



Vanuatu Magistrates Court Undertakes Gender and Family Violence Workshop

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The Vanuatu Magistrates Court, with the assistance of the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (PJSI), undertook a 5-day gender and family violence workshop between the 9th and 16th of August 2018 in Port Vila.

The course was officially opened by the Hon. Justice Saksak of the Supreme Court, on behalf of the Chief Justice, and culminated in the production of a draft Magistrates' Court Gender and Family Violence Action Plan for consideration by the Chief Justice.

The workshop was attended by 18 participants, including Magistrates and court staff from Port Vila, as well as the islands provinces of Sanma, Malampa and Tafea.

During the workshop participants explored a range of issues intended to stimulate thinking and discussion about court responses to family violence, including gender inequality, the consequences of family violence, perpetrator accountability and the key components of a good court response to the victims of family violence. Participants benefited from the experience and insights of guest speakers from the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Stretem Rod Blong Jastis mo Sefti Program, and explored key learnings by analysing the latest production by Wan Smol Bag, "I no bisnis blong yumi."



After much lively debate and discussion, participants agreed that the workshop had shifted many of their pre-existing beliefs and attitudes. On conclusion of the workshop, participants developed a vision statement to guide development of the Magistrates' Court Gender and Family Violence Action Plan, stating:

"The Vanuatu Magistrates Court strongly condemns family violence and commits to providing an accessible, fair and safe court response to the victims of family violence."

The workshop was one of many gender and family violence workshops conducted by the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative in the Pacific, intended to measurably improve the accessibility and responsiveness of court services to the victims of family violence. The initiative is funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.