



Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea

**Forum
13 October 2005
Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra
9:00am – 12:15pm
Programme**

9:00am	Guests arrive & forum registration	
9:15am	Welcome & Introduction	Chris Richards, CEO, ARHA
9:25am	Intersection of HIV & Sexual and Reproductive Health	Matt Sammels, Manager Policy & Advocacy, ARHA
9:35am	Informal address	Dr Richard Feachem
9:50am	Voicing the unspeakable: how to articulate the realities of violence in HIV awareness and prevention	Ms Katherine Lepani, Centre for Gender Relations, ANU
10:20am	Health systems in Fragile States: A PNG Perspective	Dr Clement Malau, Burnett Institute
10:50am	Morning Tea	
11:10am	Breaking the Silence - Thinking, Talking and Acting to Respond to Reality. HIV:A Critical Development Issue for PNG	Dame Carol Kidu MP
11:40am	Panel discussion: question & answer session	Chaired by Chris Richards
12:15pm	Close	

Intersection of HIV & Sexual and Reproductive Health

HIV poses the biggest threat to the development of all nations. While the loss of any life is always a tragedy, there are associated economic and social impacts. The loss of a member of society, the loss of skills and knowledge, the time taken out to care for a sick family member, the cost of health care, stigma, discrimination and other social impacts. The World Bank has attempted to calculate the associated indirect costs of HIV on a country and have found that past estimates of between 0.3 to 1.5% decline in GDP may be too conservativeⁱ.

While UNAIDS estimates of HIV prevalence in PNG are low at 0.6%ⁱⁱ, a recent report has suggested that Papua New Guinea (PNG) may be facing “an unfolding [HIV] disaster.”ⁱⁱⁱ This report estimates the upper prevalence rate could be in the vicinity of 18%. The report further estimates that at these rates, the size of the PNG workforce could shrink between 13 and 38% by 2020. Many of the people found to be HIV positive in the study were undergoing diagnosis or treatment for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or were pregnant.

Three urgent challenges of HIV remain; prevention of transmission, treatment and education. So what can reproductive health bring to the fight against HIV?

Poor reproductive health is generally indicated in a high STI rate, and a high STI rate is generally an indicator of a high HIV prevalence. In a heterosexually driven epidemic, reproductive health approaches can be integrated into existing HIV programs to provide, amongst others, broader entry points for counselling, education, testing and treatment. They can also be used as a vehicle to educate about STIs and build capacity in the wider population, which is especially important in countries like PNG where almost half the population are under the age of 18.

There are many benefits that flow on from good reproductive health. These include the empowerment of women through enabling them to complete education, choice in timing and number of pregnancies, less family fragmentation through maternal deaths, fewer infant and child deaths, less exposure to STIs and women can actively participate in all facets of society.

It is hoped that this forum will highlight the current situation and raise awareness about some of the policies, health systems and social issues that need to be addressed in order to place these in an integrated HIV and reproductive health framework.

Breaking the Silence - Thinking, Talking and Acting to Respond to Reality.
HIV - A Critical Development Issue for PNG

Dame Carol Kidu MP
Minister for Community Development

Dame Carol Kidu grew up in Brisbane and moved to Papua New Guinea after marrying the late Sir Buri Kidu. In 1993, after the death of Sir Kidu, Dame Carol Kidu started the Sir Buri Heart Institute and in 1997 she stood for public office. In 2002 she became a cabinet minister and is currently the only female member of the Papua New Guinea government. Dame Kidu has established a District AIDS Committee in her electorate which collaborates with the provincial and national AIDS committees and consults with UNAIDS. Dame Kidu also initiated the establishment of the national HIV/AIDS Parliamentary Advocacy Committee in 2003.

