International Development) to tackle this issue. The USAID BERSAMA<sup>1</sup> Project was conducted in several districts in Papua and West Papua Province; one of which is in Sentani District, Jayapura – which will be the main focus of this article.

The objective of this article is to illustrate how Gender-Based Violence (GBV) occurs in Indonesia's Papua province, particularly in the Sentani district; and how a project funded by USAID manages to create awareness in the area. This paper will first provide a literature review on gender-based violence and then explain the method used in this article. Next, it will enter into discussion topics consisting of subsections, and finally, this paper draws the conclusion.

A variety of terms are interchangeably used in this article including gender inequality, violence against women, and gender-based violence (GBV); yet the author will choose to focus on gender-based violence because it best describes the Sentani district's study case.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) can be simply described as an act of violence that attacks individuals and groups on the basis of their gender. According to Russo & Pirlott (2006), the term 'gender-based' is introduced due to violence formed by gender roles and status in the community. It is worth noting that GBV against women is different from other violence the women could experience, like facing a gun threat during a robbery. In addition to this, gender diversity in values, norms, and patriarchal social structures have also encouraged violence to take place and provided an insufficient resource for its victims.

The Committee of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) defined GBV as "violence that is disproportionately directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty" (United Nations Human Rights, no date). Izumi (2007) emphasizes that gender-based violence against women not only causes physical damage to the victim but also undermines a woman's self-confidence and ability to defend herself. More importantly, it has violated the human rights of women – as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) article 3, 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person'.

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<sup>1</sup> "BERSAMA" is a new activity that USAID/Indonesia's Office of Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) proposes to begin in 2016. It focuses on addressing the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) in four provinces of Indonesia. See <https://www.fundsformgos.org/usaidd/bersama-seeking-applications-for-gender-based-violence-prevention-program-from-ngos/>

By the same token, Heise et al. (2002) argue that gender-based violence reflects an aggressive attitude towards women and girls due to their sex, such as wife abuse, female genital mutilation, marital rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, dowry-related murder, sexual abuse of female children, and selective malnourishment of female children. In this sense, Heise et al. considered GBV not only as an act of verbal or physical force but also life-threatening deprivation, which is aimed at women or girls. GBV also has far-reaching implications, including physical or psychological harm as well as humiliation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that perpetuates women's subordination.

In Pacific countries, the prevalence of GBV has been acknowledged and the risks it may bring to human security. Forster (2010), examining 14 Pacific nations (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Tokalau, and Tuvalu), found that the potential of a strong criminal and civil legal framework can play a pivotal role in stopping such violence. Indeed, the framework enables the prosecution of offenders and helps victims with effective and accessible remedies through civil law, as well as minimizing the use of traditional methods as the main response to domestic violence, like reconciliation and forgiveness ceremonies.

On the other hand, Eckermann (2006) argues that even though the prevalence of GBV is already recognized, it remains difficult to compare prevalence rates among countries in the Western Pacific Region. This occurs because of the many different definitions of domestic violence, cultural taboos, and the normalization of violence in many aspects which leads to weak political will resulting in the absence of accurate data. Meanwhile, WHO/SEARO (2009) found that 9 out of the 11 states in South-East Asia (Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Maldives, and Bhutan) had reported GBV. Patriarchal culture, unwillingness to change family dynamics, and gender inequality are several factors that contribute to GBV.

## **METHODS**

This paper used a qualitative approach. The data collected from books, journals, webpages on the internet, as well as the writer's personal observation when becoming an assistant field officer of a local civil society organization (CSO) partnering with the USAID BERSAMA project in mid-2017. One of the project activities collaborating with the local CSOs was to conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The FGD used a social norm marketing approach to interact with individuals or communities subjected. The details of FGD are described in the discussion section as part of the project description. In addition to this, the writer evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of

the project using her personal observations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### USAID BERSAMA Project: Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has been identified as a crime towards humanity, therefore an action to create a basic understanding of gender, equality, and equity are primarily important to create awareness. USAID BERSAMA GBV Prevention was a project funded by USAID. It was a five-year small-scale budget project pilot in Papua and West Province that started in 2016 and ended in 2020. It included four villages in Sentani district, Jayapura, Papua Province (personal communication, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

The project was designed and managed by an international organization called 'Winrock International'. This organization is a United States non-profit organization working for international development in social, agricultural, and environmental issues in over 40 countries (Winrock International, 2016a). Furthermore, the USAID BERSAMA project management team built a partnership with local government and departments such as *Badan Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak* (Women and child Empowerment department), *Badan*

*Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah* (Regional Development and Planning department/ BAPPEDA), and Health and Education office (Winrock International, 2017).

Whilst executing the program to the community in the target areas, the USAID-BERSAMA and Winrock International collaborate with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). There are four local CSOs in Jayapura that managed the project in targeted villages. Those organizations are: 1) *Yayasan Harapan Ibu* (Mother's Hope Foundation /YHI), 2) *Lembaga Pengkajian dan Penguatan Kapasitas/ LEKAT Papua* (Research and Capacity Building Institute), 3) *Lembaga Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Anak Papua* (Papuan Women and Children Empowerment institution/LP3AP), and 4) *Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan Papua* (Indonesian Women Association for Rights Papua/LBH APIK) (Winrock International, 2016b; personal communication, 2016).

