

Quick facts

- Cathy Rimbao has worked as a police officer for over 12 years, including 10 years as the Coordinator for the Family and Sexual Violence Program in the Morobe Province of PNG for the RPNGC.
- Cathy graduated from the APTC Diploma in Community Services in PNG in 2013.
- During her APTC studies, Cathy developed the Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service in Lae in the Morobe Province. This service now operates five days a week and is an essential community service.
- Cathy worked with her APTC Diploma in Community Services classmate Mark Gozapao, also from PNG, to establish a second centre in Goroka in the Eastern Highlands Province.
- Cathy is also planning to open a third service in nearby Rabaul in the East New Britain Province in 2014.
- In PNG domestic violence affects more than two in three women.³

- Drawing directly on the knowledge she gained from her APTC studies, Cathy is developing and delivering a police training program for occupational health and safety implemented in 2014 - a first for the national RPNG
- After completing her APTC studies, Cathy was promoted to the prestigious role of Police Ombudsman in the Police Ombudsman Commission.
- Cathy is also Commander of Lae Station and is responsible for re-opening the station after its 20-year closure.
- A recent ChildFund Australia report found that many women who are victims of family and sexual violence in PNG are not comfortable reporting the crime to police⁴.

³ Oxfam Australia, www.oxfam.org.au/about-us/coun-tries-where-we-work/papua-new-guinea/

⁴ Stop Violence Against Women and Children in Papua New Guinea, ChildFund Australia, August 2013, www.childfund.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/Stop%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20and%20Children%20in%20PNG%202013.pdf



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CREATING SKILLS FOR LIFE

IMPACT Case Study

Saying No To Domestic Violence



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Supporting victims of domestic violence in Papua New Guinea

Australia-Pacific Technical College graduate Cathy Rimbao is combining her studies and work as a police officer to improve workplace safety and to help victims of family and sexual violence in Papua New Guinea.



Mark Gozapao with staff at the centre in Goroka



Cathy Rimbao with fellow APTC Graduates

Cathy Rimbao has worked as a police officer for more than 12 years, including 10 years as the Coordinator for the Family and Sexual Violence Program in the Morobe Province of Papua New Guinea (PNG) for the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC).

Cathy also completed the Diploma in Community Services at the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) in 2012, and now uses her new skills and knowledge to develop initiatives aimed at supporting those affected by family and sexual violence¹.

In PNG two out of three women have experienced domestic violence and half have experienced non-consensual intercourse, according to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) gender development index of 136 countries. UNDP also ranks PNG in the top 10 per cent of countries most impacted by gender-based sexual violence. Cathy hopes to reduce these statistics through her work.

While studying at APTC Cathy developed the Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service in Lae in the Morobe Province. This service now operates five days a week and is an essential community service providing counselling, referral and support to women, particularly those affected by domestic violence.

Cathy also worked with her APTC Diploma in Community Services classmate Mark Gozapao to establish a second centre in Goroka in the Eastern Highlands Province. She has since begun preparations for a third service in nearby Rabaul in the East New Britain Province, which is scheduled to open in 2014.

"APTC gave me all the necessary skills I needed to kick start the advocacy program, especially the skills I learned in case management, communications and occupational health and safety," says Cathy.

"It also helped me a lot with understanding how to communicate better with people from different ethnic groups and tribes."

The Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service in Lae, also referred to as Yana Advocacy Service or Yana, assists an average of five women and two children daily, or a total of about 35 to 40 people weekly. Yana also assists children with a disability, plus others impacted by domestic violence.

Just after completing her APTC studies, Cathy was also promoted to the prestigious role of Police Ombudsman in the Police Ombudsman Commission.

Cathy's work to help the Morobe community reduce domestic violence rates is being supported by senior community officials including the Mayor of Lae City, James Khay, and RPNGC Metropolitan Police Commander,

¹ Out of the 136 countries listed on the UNDP's gender development index, PNG ranks at just 124, placing it in the bottom 10% of countries worldwide. Source: Oxfam Australia, www.oxfam.org.au/about-us/countries-where-we-work/papua-new-guinea/

Commander Lakatani heard about Cathy's work and appointed her as Commander of Lae Station where she is responsible for re-opening the station after its 20-year closure. As Station Commander, she is still under the employ of the Police Ombudsman Commission.

