The social perspectives of different age and gender groups in Dimer community, Madang province, Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Divine Word University (DWU) is working together with HORIZONT3000 to identify the social perspectives of different age and gender groups in several communities from three provinces of Papua New Guinea (PNG). There are four broad themes that structure the study: 1) marginalization and exclusion; 2) influence of modernization on culture and traditions; 3) violence in the communities and families; and 4) intergenerational conflict. In January 2020, a team conducted a pilot study in Ambullua in the Jiwaka province of the PNG Highlands. This report is on a follow-up pilot study in a coastal community called Dimer, in the Madang province. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, children's activities, questionnaires, and close-ended interview questions were used. In total 116 participants were involved in the Dimer study, comprising 39 children, 62 adults and 15 young adults. The paper documents the results from various data collection instruments that enabled the participation of different age and gender groups. The study discusses important insights into the community, highlighting the lack of important basic services such as the need for a stronger, reliable and constant law enforcement, a functioning health centre, proper school building and maintenance, and road access. Important findings also include the strong influence of modernization within the community, especially among the youths where dressing, taste in music, lifestyle and attitude towards culture and traditions seem to have drastically changed overtime. A form of misunderstanding and disagreement exists between the old and young generation for various reasons, which will be discussed in the paper. Main concerns and issues highlighted in the study are associated with safety, education, development, infrastructure, health, and economic sustainability. The data may be of interest to various audience including the community, Government agencies and non-government and faith-based organisations. The paper concludes with the authors' fieldwork reflections at this stage in the study.

Keywords: Violence, marginalization, intergenerational conflict, modernisation, children, social perspectives, community safety

Introduction

Over the years, PNG has gradually developed as a nation, witnessing both the positive and negative impacts of modernization, development and the decisions that it has made as a country. The country has faced issues concerning the development of both natural and human resources. While battling with the issue of violence in various forms, PNG also faces the effects of modernization in its communities, marginalization and exclusion and a growing population of a young and confused generation who are not given enough opportunities to make a living for themselves, and thus resort to criminal and harmful activities. Despite the many attempts to minimize these issues, it has all proven to be a challenge. The project of which this study is a part stems from the belief that such social issues should be addressed through a collaborative effort from the people who are experiencing these challenges, as well as the government and other key stakeholders.

Divine Word University (DWU) and HORIZONT3000 are working together to identify the social perspectives of different age and gender groups in several communities from different provinces of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Four broad themes structure the analysis:

- Marginalization and exclusion
- Influence of modernization on culture and traditions
- Violence in the community and families
- Intergenerational conflict

As an attempt to address the social issues highlighted above, in communities, the project aims to identify and present the social perspectives of selected communities in PNG. These communities were selected due to their location – rural communities, for the convenience of the research team, and for the lack of information and/or data available for concerned stakeholders to use to assist in these communities' development and well-being.

In September 2020, a second pilot study was undertaken in Dimer, Madang Province, to determine whether a large-scale research project as planned in the original research project is feasible. As with the first pilot project in Ambullua, if it is feasible, this pilot study can act as a guide in planning for and executing the large-scale research proposal in three different provinces.

The study seeks to capture specific situations found in the respective communities, identify and connect services available to the communities as well as document the findings and advocate for service providers to action them. Additionally, this study is unique and important because it will capture the perceptions of different genders and age groups in one consolidated report. It has the potential for building peace in those communities over the long term. Provided with this information, the government, development partners, NGO's and other stakeholders can develop appropriate policies and strategies focused on addressing these specific issues, in a sustainable way. Using different data collection instruments in these communities will show the competency and effectiveness of these instruments and the combination thereof, in social science research data collection.

Fieldwork activities conducted in Ambullua and Dimer were co-designed by Lorelle Tekopiri Yakam and Fr. Philip Gibbs. The group that facilitated this second fieldwork consisted of the two co-designers of the activities, Kylie McKenna, and three third year, under-graduate students of Divine Word University, Ivanka Pitala, Sarah Sidney, and Joshua Philip. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, children's activities, questionnaires and close-ended interview questions were used to achieve the following project objectives:

- Define the dynamics of marginalization and exclusion of groups or people, young and old, who suffer from marginalization and forms of violence in the communities
- Review the potential and actual resources available to address the risks to family and community life
- Determine the participants' perception of modernization and its influence on culture and traditional governance and order
- Document peace-building capacities and initiatives in the families and communities
- Explore the hopes and expectations of the participants in the communities
- Understand how the participants are addressing their own issues locally
- Identify the stakeholders and decision makers in the community and review to what extent they work together successfully.

This article documents the fieldwork activities and findings of our study. A short film is available at https://youtu.be/QbjpdrtRQ1g. We sincerely thank the community for participating in this research.

About Dimer

Dimer comprises a series of villages in the coastal hills of the Madang Province, Papua New Guinea. Dimer is home to 5 clans with their villages named Dimer 1, Dimer 2, etc. People speak a language from the Trans-New Guinea Phylum called Boskien/Bosiken/Dimir, a dialect of the more extensive Gavak language (Eberhard et al., 2019, p.45). The most recent PNG census (2011) records the Dimir ward with 232 households, 1,351 persons, 720 male and 632 female (NSO 2014, p.24).[1]

The area is classed as having a moderate income with a low-density population (Hanson et al. (2001) p.191. There is an aid post at Boskien in one corner of the Dimer territory, however, most people travel on a rough road 12 km down to the coast for medical needs, either to Mirap or to the health centre at Megiar. There are several locally owned trucks that make daily runs to the Provincial capital, Madang. The 60km trip to Madang will take approximately an hour and a half by road, but longer in wet weather. People grow Chinese taro, banana, sweet potato, yam and various green foods. Homes are situated on ridges and inhabitants do not have easy access to water, especially in the dry season. There are two schools, a primary school at Urimong and another at Kanenung. The majority of the people identify as Catholic. Recently the Christian Missionary Fellowship (CMF) church has started in the area.

