Shield PNG

TALKING TO THE MEN YOU KNOW



Most violence against women in PNG is committed by men who are known, respected and connected. They have brothers, uncles, workmates, teammates and pastors. Those men usually know. Almost none of them say anything.

That silence is not neutral. A man who hits his wife and hears nothing from the men around him learns that the men around him do not mind.

This is about what you say

1 Pick one man, not all of them

You are not going to fix your whole community. Think of one man whose behaviour you know about and who might actually listen to you. Start there.

2 Say it in private

A man shamed in front of others will defend himself, and he will often take that home. Say it where nobody else is listening.

3 Do not open with an accusation

“You are a wife-beater” ends the conversation. “I heard what happened on Friday and it is not sitting right with me” keeps it open.

4 Say it is his choice

He will tell you he was drunk, that she provoked him, that he was under pressure, that this is how things are done. You do not have to argue about any of it. He chooses. Other men under exactly the same pressures do not do this.

5 Be ready for the Big man argument

Somewhere in the conversation he will tell you, in one form or another, that a man runs his house and a good woman accepts it. That belief is the thing doing the damage, and it is not the same as culture. Plenty of respected men in PNG hold authority without hurting anyone.

6 Ask about his children

More men change over what their sons are learning than over anything you will say about their wives. His boy is watching and working out what a man does.

7 Give him somewhere to go

“Stop it” is not a plan. Counselling exists – Community First PNG takes calls from men on 714 71518 or 765 85653. A pastor he respects. A men’s group. Something real.

8 Or give him something to do

Not every conversation like this happens sitting down facing each other. Programmes in PNG that get men and young men onto a sports field, or into a work group growing something, find the hard conversations start on the sidelines afterwards. One young man who went through a sport programme in Hela put it this way: they used to sit and plan fights, and now they sit and plan games. If there is something in your area he could be part of, that is often a better offer than a meeting.

9 Say it more than once

One conversation changes very little. Being the man who keeps raising it changes a lot.

Community First PNG

714 71518 or 765 85653

Counselling. They take calls from men.

One thing to do today

Pick the one man. Decide what you will say. Say it this week.

