

PNG Institute of Directors

Workshop on

“The Fight Against Crime”

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Let me first thank the Institute of Directors for the invitation to address this meeting for the launch of this coalition against crime

I'll say a few introductory words and then Graham Ainui, Chairman of the CIMC Law and Order Sector Committee and Geraldine Paul with the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (and maybe if time John Varey on the Informal Sector) will give more details of their committee's work and programmes and recommendations for action. Both of these committees operate under the auspices of the CIMC, which is managed by the INA, along with other committees on the Informal Economy, agriculture, infrastructure, commerce and services, etc. each of which are there to bring government, private sector and civil society together to share concerns, ideas and collaborate constructively. The INA is an independent policy think tank, funded by the private sector, although specific research programmes secure funding from different private and public, including donor sources.

PNG has a reputation for lawlessness. I won't simply use the term crime, as some of the activities, as with tribal fights which severely undermine economic activity and human rights, are not what you'd conventionally simply term as crime.

Consistently in the INA's periodic Business Survey (with the last one in 2007) law and order problems were considered the biggest handicap to business and investment, followed by Corruption (which is merely a type of crime anyway), then poor infrastructure and services, land problems and red tape.

Crime has a major economic as well as social impact upon this country.

Sometimes tales of crime in PNG are exaggerated, particularly in the Australian press. Other countries, including parts of Sydney and

Melbourne, also have significant crime problems, but there remains no question that crime (including corruption) seriously undermines this country and its peoples' prospects and welfare. When leaders publicly downplay it, or simply blame the messengers, they're just covering up for their ineffectiveness in addressing it, or worse, their active participation in corruption.

The Port Moresby community crime survey by NRI and JAG in 2005 highlighted the direct impact on the community with 2/3 of households being victims of crime in the past 12 months, over half being victims of multiple crimes and 1/3 of repeat crimes and 1 in 8 the victim of more than 10 or more crimes. Different areas and settlements and segments of the community were affected by different types of crime, whilst a high portion of certain was perpetrated by people they knew and involved alcohol.

Around the world higher levels of policing generally results in lower levels of crime owing to deterrence, but it is a matter of concern that the Moresby crime survey suggested that the community widely distrusted the police and improvements in local law and order were largely attributable to community self-help.

What causes crime? This comprises broadly, need and desperation at one extreme, to greed driving the massive theft and corruption we see in some echelons of Govt and some businesses or with some of the major robberies, to unrestrained emotions like anger and jealousy and payback, sometimes combined with fear of the unexplained like sorcery. Ready access to alcohol and other drugs and weapons, notably guns, severely worsens the impact of these various emotions.

Some actions are premeditated, like major thefts and corrupt acts, misappropriation or whatever you want to call them, whilst others are more spontaneous, including most acts of violence, including many (but certainly not all) acts of family and sexual violence triggered on the spur of the moment, in the heat of anger or jealousy, sometimes under alcohol's influence.

Wider social conditions as well as individual factors greatly influence behaviour, so we know that around the world most prison inmates have been victims of domestic violence when children. Perpetrators have tended to have been victims of violence themselves. Peer norms and pressure, including in gang cultures, fire people up to commit or justify offences. Lack of education, accessible services and other aspects which

contribute to poverty certainly contribute to desperation or the lack of options.

We need to have a clear understanding of crime, its causes and its perpetrators in this country to be able to tackle it as a society. There have been various studies undertaken by the INA and other research bodies, notably ANU and NRI, over the years on crime and related issues, including the Police Review of 2004. Studies of the labour market, notably by Duncan and Lawson and by Levantis in 2000, emphasise the key role of poverty and the lack of dynamic employment growth in the formal and legitimate informal economies since the 1970s as the major contributor to the growing crime rate.

Clearly, there are many factors driving our crime rate, which does ebb and flow as other economic opportunities arrive, but limited employment opportunities is certainly the greatest, which drives large numbers into marginal or more serious crime. Levantis may overstate the case, and may place too much emphasis on the regulation of wages back in the 1970s as the major constraint to subsequent formal employment growth, but certainly unsuitable processes, combined with the collapse in governance and maintenance of rural infrastructure and basic services, (which can largely be put down to poor leadership, infighting, unaccountability and abuse of power) have all restrained growth and formal and informal job creation for decades. High crime rates have, in turn, undermined prospects for many industries, such as tourism, but also agriculture, which have the potential to generate extensive employment.