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[1] Both the terms Dimir and Dimer are used in references to the location.

A. FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES

The study employed the use of non-random heterogeneous purposive and convenience sampling strategy to identify the participants. These sampling strategies were most effective as the participant's timing and availability were taken into consideration, as well as identifying key participants who were able to provide adequate answers to the study's questions. In total, 116 participants were involved, comprising 39 children, 62 adults and 15 young adults. They participated in focus groups, interviews and children's and young adults' activities. Some individuals may have participated in more than one activity, but that was within the control of the research team. For instance, after the FGD, one or more participants were asked to be interviewed individually so that more insight could be given on a specific topic or concern raised in the FGD. Additional data was generated from 12 structured questionnaires and 20 Menzies surveys.[2]

Participants comprised of children, community leaders, church and women leaders, village court officials, health workers, teachers and other members of the community. Three different age groups participated in the study. The schoolchildren who participated in the study were between the ages of 10-15 years. The young adults involved were between the ages of 20-30, and the adults were 40 years and older. Although the participants in the Menzies survey were adults (over 40 years old) and mostly parents, the survey questionnaire did not require any demographic information from these participants, so there is no recorded data on their age range.

The data were collected in the form of audio recording, pictures, hand written notes and questionnaire forms/surveys. They were first organized into groups according to age groups, and then put into smaller groups according to the activities administered. Each member of the research team was given certain groups, survey questionnaires/forms and/or individual interviews to transcribe and then analyse. The student researchers in the team were taught the basics of transcribing and data analysis, and were also given assistance and guidance by a senior member of the research team. The thematic data analysis method was used to analyse all the data.

1. Children's activities

The first activity was with the grade 7 students alone. The class comprised 8 female and 12 male students. They were asked to draw a map of their community and identify the places that they felt 'safe' or 'unsafe' by drawing a smiling face (☺) or an unhappy face (☹).The second activity (which included 4 male students from grade 8) was a "Safe/unsafe" activity, in which statements were read out to the students, and they had to move to either side of the room depending on whether they felt each situation in the statement was safe for them or not. An example of a statement for the activity is, "Walking along the road you meet someone known to be a thief."

The grade 4 students (11 female and 9 male) took part in a "safety continuum" activity where statements concerning their safety was read out to them, and they had to decide whether they felt safe in each of those situations or not. This was indicated by their movement on the safety continuum range of 1 – 10, with 1 being very safe, and 10 being very unsafe.

2. Young adults' activities and interviews

A total of 15 participants took part in an "Agree/disagree" activity. There were 5 females and 10 males. Statements associated with the major themes of the study were read out to the young adults. They then had to decide whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral about these statements, and to provide their reasons. An example of such a statement is: "There is a good relationship between the older generation and the younger generation."

5 Female young adults participated in a "Safety Continuum" activity, similar to the children's activity above. 12 statements regarding safety were read out to the participants, who then moved to different ranges of the safety continuum, depending on how safe they felt in those situations.

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[2] Adapted from the Parenting for Child Development program developed by the Menzies School of Health Research, Darwin, Australia. Parenting for Child Development (P4CD) is a group parenting program that has been developed for Papua New Guinea (PNG) with the aim of reducing harsh parenting, child maltreatment and violence against children.

3. Adult Focus group discussions

In 6 focus group discussions, 57 adults took part. There were 27 females and 30 males. The following questions were used as a guide for the focus group discussions:

- How are decisions about community matters made in Dimer?
- What changes have you observed with the culture and traditions of Dimer? Are the changes positive or negative? Why?
- How would you describe the relationship between the older generation and the young ones in Dimer today?
- What do you expect from your community, government, family, friends and leaders? What do they expect from you?
- What kind of services are available in your community and who provides them?
- If a child or person is beaten or abused, what does the community do?
- How is peace maintained in the community?
- Are there any widows, orphans or people living with disabilities here? If so, how does the community care for them or treat them?

4. Semi-structured, one-to-one adult interviews

There were also 5 one-to-one adult interviews conducted with 2 females and 3 males. Interviewees were asked the same questions as the above focus group discussions, along with further detailed discussion aimed at capturing more in-depth, individual stories on the project's broad themes.

5. Questionnaires

A total of 12 adults participated in response to a hard-copy questionnaire distributed to key stakeholders in the community such as, teachers, village court officials and a health care worker. There were 6 females and 6 males. The questionnaire comprised: socio-demographic information, and close-ended and open-ended questions on the broad themes of the project. All 12 questionnaires distributed were returned.

6. Close-ended statements for adults and older people (Menzies)

In the Menzies survey, 20 participants took part in responding to the close-ended statements for adults and older people. This instrument did not ask participants to indicate their gender. Participants were asked to respond to the statements by selecting 'not true', 'sometimes true', and 'always true'. All 20 copies of the Menzies survey were either distributed and returned or administered by the project team, as some participants had difficulty reading and understanding the statements. An example of the Menzies close-ended statements is, "In my family everyone is respected."

B. VOICES OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

1. Table 1: Safety Continuum Activity: Grade 4 Students

The table below shows the responses from the students on what they consider safe or unsafe in their lives.