In 2005 Dame Kidu was recognised in her own right with the female equivalent of a knighthood – the DBE – for her services to the community and politics. She speaks regularly outside and within parliament for government support to control the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Voicing the unspeakable: how to articulate the realities of violence in
HIV awareness and prevention

Katherine Lepani
PhD Scholar
Gender Relations Centre
Research School for Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University

The intersection of violence, gender, and sexuality holds serious implications for HIV transmission and its effects. The international health community now recognizes the causal relationship between violence and HIV and the challenges it holds for effective responses to localized epidemics. In Papua New Guinea, enduring and pervasive patterns of male sexual behaviour involving coercion, violence, and gang rapes are highly conducive to the transmission of HIV and other STIs, and have a critical bearing on women's sexual autonomy and health. The realities of violence are intensified by the widespread misconception that women are responsible for the spread of the virus. This presentation considers forms of gender violence in PNG, from interpersonal to institutional, which influence and shape social vulnerability to HIV. Acknowledging the challenges of contextual diversity and cohesion in framing a national response to HIV the presentation advocates transformative approaches for responding to the epidemic and engendering sexual citizenship in the PNG context.

Katherine Lepani is a long-term resident of Papua New Guinea. She was the coordinator for the development of the PNG National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan 1998-2002, the first national multi-sectoral strategy for responding to the epidemic. She has recently worked with the PNG Health Services Support Program as Gender and Development Adviser and Formative Research Adviser. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Anthropology) from the University of Hawaii at Manoa (1991), a Master of Public Health (Tropical Health) from The University of Queensland (2001), and is currently a PhD candidate in Anthropology at the Gender Relations Centre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU.

Health Systems in Fragile States – A PNG Perspective

Dr. Clement Malau
Public Health Management Specialist
The Burnet Institute

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an emerging fragile state not because of armed conflict or absolute poverty – its per capita GDP is higher than Pakistan – but because of a declining economy, in turn linked to poor governmental controls and policies, maladjustment to its inherited democratic institutions, a decentralized governance system ill-equipped to cope with the demands for rural social services, the worst HIV epidemic in the Pacific, and an escalating crime rate fuelled by rampant arms smuggling.

The presentation will focus on the need to strengthen health systems in order to improve the quality of life of all Papua New Guineans. Focusing on reproductive health and HIV and AIDS the presentation highlights the link between governance, partnership, coordination and alignment. Highlighting these links and improvements in support to the health sector through a sector wide approach should improve efficacy of the health service delivery resulting in provision of health services including reproductive health and HIV and AIDS services to the majority of the population in PNG.

In conclusion the presentation will suggest a number of areas that need to be addressed if PNG is to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Some of these areas include the fact that PNG does not lack the potential for strong economic growth, tensions between major donors are an important constraint to harmonisation and that resource allocation continues to be determined by tribal and clan loyalties.

Dr Clement Malau is a Public Health Management Specialist with the Centre for International Health. Dr Malau was born and grew up in Papua New Guinea. After obtaining an MBBS degree in Medicine from the University of Papua New Guinea, he spent time with the Papua New Guinea Defense Forces where he saw the importance of public health and preventative medicine and took up the challenges of a Public Health career.

Influenced by the late Professor Jonathan Mann, Dr Malau took up the challenges of linking public health with human rights. Dr Malau is the Project Director for the Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Project and co-facilitator of the Pacific Islands regional Asia Pacific Leadership Forum Workshop for HIV/AIDS. In Papua New Guinea Dr Malau has set up the National AIDS Council and was the founding director of the council's secretariat.

Australian Reproductive Health Alliance
Intersection of Reproductive health and AIDS in Papua New Guinea

i World Bank 2003 *Economic Costs of AIDS*
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20120895~menuPK:34457~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html> (accessed September 2005)

ii UNAIDS, *Papua New Guinea 2004 Update*,
http://www.unaids.org/NetTools/Misc/DocInfo.aspx?LANG=en&href=http%3a%2f%2fgva-doc-owl%2fWEBcontent%2fDocuments%2fpub%2fPublications%2fFact-Sheets01%2fPng_EN%26%2346%3bpdf
(accessed September 2005)

iii McBride, W.J. 2005 *HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea: An unfolding disaster?* *Emergency Medicine Australasia* v17, pp304-306.