"Cathy is a [role] model for other station commanders, especially from the city," says Commander Lakatani.

He also believes Cathy has made a positive impact by tirelessly working with the community to help with the rehabilitation of former criminals.

According to one of her APTC trainers, Eileen Olney, Cathy's remarkable ability to successfully work with communities and make a real difference can be attributed to the skills she gained through her APTC studies and her improved self-confidence.

"Cathy was already working in a male-dominated society and institution, but the course seemed to raise her confidence and her voice for other women," says Eileen.

"She was always a standout and was voted by her peers as the student representative for her group."

Cathy admits that it can sometimes be difficult being a female working in domestic violence and policing, and that "sometimes I think my life may have been in danger", but she has always been able to manage difficult situations.

For Cathy, the growing community demand for the service makes the hard work worthwhile. Yana has recently extended its operating hours from three days to five days (Monday to Friday) by increasing the number of volunteers from two to three.

"There is an increase in women [coming to Yana] and they are coming from all corners of the Province and even from outside of the Province itself," says Cathy.

Cathy believes that this increase is in part due to women understanding more about their rights in relation to domestic violence.

More cases are also now proceeding to court and this has caused some "confusion" for the men involved because they believe that "domestic violence is acceptable". This has resulted in men also coming to Yana for advice and as a response to this Yana is running regular information sessions for men.

Although she is busy in her daily work as a police officer, Police Ombudsman and with Yana, Cathy is also a patron for the City Mission orphanage.

"I understand more now the commitment needed from a person working for the community, and how to try to be more professional and more strategic, and work to standards," says Cathy.

Improving workplace safety

Since becoming a police officer, Cathy Rimbao completed the Diploma in Community Services at APTC in 2012, and she has been determined to share her new knowledge about occupational health and safety standards in her own workplace.

Using learning outcomes from her APTC studies, Cathy is developing and delivering a police training program for occupational health and safety; a first for the national RPNGC. This training also includes aspects of case management.

"Some of the most important information I learned at APTC was about occupational health and safety, and the monitoring and evaluation of the clients," Cathy says.

"For occupational health and safety there is a very large need in our workplace [and] there is much, much work to be done."

Cathy has identified that improved safety standards are needed, for example, ensuring rubber gloves are used by police officers who come in contact with blood, installing fire extinguishers in police force buildings, and the safe connection of electrical cords and computers in offices.

Involving men in the solution

Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service also offers support to men and encourages their involvement as advocates.

Involving men in domestic violence services is part of a key strategy in the Service's mission to reduce family violence. This strategy was initiated by Cathy based on her experience working as the Coordinator for the Family and Sexual Violence Program for the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary.

In this former role, Cathy organised educational workshops for women and also domestic violence initiatives that involved men as advocates to educate and influence their male peers.

"Domestic violence in Papua New Guinea will remain a big issue unless we get information down to the community level and especially to the men, who need to be at the forefront of educating other men," says Cathy.

"[There is the potential for] a lot more lives to be taken by domestic violence caused by men. The situation is very serious."

By improving her skills and taking a proactive approach to domestic violence, Cathy is now a positive role model - not only for her peers in the police force, but also for other women and men who are actively taking a stance against Papua New Guinea's high domestic violence statistics.

Helping women report violence

A recent ChildFund Australia report found that many women who are victims of family and sexual violence in PNG are not comfortable reporting the crime to police. The report stated that "some women were scared of police; it seemed to be a last resort for serious attacks rather than a potential source of support".

This is primarily why Cathy Rimbao recently established the Yana Advocacy and Child Lifeline Service in Lae to support the victims of domestic violence.

"I saw there was a big need for more support to women because at the police station there are no private rooms for interviewing victims of violence - they are interviewed in the public area at the front counter," says Cathy.

To address these and other issues, Cathy established her own program using the skills and knowledge that she learnt at APTC such as case management and community liaison.

This sometimes involves accompanying victims to the police station to make them more comfortable and to ensure there is some privacy for the interview. In some cases, the interviews have taken place outside the police station in a private space supported by Yana volunteers.

"I worked out my own way to initiate my own program. It is more comfortable and safe for them," she says.

² Stop Violence Against Women and Children in Papua New Guinea, ChildFund Australia, August 2013, www.childfund.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/Stop%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20and%20Children%20in%20PNG%202013.pdf