



**TONGA POLICE FORCE**

**POLICE COMMANDER'S ADDRESS TO PACIFIC ISLANDS REGIONAL  
SECURITY FORUM**

**TONGA – GENDER BASIC VIOLENCE**

The Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme (PPDVP) initiated the establishment of a Domestic Violence Response Unit within Tonga Police in August 2007.

The experience and knowledge base of the PPDVP and its officers provided a facility and a start point for Tonga to address this sensitive area.

It has taken 2 years to establish a Unit that now has confidence in its approach, deals with the reports consistently, maintains an information data-base and engages freely with support organizations.

As Police Commander I have taken a strong interest in developing strategy and maintaining integrity to ensure the rights of women and children in Tonga are a priority.

The continued presence of PPDVP is critical to ensuring levels of training, levels of competency and resourcing are kept up to speed.

I have required my 6 district Commanders to be accountable each month in reporting all cases in detail, from the initial notification, victim support and final disposition.

Each police district has a trained co-ordinator who deals with the reported cases and liaises with the National D.V.U. Group.

We have established a National Advisory Group from NGOs and individuals who provide advice, review and support to the Tonga Police.

This system ensures a committed approach from Tonga Police in its domestic violence response, an accountability from police managers to be consistent and proactive and an engagement with non-government organizations who provide important support.

The Tonga Police Domestic Violence Response Policy has been written and the final draft is with members of the Advisory Group for comment before implementation in July 2010.

Up to this point we have been operating on the Police Commander's directions including a 'No Drop' policy. We felt it was important to begin operating and testing our procedures before putting in place a final policy.

Once the Response Policy is in place we can then fine-tune the Desk file for our practitioners and ensure consistency and fairness in our approach.

The question therefore is

'Has the intervention of PPDVP and the development of a Tonga Police D.V.U. had any effect in protecting women and children from domestic violence?

Since August 2007 until 30 April 2010 we have had 1,035 cases reported.

2007 (Aug to Dec)	=	116 cases (29 per month)
2008 (Full year)	=	280 cases (23 per month)
2009 (Full year)	=	458 cases (38 per month)
2010 (Jan to April)	=	191 cases (47 per month).

Total for 32 months = 1035 cases (32 per month).

We believe 480+ of the 1035 cases involved physical assault and/or sexual violation with most facing charges of common assault. Tonga has at least 12 laws specifically relating to offences against women and children and at least 21 laws specifically relating to violence against men, women and children.

Victims we note are primarily in the 21 to 30 year age bracket and offender in the 31 to 40 year age range.

Have we seen a dramatic increase in domestic violence?

Are we seeing an increase in reporting?

Whilst we have only been keeping domestic violence Statistics since August 2007 our general police records and statistics also provide data.

In the ten year period 2000 to 2009 2,573 women are recorded as victims of violence, both physical and sexual assaults.

On average then 22 women per month have come to the police to report an incident of physical or sexual violence. The majority of these victims were assaulted in the 'domestic environment', the home!

Without doubt nearly all the attackers, the offenders were known to the victims.

The courts entered convictions in 1304 of those cases. 50% approximately.

Public awareness in Tonga of domestic violence has been raised.

This is not just a Tongan problem it exists everywhere but smaller countries and populations find the exposure process much more revealing than perhaps the larger countries and their communities.

In a recent speech I put up some statements of where does it begin? what are the solutions what can we do to change attitudes and these learned behaviours.

Those points are not for this forum but solutions are there if we care to look.

The PPDVP is a programme that breaches a comfort zone, if it didn't then there is no purpose, the partnership and aid support have in my opinion been well directed and managed very effectively. If the money involved has saved one life – then it has all been worth it.

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Chris Kelley

**Police Commander**

**Tonga.**