

## **Juvenile justice reform in Papua New Guinea**

*Since 2001, UNICEF has been supporting the Government of Papua New Guinea to re-engineer how the justice sector meets the challenge of juvenile offending. The vision of the juvenile justice reform process, as articulated in the National Juvenile Justice Policy, is the creation of a comprehensive juvenile justice system based on restorative justice, Melanesian tradition and contemporary juvenile justice practices. PNG has a strong tradition of community dispute resolution, and juvenile justice reforms seek to draw on these strengths to promote more restorative approaches to juvenile offending.*

*In support of this new approach, UNICEF assisted the Royal PNG Constabulary to draft a Police Juvenile Policy and Diversionary Protocol, simplifying the key messages: to divert children rather than arrest, to use pre-trial detention and remand as a last resort and to avoid the use of force. Police are encouraged to issue cautions or refer children to community mediation rather than formally arresting them, particularly for minor and non-violent crimes. A specialized Police Juvenile Policy Monitoring Unit has been established in two main urban centres to monitor police compliance with the Protocol, and a network of NGOs has been trained to document abuse and provide care, support and advocacy where required.*

*Diversion is also available at the court level through an innovative Juvenile Court Diversion Programme. When children come before the court charged with minor crimes, the court has the discretion to refer them to community mediation rather than proceeding with the formal trial. Local mediators have been accredited to facilitate resolutions between the child, the victim, parents and community members. In addition, Juvenile Court Magistrates throughout the country have received training on juvenile justice principles to ensure that the children who are processed through the formal court system are handled in a child-sensitive manner and are sentenced to imprisonment only as a last resort.*