Very safe
- ➡ Someone helps you with your homework
- ➡ A friend shares their lunch with you
- ➡ You are hungry and a parent from the village gives you banana to eat

A little bit safe
- ➡ You are sick and in the hospital
- ➡ Walking to school alone

A bit unsafe
- ➡ Your parents are fighting
- ➡ There is a thunderstorm at night
- ➡ You meet someone on the road that you know is a thief
- ➡ You decided to go to town and the vehicle you are on is speeding

> ➜ You are in class and your friends argue
>
> **Very unsafe**
> - ➜ You meet someone that people say is a sorcerer
> - ➜ You meet someone that people say has HIV
> - ➜ You encounter the police on the road
> - ➜ You have taken food (banana) that doesn't belong to you
> - ➜ You go past a place that where people say there is a masalai spirit
> - ➜ You were ordered by your parents to help out in the garden after school but you did not obey the order (posed by a parent)
> - ➜ You are walking on the road and see a drunkard approaching and shouting (posed by a parent)

The statements in the 'very safe' category are self-explanatory. Food especially is a sign of safety and good relations.

In the 'a little bit safe' category, several children explained how they were anxious about being in hospital lest they pick up an infection or disease there. So also, walking to school is not always safe if one comes from far away and has to walk through the territory of another clan.

They felt a bit unsafe with thunder because one had actually experienced a lightning strike. When meeting a thief, they felt a bit unsafe, but very unsafe when they themselves took something that does not belong to them. With the very unsafe category children are afraid of sorcerers and *masalai* spirits who might kill them, and people living with HIV who they think will infect them. They were also fearful of not obeying parents, lest they be beaten or food be withheld from them, and they had experience of meeting drunkards on the road.

2. Graph 1: Safety Continuum Activity: Grade 7 & 8 Students

Safe/unsafe activity with Grades 7 & 8 Students - Kanenung Primary School.
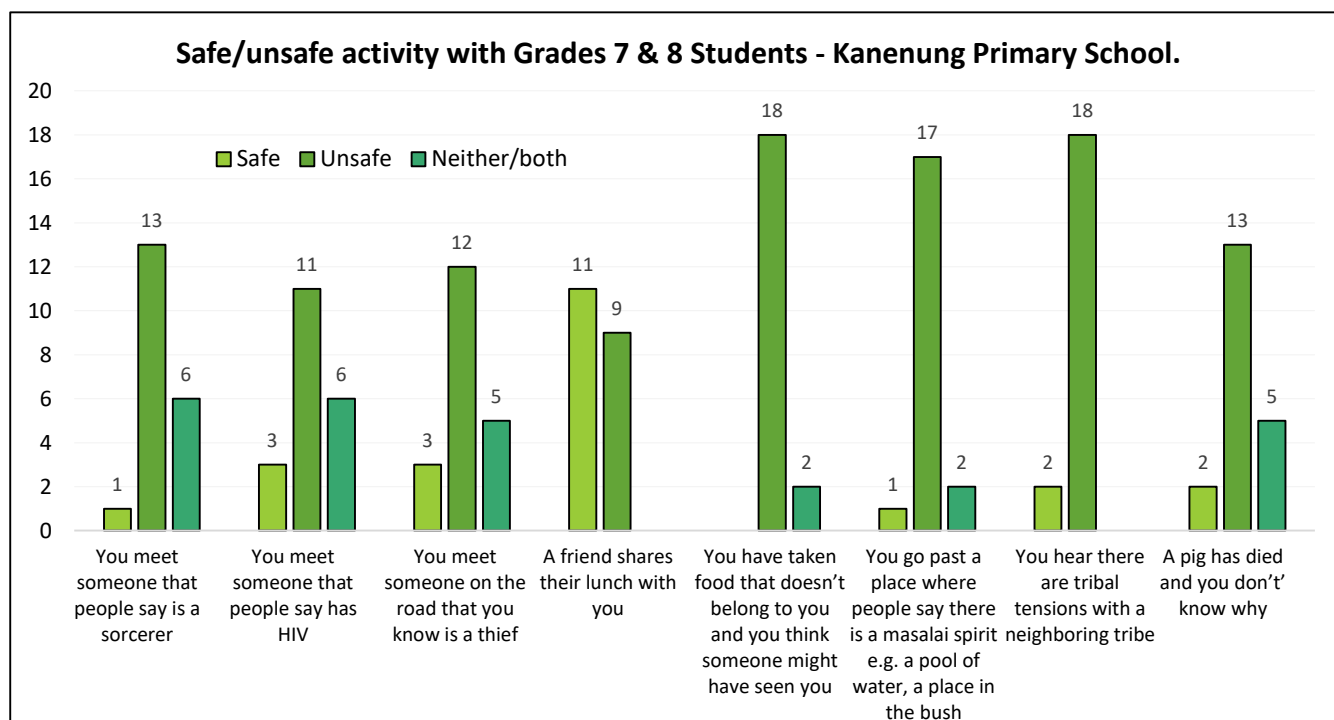
The second safety continuum activity was conducted with 20 grade 7's and 8 students. The graph above shows these statements and the number of students who chose the statements to be safe, unsafe or they were not sure.

There were various responses from the students justifying why they thought the statements were safe, unsafe, or were not sure. The students gave examples and experiences they went through that influenced their answers. One student mentioned that he is a Christian and does not believe in *masalai* spirits, and therefore is not afraid to approach a place said to contain a *masalai* spirit. Almost all the students regard taking food that does not belong to them as unsafe, because they might get into trouble for doing so.

Table 2: Safety issues and problems identified within the community by grades 7 & 8 students

The table below shows some of the safety issues and problem issues within the community, identified by the grades 7 & 8 students.

