



# CASE STUDY

## Tackling Violence, One Community at a Time

By Elissa Webster

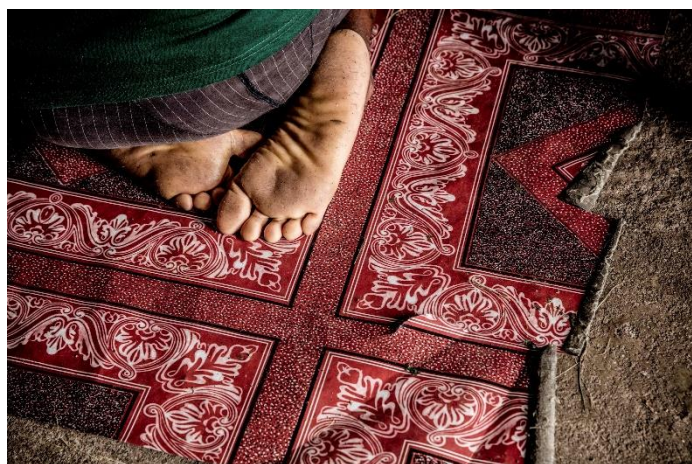
### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Part of CARE International in Vanuatu's Gender Equality program, the *Life Skills Series - Good Relationships Free From Violence* training is designed to tackle violence against women and girls by exploring common cultural beliefs and norms, challenging negative assumptions, and giving people the information they need to make good relationship choices. The training focuses on adolescents and young women and men, aiming to equip young people to create new and positive norms within their community. The *Good Relationships* training was piloted with a group of participants in Loukanra, Tanna Island– with promising results.

### Good Relationships Free From Violence

Vanuatu is renowned for its smiling faces – it ranked fourth in the world on the Happy Planet Index in 2016 – but behind closed doors, there is too often a different story. According to a national study by the Vanuatu Women's Centre in 2009, three in five women in Vanuatu experience violence in their lifetime and one in three experience sexual violence before the age of 15. Tanna Island has the highest rate of violence against women and girls in Vanuatu, with 67 percent of women in Tafea province saying they have experienced physical or sexual violence from a husband or partner in their lifetime. In times of disaster, the statistics are even worse – the number of domestic violence cases reported to the Vanuatu Women's Centre in Tanna increased by 300 percent in the wake of Cyclones Vania and Atu in 2011.

Social norms and beliefs that allow a man to beat his wife and a lack of understanding about the basic human right to live free from violence are some of the main drivers of violence against women and girls in Vanuatu, which has one of the highest rates in the Pacific. A 2013 study on domestic violence in Vanuatu found that 81 percent of men and 79 percent of women believe there are times that a woman deserves to be beaten<sup>1</sup>. The consequences of perpetrating violence against women and girls are also often minor. Though use of the police and the legal system is increasing, in rural areas, many cases of violence against women and girls are still resolved through the chiefs in the traditional way. If a man beats his wife, the couple usually go to the chief for mediation. If a man rapes a woman, the man might have to give a pig, a cow or some kava to the woman or her family as compensation.



Three in five women in Vanuatu experience violence in their lifetime.  
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“Rape it is not taken particularly seriously,” says Senior Sargent Wilfred Nos, a police officer in Isangel, Tanna. “They don’t talk heavy – light only. And if a man has whipped his wife and the wife runs away, the emphasis is on the wife returning to solve the problem – not on the man’s responsibility to stop beating the wife.”

CARE’s *Good Relationships Free From Violence* training aims to tackle violence against women and girls at the roots – people’s attitudes. By teaching adolescents and young men and women that all people have the right to live free from violence and encouraging them to take a closer look at their own beliefs and behaviours, the training is helping communities to build a culture where men and women are treated equally.

“Women need to know their rights,” says Enimahia’s Chief Charleson William Koda Ialikawa, who is also a local teacher. “They need to know the Family Protection Act, and men need to know about individual rights and consequences. Life Skills has been very useful for the youth, especially the young females, as it helps them to build their confidence and to make good decisions, like about pregnancy. Youth were isolated before but this brings them together and helps them make wise decisions.”

Building on and complementing CARE’s other Life Skills training, which focuses on building confidence among young women, *the Good Relationships Free From Violence* training specifically includes young men. The training gives adolescent boys and young men as well as adolescent girls and young women the opportunity to think about the impacts of gender inequality in relationships and their community and provides them with the information they need to make changes.

“Since the training, my husband and I have had good consultation with each other,” says 25-year-old Juliane Naui, who took part in the Good Relationships training pilot sessions in Loukanral, Tanna. “Now people in the community think that the young couples should follow our example. I think the training is very good and I’d like my husband and I to work together even more.”

For 24 year-old Koda Mokira, taking part in the *Good Relationships* training has been a turning point.

“Before the training, I was a boy who didn’t do anything. After the training, I have changed plenty of things in my life, and I hope lots of young boys and girls will change like me. I will share my experience with all my friends and especially the young boys.

“Since the training, I have had good consultation between me and my friends and girlfriend and family in the community. Lots of things have changed here – now, we work together as a community.”

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<sup>1</sup> Citizen Access to Information in Vanuatu