### Community Background: Sentani District, Papua, Indonesia

Indonesia is known as the largest Muslim country in the world and a multiethnic country with several different cultures, beliefs, and social norms. Yet, Papua and West Papua Province have different ethnicity and belief from most provinces in Indonesia which is the predominantly Malay population. The Papuan islands are inhabited by indigenous Melanesian (ethnographical group in South Pacific)

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<sup>2</sup> The USAID BERSAMA Project in Papua and West Papua Province are Jayapura, Jayawijaya, Manokwari, Sorong Districts, and Jayapura City. See <https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/BERSAMA-infographic-A4-20190415.pdf>

people, many of whom practice Christianity as their belief (Kirsch, 2010).

One of the USAID BERSAMA Project target areas was in Sentani district with the indigenous tribe called 'Bhuyakha'. The term *Bhuyukha* consists of two words *bhu* (water) and *yakha* (clear), meaning clear water or people who live close to the water (Lake Sentani) (Levi, 2020). There are around 23 villages in the tribe, however, the Gender-Based Violence program is conducted in 4 villages only which have a population range of 300-500 people in each village (personal communication, 2016).

The social structure of the indigenous Papuan is a patriarchal system (Hardiningtyas, 2016). In certain circumstances, this system benefits males to be in control of society. Men become the dominant and main figure in families and communities structure. Bhuyakha tribe also practices the same system in their community. Women and men have a different roles in their families. For example, men are socially shaped for hunting, clearing land for gardening, and joint ethnic war. Women, on the other hand, are constructed by the community to do domestic jobs for the family, fishing, gardening, and trading (traditional market) (personal communication, 2016).

The description clearly shows the major difference between the social expectations of both genders. It seems that women are likely to work more than men. If those works are not properly conducted, such a situation then becomes one of the factors that cause domestic violence in the

households. Another traditional practice such as bride price is also having a negative impact, especially for women in Sentani, and it needs to be fixed. As stated by Sanggenafa & Hidayana (2020) that there needs to be a change in the way of thinking that if the dowry has already been paid by men, then they have full rights to their wives, including committing domestic violence. Broadly speaking, this way of thinking occurs not only in Sentani but also in other parts of Papua; however, it does need more research and evidence.

It is also worth noting that women are prohibited to speak in village meeting or become a leader in the community in Sentani district. Besides the social and cultural causes, alcohol consumption is also one of the external factors that lead to gender-based violence (personal communication, 2016; Sanggenafa & Hidayana, 2020). To reduce the practice of domestic violence in the community, both the victims and the perpetrators need a specific approach and help.

#### **USAID BERSAMA Project: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in Sentani District**

The objectives of the project are: 1) to create a local solution to reduce gender-based violence among families, communities, and the public; 2) to build a networking alliance and strengthen a local government and non-government agency that provides basic gender-based violence - related services; and 3) to strengthen the capacity of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to help the

campaign to compete with gender-based violence prevention issue at the local and national level (Winrock International, 2016b).

Winrock and local CSOs implemented BERSAMA's project in the targeted areas by using the social norm marketing approach to raise awareness about gender-based violence. Social norm marketing is a concept using mass media and face-to-face campaign techniques to alter an individual's perception about which behavior and attitude are expected and desired in the community (Paluck & Ball, 2010).

The local CSOs' role is to execute the project in the targeted villages using approach, techniques, and modules provided by BERSAMA Project and Winrock International team. Through this approach, the local communities could alter their perspective and action that refers to GBV practices in the families, communities, and public. Before launching the program at the grassroots level (villages), CSOs partnering in the project were trained by USAID-BERSAMA and Winrock about facilitating skills, leadership, anthropology background of the community, reporting skills, and financial management skills (personal communication, 2016).

The project collaborating with the local CSOs is a Focus Group Discussion program that started in mid-2017. The program was conducted in 4 villages in the Sentani district named Yoboi, Sere, Yakonde, and Sosiri Village. The local CSOs created 4 Focus Discussion Groups

(FGDs) in every village, namely: *persekutuan kaum bapak* (male adult/Father group), *persekutuan kaum ibu* (Female adult/mother group), male adolescence group, and female adolescence group (personal communication, 2016).

The groups must consist of no less than 15 participants as the minimum number and 30 participants as the maximum number. To run the program efficiently, CSOs work closely with the indigenous' chiefs, church, and village government representatives. Focus group discussions (FGDs) about gender-based violence could be a simple technique, yet effective methods to introduce basic understanding about gender definition, gender equality and equity, as well as gender-based violence to individuals, families, communities, and the public to fight this issue and spread the awareness is a difficult endeavor.