Issues leading to safety	Problem issues making people unsafe
• Respect others • Help others • Solving conflicts	• Smoking Marijuana • Drinking Alcohol • Fighting • Land and water issues

3. Safe/Unsafe Mapping Activity: Grade 7 Students

The students formed four groups and were asked to draw a map of their community, and to indicate in the map, places where they felt safe or unsafe with the key symbols – *smiley face* (☺) for a safe place and *sad* or *unhappy face* (☹) for places they felt unsafe. After drawing their maps, they did a small presentation of their discussions and explained why they indicated these places safe or unsafe. They were also given an opportunity to comment on their peers' maps, especially on places they thought could have/should have been indicated as safe or unsafe, or places their other peers might have forgotten to include in their maps.
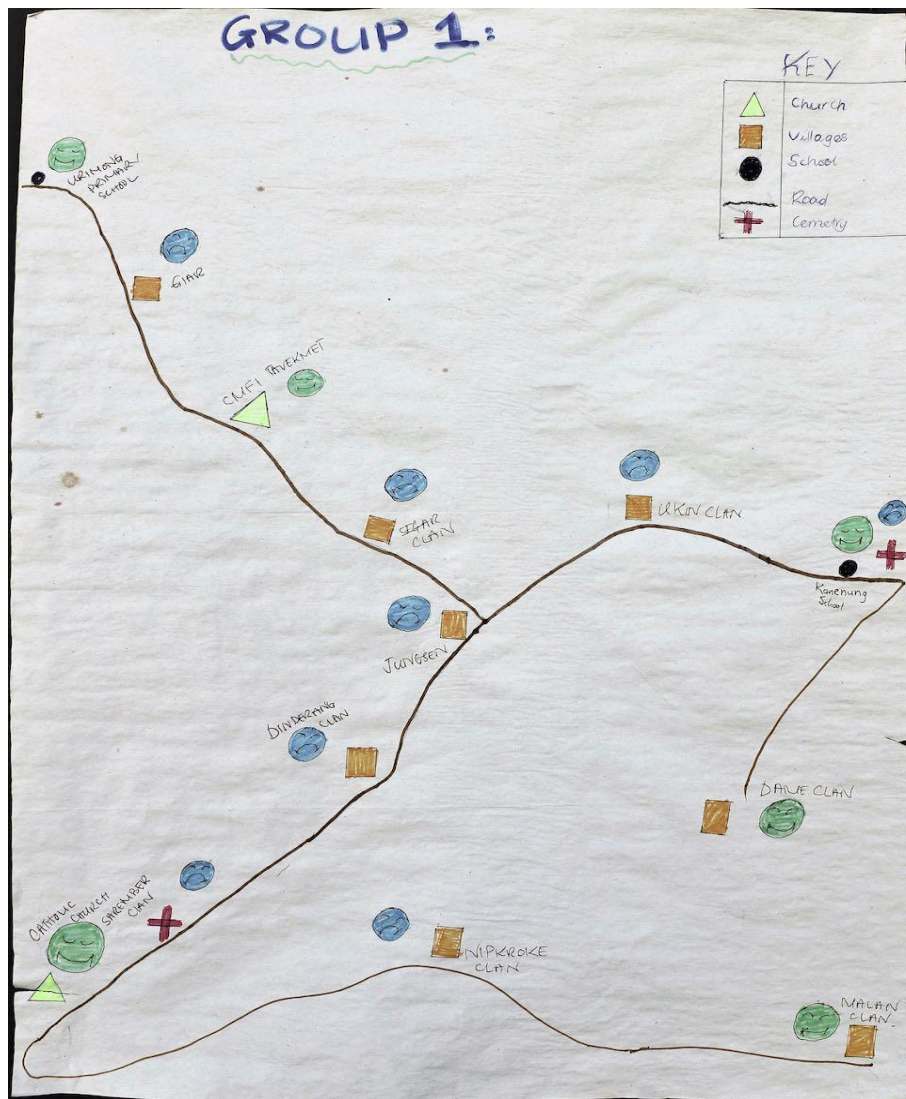

Figure 1. Image of map drawn by Group 1 showing where they consider safe or unsafe places in their community.
Safe: school, church (Catholic and CMF), some (2) clans
Unsafe: many (6) clans, the road junction, (2) cemeteries.

Figure 2. Image of map drawn by Group 3 showing where they consider safe or unsafe places in their community.
Safe places: school, aid post, village, church, "home sweet home"
Unsafe places: road, forest
unmarked: toilet

Generally, places the students identified as safe were

- Church - it is a place of worship
- School - they learn new knowledge and meet their teachers and friends
- Dimer 1 (Village) - consists of good people
- Forest - Supplies everyone with fresh air and food
- Toilet - can be a safe place - where one can relieve themselves
- River - you will not find any rubbish in it, and you wash there, therefore it is safe.

Certain places were discussed and explained why they were indicated as unsafe

- **Toilet -** Although being safe, can also be an unsafe place, because it attracts flies and these flies bring with them germs that may cause diseases.
- **Village -** Some students went against the idea of the village being a safe place, their main reason was that the people in those villages have what they call an 'attitude problem', especially the youths. They do not have respect for anyone in the community and they are the ones who tend to be the trouble makers in the village.
- **Forest -** A few students discussed and mentioned that even though the forest is unsafe because of the dangerous animals living there, for instance, snakes that can bite a person and that person may die from their lethal bites, it can still be regarded as a safe place because the forest provides them with fresh air and food.
- **Cemetery –** many people are afraid of the dead.
- **Rubbish bin -** it smells and it spreads germs

C. VOICES OF ADULTS & YOUNG ADULTS

1. Violence

Out of 12 participants in the questionnaires, only two indicated that they do not experience any form of violence, while 10 indicated otherwise. Most common types of violence experienced or witnessed in the community are:
- Wife beating and GBV

- Child abuse (verbal and physical)
- Drug and alcohol related violence
- Mother bashing female child
- Verbal abuse to children
- Domestic violence
- Land disputes
- Early childhood pregnancy (which participants considered as child-abuse)

Some factors that contribute towards violence in the community, as listed by the participants are consumption and abuse of alcohol and drugs, disobedience, lack of respect, attitude problem, socio-economic factors, land dispute and boundaries, sexual violence, abuse, adultery, and women (this latter defies explanation).

