Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence – what we are learning?

ANU REGNET, DIVINE WORD UNIVERSITY, NRI
The types of initiatives that make communities less vulnerable to narratives of sorcery and need for violent responses

• These initiatives are “Inside-Out” (i.e generated within communities)
  • Led by respected members of the community
  • Use language and concepts and principles that resonate with that particular community

• Create room for experiential learning (e.g. hearing from survivors/ seeing footage of violence)

• Preventative not reactive

• Are networked/ supported locally, and ideally also regionally/ nationally
  • State and non-state actors and institutions

• Are sustained over time and involve different types of groups (eg family, community, youth, church, etc)
The types of interventions that help to address accusations in a non-violent manner

• Mediation by community mediators
• Village court mediation and “full court”
• Support by police (less common)
• Common characteristics:
  • Public forum that exposes chain of gossip and allows accused to provide explanations for “suspicious” behaviour
  • Skilful mediators/ justices who are at least sceptical of accusations of sorcery
  • Use of multiple sessions
  • Reference to the law and Christian principles
The types of interventions that reduce accusations of sorcery being voiced

• Consistent application of rules of defamation against those accusing others
• Community rules banning accusations of sorcery
• Fear of having to pay compensation (as ordered by customary courts by OMS in Enga) to repair the name of the person accused
• Arranging for a church-centred funeral (from 5-point plan)
• Family members with moral authority saying “we are not going down that path” in the context of a death
The types of initiatives that help to protect survivors over the long term

• In many ways this is the greatest challenge for SARV: continued insecurity of survivors
• Safe houses and repatriation important – but need a re-integration plan or temporary becomes permanent
• Defamation claims can assist in stopping articulation of suspicions
• Re-integration in community is rare; occurs where:
  • Accused individual’s ties with their community are actively strengthened
  • Accused individual regularly performs pro-social functions
  • Accused individual engages in social rituals such as communal eating
  • Public apology by person who made the accusation

• Example: Margaret’s failed attempt to reintegrate and her desire 2 yrs later to try again be return home.
Types of interventions that help change people’s thinking/beliefs

• Producing convincing examples that show a “glasman” is a con-man
• In some areas (such as Enga) reminding people that this is something new coming from outside and not really part of Enga culture can be unsettling for some.
• Some men start to wonder when it is pointed out that this thinking will put their own daughters into danger. Send it back where it came from to protect our daughters…..
• Worry about cause of death or simply ”leave it on the coffin.”
• Communities learn from experience that accusing someone and using violence again them leads to more problems (“stockpiling problems”) rather than solving them
• Individuals who have been falsely accused or whose family members have been falsely accused become less accepting of the veracity of accusations