Most of the villages around Jayapura and the Sentani district are Christian with the Lutheran denomination. Other churches are rare to be found in the area or even not accepted in the community. This situation paves easy access for the CSOs by partnering with church activities. Since the community in the village is in one congregation, it has become easier to bring the people together. In the Lutheran denomination, apart from Sunday service, there are fellowship group services such as father fellowship, mother fellowship, and youth fellowship. By working with the church, CSO's manage to do FGDs based on the church schedule for the





fellowship service (personal communication, 2016).

FGD modules and sources are supplied from a non-government feminist organization from Jogjakarta in Central Java named Rifka Annisa, meaning 'Female Friend'. It is an organization that works as a counseling and advocacy institution for gender-based violence cases (Sejarah Rifka Annisa, 2013). The organization has produced several modules, guidelines, and other supporting material that refer to gender-based violence prevention campaigns.

The module provides specific information from the basic knowledge about gender-based violence, patriarchy system, work wages, become a real man/woman, parenting for father/mother, conflict management, and good communication. Through every FGD session, it is expected that the participants might acknowledge what they received in the discussion, gradually change their mindsets and actions, and become the actors of change, especially for gender-based violence campaigns.

### **USAID BERSAMA Project: Strengths and Weaknesses**

There are several strengths in this project from my perspective. First, the project has a good partnership and gets support from the local government. Indeed, the head of Jayapura District government (Bupati Matius Awaiting) conveyed partnership and build important networking between USAID BERSAMA Project and the Government departments such as

Bappedada (Regional Development and Planning Body), Women's Empowerment Office, Health and Education District Offices that related to gender-based violence prevention. This is a strong foundation for the progress of the project.

Second, the project was acknowledged and approved by the villages' chiefs. A chief is a very important honorable figure in society; they are the people who have traditional authority over the community. Having a good relation and partnership with the important stakeholders could contribute to a positive outcome of the FGDs program.

Third, the local communities' enthusiasm and willingness to actively participate in every group discussion is countless strength for this project. This project is a small-scale budget program which means that in the FGD there is no fee for the participants or other fee exchange. However, the participants confirmed that they were more interested in the discussion than money (personal communication, 2016). They argued that through the FGD program they experienced gradual changes in their daily living.

Last, this project involved both genders without excluding another gender to reduce any stereotyping and not blaming or condemn any gender. Through intensive FGDs sessions, some participants stated that they became more aware of themselves, their families, their well-being, and society. The chief of Yakode village stated that 'it would be

shameful for him to cook for the family; however, through FGD session he changed his perception and cooked for his family' (personal communication, 2017).

A mother from Yoboi village also acknowledged that after getting involved in the FGD session, she and her husband stopped arguing and started using persuasive communication to solve their problems. Likewise, a teenager female from adolescent FGD claimed that she ended her unhealthy relationship because of what she understands about gender-based violence (personal communication, 2017). These are some of the examples of success stories in the FGD program which could be the milestone to reach the project goals.

On the other hand, there are several weaknesses in this project. First, the FGD session only runs for 2 years due to budget limitations. The project will focus on local government partnerships for capacity building with government departments that work with the community such as the Women's empowerment department or other related departments.

Second, the module used by CSOs did not suit the local Papuan condition in certain circumstances. In my view, the module was much influenced by Javanese styles; and therefore, the facilitator found it difficult to encourage indigenous Papuans to think and act based on the module. Consequently, this situation requires additional time. For example, if there are several role-plays in the discussion that is unfamiliar in Papua it

then becomes hard for the participants and facilitators to come into play, thus requiring more time to address the issue.

Last, it is worth noting that making a social change through changing mindset and social behavior needs a large amount of time. Even though this program is designed to improve and raise local community understanding about gender-based violence prevention, it is in the short run and might not be effective to make bigger changes in the community.

## CONCLUSION

This article has described how gender-based violence (GBV) happens in the Sentani district – Indonesia's Papua province, and how the USAID BERSAMA Project can create awareness in the area. The project, initiated in late 2016, collaborates with diverse important stakeholders such as local governments, customary governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), churches, and the communities. This project adopts a social norm marketing approach to change how the community looks at GBV, as well as concerning the local context. This is one of the best and effective approaches to deal with changing behavior projects.

One of the project activities conducted by USAID BERSAMA and Winrock International partnering with CSO's in mid-2017 was a Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The FGD comprising of a father group, mother group, and youth group (girls and boys) play a pivotal role in seeking information. With modules supplied by Rifka Annisa, CSOs

then executed their role in the FGDs. In so doing, CSO collaborates with churches across 4 villages in the Sentani district to arrange and synchronized FGDs' schedules with the fellowship service.

This article also highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the project. The strengths included forming a partnership with a variety of stakeholders such as Jayapura regency's local government, the women and child empowerment department, regional development and planning department/BAPPEDA, health and education office, department of social and other departments related to development. It also gets approval and support from the village chief and the communities, as well as the enthusiasm of the participants in FGDs. Meanwhile, the weaknesses are the modules used by CSOs did not suit the Papuan context in certain circumstances, the FGDs were in the short-run, and changing mindset/social behavior was not an easy task thus requiring more time. The findings of this study could contribute to future research concerning GBV in other regions.

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