A majority of the participants indicated that the main victims are women. Participants believe that violence is not a private matter, and also identified support services available for survivors or victims of violence. These are listed as follows in the order of the frequency mentioned:

- Caritas
- Meri safe Haus
- Police – Family and Sexual Violence Unit (FSVU)
- Community leaders
- Counselling hotline
- Village mediation team
- Village court
- Church
- Councillor

Although there are support systems/services available, many of the people in the community may not be aware of these, indicating a need for more awareness and promotion within the community.

1.1. Peace-building capacities and initiatives in Dimer

Contrary to violence, peace building capacities in Dimer involve traditional elements, as well as more modern arrangements such as the magistrate, village court and the police. Threats to peace in Dimer are dealt with according to whether they are deemed "serious crimes" or "small crimes". Serious crimes include rape, adultery, physical violence, and repeat offences. These crimes are referred to the Village Court for deliberation by the Magistrate and his officials who will then decide if the case should involve the Police (FGD_Council_1). Police are asked to intervene in cases such as murder to prevent "retaliation between the deceased relatives and the murderer's relatives" (FGD_M_1). Yet the Police do not always respond to calls from the community.

"Small crimes" such as swearing, and stealing are handled within the community through the Village Court and mediation processes facilitated by clan leaders and the magistrate. Mediation requires all parties to sit together and exchange "prescribed items" as a sign of peace. Common items exchanged include poultry, betel nut, pigs, tobacco, string bags, and more recently, money.

The aim of the ceremonial exchange is for all parties to reach a common understanding and to protect the community from further harm, including payback violence. In addition to the ceremonial exchanges and mediation, those young people who cause trouble are provided help and guidance from the older people to help them change.

From the responses in the questionnaire, other mechanisms in place to maintain the peace in the community, also include respecting leaders, mutual agreement, planting a 'tanget' as a sign of peace between conflicting parties, sporting events and, even the use of sorcery.

1.2. Community response to a child that is badly beaten by parents

Physical punishment of children appears to be seen as an appropriate means of discipline. Without discipline, parents fear their children will become trouble-makers and create problems for their family and community. Yet participants suggest there are accepted ways of "hitting a child". Parents generally determine the appropriateness

of punishment themselves, but other family members may talk to the parents and tell them to "go easy on the child" if their actions are deemed excessive.

Participants in the questionnaire believe that children should be disciplined physically (i.e. corporal punishment, like spanking), and should be given strong advice by parents and teachers every day. This should all start from as young as 3-5 years old. They believe it is important because it will teach the child what is good and bad, and to have respect for others. However, severe cases, in which a child is badly hurt, are reported to the Police. Yet, this appears to be rare and the number of incidents involving child abuse is reportedly decreasing, possibly due to people listening to community leaders and attending church (FGD_M_2).

2. Influence of Modernization

Participants believe that modernization has led to changes in culture, traditions and community harmony in Dimer. Life in Dimer prior to PNG's independence, is characterized as peaceful. Yet access to basic services was more difficult, as there were no roads, vehicles, or school located in the community. The period following independence brought notable observed changes, particularly regarding levels of respect between community members, especially towards elders. A new generation is thought to have emerged, with their own morals and standards.

Culture in Dimer is often described by participants as "slowly dying" or "starting to fade away". This is characterized by the infrequent use of traditional practices and lifestyle changes such as, traditional songs, beating of the kundu and garamut drums, bride price payments, clothing styles, and children's preference for store-bought foods (e.g. rice). There are concerns that the local language is also being lost due to increased use of Tok Pisin and the mixing of English and Tok Pisin.

Furthermore, the traditional barter system that the Dimer people had with the people from the coast, has changed radically, due to the introduction of money. Instead of trading fresh, garden produce for fish, they are now selling the produce, and using the money to buy fish, as well as pay for their other needs.

Young adults observed that traditional knowledge and skills are not being transferred to the young generation and are becoming very unpopular among young people in the community. Another noticeable change is the disobedience to the law set by the leaders in the community. It seems that people are now creating their own laws to follow.

While 9 participants in the questionnaire concurred that modernization has been embraced by everyone, 2 participants disagreed. There are mixed perceptions among young adults about who was more unwilling to accept the changes. While all seem willing to accept the changes, older people are more unwilling, as opposed to the younger generation, because they are more sceptical of the advantages and disadvantages of modernization in their communities.

2.1. Factors contributing to the changes in Dimer

Changes are mainly attributed to "outside influences" such as, young people returning to the village following completion of school and university. Examples include learning how to produce homebrew, sharing explicitly sexual material, and more generally, developing new behaviours and attitudes.

Contributing factors to these changes are thought to include:
- the influence of missionaries and religion, especially the emphasis on "one God" and discouragement of some customs and traditions
- introduction of new technologies (e.g. mobile phones and internet access)
- contemporary music
- imitation of nearby communities
- the older generation not sharing stories with the younger generation; and lack of interest in traditional practices among all age groups.

2.2. Social issues and concerns linked to influence of modernization

Research participants link numerous social concerns to the loss of traditional and cultural practices. Key issues include:

- alcohol and drug abuse (especially homebrew and marijuana) among young men
- teenage pregnancy
- disrespect of leaders and older people
- law and order problems
- marriage within the family (e.g. second cousins)
- Land boundary/ownership disputes.

Participants in the questionnaires also observed the following changes:
- Traditional dressing dying out
- Young boys do not know how to carve garamut drums
- Young girls do not know how to make a bilum netbag
- Traditional to modern arts
- Gambling games
- Practice of adultery – due to money flow, women resort to admire men who have money
- Worship - previously people did not attend church service, but now they realized the importance of worshiping God

Some noticeable changes expressed by the youths include style of dressing and a generation of young people ashamed of wearing traditional attire.

There were mixed perceptions in the questionnaire responses as to whether the influence was positive, negative or both. These different perceptions show how much modernization has affected the lives of this generation of young people. One can see the struggle of wanting to hold on to traditions and culture, while at the same time, they embrace these new changes and the advantages that come with them.