We now have to be very careful that major enclave projects, notably LNG, don't raise expectations (and corruption) through the roof, whilst undermining other businesses, notably large and smallholder agriculture, and hence broad-based long term employment prospects. Poverty, lack of opportunity, depression, combined with jealousy trigger a wide range of criminal and other anti-social behaviour, including family and domestic violence.

I won't rank crimes in order of severity, but I will emphasise that corruption is certainly amongst the top, because of its severe impact upon the wider community. It may not be so direct or visible as theft or violence against an individual or household, but it sets the standards by which the rest of society operates. The massive abuse of public funds, through overpriced contracts, out of court settlements, special office rental deals (whilst abandoning the Central Government Offices etc), misuse of MOA grants, granting logging or fishing concessions and

licenses or special purpose land leases or even mining exemptions in exchange for private or party contributions (maybe in Singapore accounts or Gold coast properties), false invoices and manipulation of appointments or scholarships, all undermine the entire State apparatus and its capacity to serve the population.

Corruption, large and small scale, results in inadequate funds and capacity for priority public goods (for medicines, school books and roads maintenance), whilst resources allocated for second rate facilities or landowner resources squandered for a few landowner leaders to gain overseas entertainment and royalties, cost to the whole community into the future. The large scale corruption sets the rules and progressively corrupts the whole system in a copycat manner. It also chases off credible investors, who expect to win business on merit and refuse to participate in graft, or to pay Finance Department staff 20% up front to receive payments owed.

Clearly, the family and sexual crimes also fall into the most serious category, and destroy peoples lives and morale, and those of their children and Geraldine Paul will talk more on that, but addressing this is critical also because creating the right atmosphere for our children to grow up in, free from fear of crime and violence, being educated and with suitable skills and with a clear work ethic and sense of right and wrong, will be critical to PNG's future, free from the levels of crime, corruption and violence now widely encountered.

To counter crime we need a wide ranging approach, which addresses especially prevention, but also provides punishment, but largely to act as a deterrent to other potential perpetrators and against repeat behaviour.

Prevention and discouragement include:

Making it unnecessary to undertake crime by generating meaningful formal and informal sector employment and income earning opportunities which can meet individual and household needs and some wants, and preferably at least compete with returns from basic crime. This really requires creating the right conditions for business and investment to generate employment, by addressing the full range of impediments (including law and order problems themselves) affecting large companies right down to PNG micro-enterprises. This requires suitable macro and micro economic conditions, right through to promptly building up suitable education and technical and vocational training capacity to meet the country's current and future needs. Reducing crime might also

require some marginal or currently illegal activities being legitimised, supervised and perhaps taxed rather than driven under the control of unscrupulous criminal cartels.

Making it harder to commit crime and get away with it, through great public information and transparency, including awareness of Budgets, laws and government responsibilities, whistle-blowing, operating emergency numbers, stronger independent watchdogs, as well as more effective security (like security cameras etc).

Increasing the quality and quantity of policing and other law and order services, including improving police morale, with better facilities, standards and training including more independent auditing and checks and balances to counter graft and corruption in the force. With the public sector barely penetrating rural areas more support for community level administration, magistrates, NGOs and churches is critical.

Public education in schools and for adults is critical, including use of radio and tv “soaps”, to raise awareness on key issues, from responsibilities and ethics in government and business, to human rights and family and sexual violence issues etc. This must be a long term programme targeting specific issues, but also encouraging nation-building and a more harmonious and invariably less fractured future society for PNG.

Awareness and skills training for perpetrators, to assist them to fit back into society with improved attitude and suitable skills to survive through legitimate means. This may include restorative justice, suitable applied, including coming face to face or better recognition of the victims of crime.

Over to Graham and Geraldine for specific and tangible actions, based upon the recommendations from the CIMC Law and order sector committee, covering subjects from the implementation of the Police review, to the operation of the NACA (the anti-corruption alliance) to supervision and standards of the Security industry to international crime (including facing new phenomena like triads etc) and Geraldine on the major impediment to PNG development, namely seriously addressing the country’s high level of family and sexual violence.