3. Generational gap and intergenerational conflict

The generational gap and intergenerational conflict that exist between the two generations is perceived to have been caused by various factors, including modernization and development, different perspectives, beliefs and values, traditional knowledge gap between the two generations and a lack of cooperation.

A number of issues have emerged. The ones identified by the participants are violence, conflict, loss of beliefs and faith, lack of respect in community, disruption of education and culture and traditional customs, and a disregard for the laws and rules in place. Land issues are also seen as a consequence of intergenerational conflict and generational gap.

3.1. Relationship between the old and the young generations today

Perspectives on the quality of the relationship between the young and the old generations of Dimer today vary. Some participants characterize Dimer as a peaceful community where different generations live together in unity, freely tell jokes, and young leaders collaborate with community leaders on youth activities (e.g. sporting events). The bond between young people and their grandparents is thought to be particularly strong, with some observing reluctance among young people towards their parents when asked to undertake a task.

Other participants believe the relationship is not as strong as it once was, and elderly people are not getting the respect that they deserve.

> *In the past, we have great respect for our elders. We go by any decisions they make. In this present time, the youths do things according to their own will.* (FGD_M_3).

According to the young adults, although the older generation have changed their approach and perception by providing advice to young people and allowing them to sit and talk with them, there is still a lack of cooperation when it comes to certain activities in the community. For instance, when it comes to sports activities and issues that occur in the community, both groups come together to talk and plan. However, for some other activities, such as church activities, many young people do not attend or participate, and only a few do. As expressed by a participant:

> *At the church service you will see that not a lot of young men attend, that's not good, but you will see a lot of young men attend sporting activities, even fathers, they support it* (Young Adult_M_1).

Key factors thought to be straining the intergenerational relationship are alcohol abuse and an incomplete education (due to the inability of parents to afford school fees). Young people are said to swear, "talk back" and cause fights whilst drunk, and without police presence community leaders are finding it difficult to control youth drinking.

> *They only fear the police because they have guns. When police presence is felt, they behave and some will run away and hide, but when the police are gone, they go back to their old ways* (FGD_M_3).

It is also recognised that the two generations do not communicate as regularly as they did in the past, possibly due to sorcery claims and suspicions concerning the cause of deaths in the community:

> It started from claims of sorcery over the deaths of persons who died after suffering from illnesses, ulcers or other causes. People believed that to stop these kind of deaths, young people must stop associating with seniors. That is why you will see that the youths do not show much interest because they hear rumours about some seniors who practice sorcery. They feel they cannot freely associate with seniors; they fear they might get cursed or be fed *sanguma* stories (FGD_F_2).

The young adults suggested that, in order to resolve the misunderstanding and bridge the gap between the two generations, the leaders should organize a reconciliation ceremony or "kaikai" for the two groups to gather, discuss, and reach an understanding.

4. Marginalization and exclusion

Participants state that marginalization and exclusion are caused by a combination of internal and external factors, which include:
- Living in isolation and excluding self from community, church and social activities, like sports
- Having a negative attitude and mentality
- Socio-economic issues
- Mistreatment of women.

Other examples mentioned were individuals living with fatal illnesses like HIV/AIDS and TB, and land issues with orphans as a consequence. People who adopt children may soon reject them due to land shortage.

A majority of participants (7) acknowledged that there are groups in the community who are marginalized and excluded, while 5 expressed otherwise. Below are some of the groups that they perceive as marginalized and excluded from the community, in the order of the most mentioned by participants:

- Women
- Homeless children or orphans
- Old people
- Little children
- People living with disabilities
- People consuming marijuana
- Sorcery group
- Denomination
- Settlers (living with relatives)
- Youths

In terms of looking at how the community protects those marginalized and excluded groups, a majority of the participants indicated a weak response from the community. On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the strongest, 7 participants marked a range between 1-5 indicating a weak response from the community, while 3 participants marked a range between 5-10.

4.1. Decision-making in Dimer

It is the duty of the Councilor to call meetings, which, in the past, were announced by the beating of the *garamut* drum. Yet, as a symbol of social change in Dimer, the *garamut* has now been replaced by mobile phones. The key decision-makers in Dimer include:
- 5 clan leaders / village elders
- Councillor
- Magistrate
- Women's representatives
- Youth representatives

- School board members
- Leadership board members
- Village law and order committee members
- Women church groups
- Business mother leaders
- Church elders

In addition to individual leaders, a range of decision-making committees have been established in Dimer to oversee specific areas such as, a school board, village law and order committee, and network of business mother leaders. A Ward Development Committee has also been established which, although recognized as a good structure, lacks momentum and sustainability, possibly due to limited funding.

The leaders of Dimer's 5 clans appear to be the key decision makers. Yet there is an emphasis on a wider representation of groups coming together to discuss matters of concern, including women and youth representatives. Decisions are primarily reached through conversation. Agreements are then implemented through community effort. This appears to be underpinned by a commitment among leaders to promote the well-being and future of the community, and to make decisions supportive of men, women and youth.

Dominant issues requiring community-level decision-making in Dimer include the development and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g., school classrooms, road services, and buildings), and law and order problems (e.g., violence, stealing, drinking in public places and harassment of women). The Police can also become involved in responding to law and order problems in Dimer, but due to concerns about the police mistreatment of youth, village leaders prioritise community mediation as a first response.

While the adults share these perspectives, the young adult members of the community believe that decisions in the community are mostly made by male leaders. Youths are rarely included in the decision-making, and are seen as trouble-makers and incapable of participating in decision-making. When youths are included, it is only after the leaders discuss among themselves.

With regard to children's participation in decision-making, participants in the questionnaire expressed mixed views on the right age to involve children. Some agreed that children should be able to air their views from as early as 2 – 16 years, while others think that 18 or 16 – 24 years would be more appropriate. This is because at that age, they are developed and are able to reason things out properly, make logical choices and express themselves clearly.

When asked about their perception on women being involved in decision making and airing their views, participants in the questionnaire all agree that women should be involved, especially women with leadership qualities and good decision-making skills. However, at the end, the men should always have the last say.

The community has individuals who live with physical disabilities. Although there is a debate on the ability of this group of people to make good decisions, a majority of the participants agree that this group of people are members of the community and have the right to have their say. Hence, they should be involved in the community's decision-making.

4.2. People living with disabilities, widows and orphans in the community

Focus group participants suggest there are only a small number of people living in Dimer with physical disabilities, such as hearing impairment, difficulties walking, and ulcers. Yet there are many others that are widows, orphans, and children that have been abandoned or are without primary care. There is a strong emphasis on adoption and caring for children separated from their biological parents, either due to divorce or children from other villages attending school in Dimer.

Family members are the primary caregivers for vulnerable members of the community in Dimer. Common forms of assistance include medical help, provision of food, clothes, helping those with physical ailments to fetch water, and small amounts of money. The Saint Vincent de Paul Society is active in Dimer and provides support for the old and sick. The land is also recognised as a caregiver due to the food it provides. Some participants express concern that there is too little community assistance for those that are vulnerable, with one describing the lack of village support as "our failure" (FGD_F_1).

D. SERVICES SUPPORT IN DIMER

The main services available in Dimer are a road and two schools. The two schools in Dimer are provided by the Catholic church and are much appreciated. Yet the school buildings are run-down and lack funding for maintenance and resources. Dimer is reasonably accessible by road and five public motor vehicles (PMVs) service the community. The road enables villagers to market cash crops such as *koniak* (traditional depressant drug), cocoa, vanilla, betel nut, or fresh garden food. Yet the road is in a poor condition and rain causes the road to be slippery, making it difficult for vehicles to travel up the mountain.

Access to health care is a key challenge in Dimer, with significant impacts on mothers experiencing complications during childbirth. It is also recognised that some women are having abortions by using bush medicine, which produces risks for both the mother and child. There was once an aid post in the community, which was built in 1998, but it was damaged 20 years ago in an angry response to the death of a youth.

The nearest health centres are located in Boskien and Mugil. Boskien is closer, however, participants said that they would rather go to Mugil because travelling to Boskien is unsafe for them. Even travelling to Mugil requires access to a PMV bus or car, both of which are not always available. This results in people hitchhiking on the main road or walking long distances. Although there is a nurse based in Dimer, there is no medicine. Additionally, Dimer has no regular drinking water supply and this requires villagers to walk long distances to find and carry water, particularly during the dry season.

Other services or support systems available in the community are provided by the church, such as the Legion of Mary and St. Vincent De Paul. These church groups support and help different members of the community, including the sick, the unfortunate, elderly, orphans, widows and widowers. The Legion is divided into two groups consisting of the seniors and the juniors. The juniors assist the elderly and sick who are unable to help themselves, by doing their household chores, washing their clothes and fetching water for them. The seniors on the other hand manage more serious issues such as providing counselling to resolve family and marital issues, and encouraging and disciplining young people in the community.

E. EXPECTATIONS FROM GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

Priorities for improved access to services in Dimer include:
- Sealing the road
- Replacing bush material classrooms and houses with permanent buildings
- Water supply and tanks
- An aid post and access to medicine
- Assistance with law and order, including Police presence and tougher penalties
- Help with school fees
- A high school
- An elementary school in Dimer 2
- A proper and accessible market to sell cash crops and garden produce

The government is the primary stakeholder expected to provide these services, but research participants expressed frustration towards election promises that go unfulfilled. Funding proposals have been submitted to the Provincial Government to improve access to basic services in Dimer, but these have not been successful. Some participants believe this could be due to corruption or officials preferring their own communities.

In addition to government service delivery, some participants recognise the need for the community to work together to provide services for themselves. It is believed that this can be enhanced through the opening of better communication channels and contributing ideas. Individuals can also play an important role by embracing a life of prayer and "changing their attitudes".

There is a particular emphasis on the need for a change in attitude among youth due to problems in the community stemming from alcohol abuse, especially law and order issues. Some participants suggest individual behaviour change needs to occur in the context of a stronger police presence and tougher sentencing to limit the number of repeat offenders. Yet as stated above, others are concerned about Police mistreatment of youth and would prefer to handle matters within the community.

Some of the expectations of young people include:

    a)   Community has to organize skills training workshop for young people, assist in sporting and church activities. The community is also expected to help in fundraising for start-up capital or marketing of cash crops.

    b)   Leaders are expected to assist them in seeking opportunities for funds/sponsors for school fees and training. They are also expected to show confidence in youths by appointing them as church leaders.

Many young men and women in the community have either never received formal education or have dropped out after, either grades 8, 10 or 12, due to school fee issues. Without anything to do, young people often get involved in activities that bring disorder in the community, which is why the young adults who participated, strongly emphasized the need for skills training workshop or a school. An important point expressed by a male participant in the group activity, was that leaders will only help youths, if they help themselves first. If young people take the initiative to do something, the leaders will definitely step in to assist.

### F. SAFETY CONCERNS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Generally, the female young adult participants associate safety with church, church activities and their parents. However, when the statement *You are left alone in the house* was read, there was a concern for safety, as the community has different people, and it would not be safe for a woman or girl to be alone at home, especially in the night. For the female young adults, their movements seem to be more monitored and restricted, as opposed to their male peers. For instance, if asked to attend a social or sporting event, parents will not allow females to attend or participate, but will allow males to attend. However, if it is a church event or activity, then the females are allowed to attend or participate, emphasizing the association of safety with church.

Furthermore, walking alone for females, in their community or in other communities, is not safe, according to the participants. Although it is their community, they do not feel safe because there are different people who travel the road, and there may also be drunkards on the road.

Perceptions of participants were not only attained from the activities, interviews, discussions, and questionnaires, but also from the Menzies survey that was administered by the research team. It complements the rest of the data and contains information related to the different themes discussed above.

Graph 2: MENZIES QUESTIONNAIRE – adopted from Parenting for child development by Menzies Institute

The graph below displays the responses from the participants to the Menzies questionnaire.
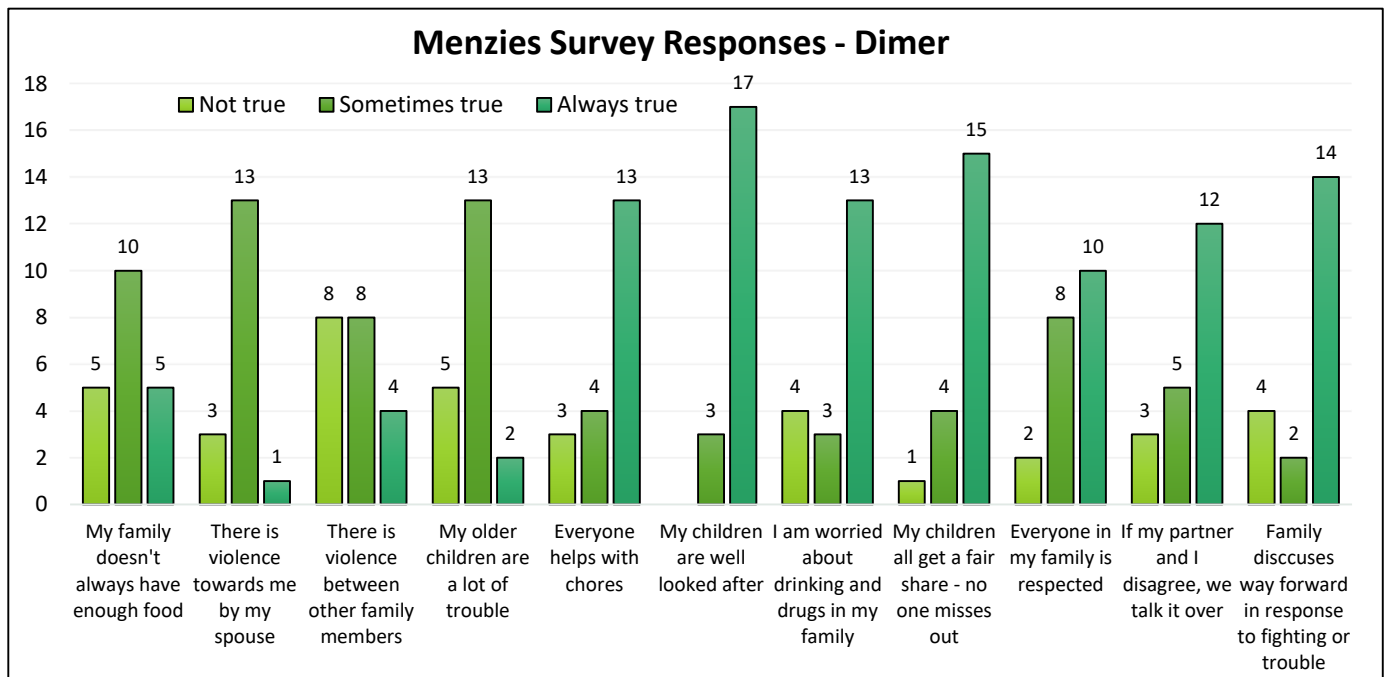
It can be seen from the responses that families often do not always have enough food in their household, which is contradictory to the statement that *My children are well taken care of,* which the majority stated, is 'always true'. Also indicated in the questionnaire are major concerns among the participants regarding domestic violence between the married couples, as well as among family members. 13 participants indicated having older children who cause a lot of trouble like fighting, hitting them (the parents) and being disobedient. Moreover, 13 participants stated that they also experience violence from their spouse sometimes. Furthermore, a majority of the participants expressed concern about drinking or drugs in the family. These responses affirm information from the interviews, discussions, activities, and questionnaires, that alcohol and drug consumption, as well as violence in the community is a problem. However, despite these concerns, participants indicate a healthy relationship and communication among their family members.

G. FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

The objectives of the research conducted were achieved. The study managed to identify the existence and contributing factors of marginalization and exclusion of certain groups within the community, as well as the main victims and/or groups or individuals who are more vulnerable to violence. Additionally, the potential and actual resources available to address the risks of family and community life were also identified and documented. Resources also include peace-building capacities and initiative in their families and community, which was identified by participants and recorded. This showed how they address their issues locally. The study captured the participants' perceptions on modernization and its influence on culture and traditional governance and order, and their hopes and expectations for their future. In addition to that, the study was able to identify the stakeholders and decision makers in the community and review to what extent they work together successfully.

Overall, the research team was satisfied with the outcomes of the fieldwork. Achieving the objectives of this second pilot study indicates the feasibility of the study at a larger scale, while considering the challenges and unique restrictions.

Some approaches that worked well were:

- The involvement of 3 undergraduate students as research assistants to help in interviewing participants, as well as data organization and analysis.
- The involvement of local people/leaders to introduce the team to the community and encourage the local people to participate.
- The use of different data collection instruments enabled the participation of different age and gender groups.
- The involvement of parents, teachers and guardians, especially with the children's activities, made it conducive for children to participate freely.

What needs amending:

- Activities for young, female adults need to be considerate of their availability and context, in order to have increased young female adult participation.
- Data care and organization needs to be adequately planned beforehand, so as to avoid any inconvenience in the analysis stage.

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