



MERCY WORKS

PROGRESS REPORT

JUL 2017 - DEC 17

FOR HORIZON OIL

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KIUNGA VILLAGE HEALTH PROGRAM

ABOUT KIUNGA

Kiunga is a port on the Fly River in the Western Province of Papua New Guinea. The province is the least populated and least developed of PNG's provinces. The growing mining and liquid nitrogen gas industries have led to a rapidly expanding population - from 7,000 in 2002 to as much as 30,000 today. This has caused problems of crime, unemployment and increased demand for health services.

Located close to the border with Indonesia, Kiunga also has a significant West Papuan refugee population.



Approved Total Budget: AUD \$100,000 (12 months)
Actual Expenses: AUD \$54,969 (6 months Jul 17-Dec 17)
Balance: AUD \$45,031

The major health problems currently affecting the area are:

- Communicable diseases, with malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoeal diseases, and acute respiratory disease being the major causes of morbidity and mortality.
- A generalised HIV epidemic driven mainly by heterosexual transmission.
- High rates of infant, child and maternal mortality

The Village Health program supported by Horizon Oil trains people to work in health centres and aid posts in the North Fly region. The activities are focused on reducing maternal and infant mortality rates, promoting healthy lifestyles and offering widespread curative care.

Additionally, we help to provide toilet pits, safe water supplies and infrastructure that allows villagers to dry dishes and clothes off the ground - small things that we take for granted here in Australia, but which are not easily accessible in Kiunga and are important elements for maintaining good health.

Funds for Jul 2017- Dec 2017 also continued to provide ongoing support for the training of Village Birth Attendants who assist women with the birth of their children and alert their health centre if there are any problems. With one of the worst maternal health indicators in the entire Asia-Pacific region, PNG loses an alarming number of mothers and babies every single year. A lack of adequate medical care, due to their remoteness and a shortage of effective government health services mean that mothers are at serious risk of death and disability during pregnancy and childbirth, and their babies are at high risk of dying too.

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While there are still many challenges for mothers and babies born in Kiunga, having access to trained support people to help them through pregnancy and childbirth is a big step in the right direction to improving the previously dismal maternal health figures in the region.

As some remote villages of Papua New Guinea have not seen a doctor for over 20 years, the Village Birth Attendant and Village Health Volunteer programs funded by Horizon Oil, remain the cornerstone of primary health services. With only 50 health/medical graduates produced each year by the University of PNG, it is nowhere near enough to meet the country's needs.

During the six month period of Jul-Dec 2017, and across 22 villages along the Fly River, we trained:

- **3 ToT (Trainer of trainers)**
- **29 VHV (Village Health Volunteers)**
- **10 VBA (Village Birth Attendants)**



We help with the creation of sanitary toilet pits

In mid 2017, Cathy Yaki (Snr Nurse/Midwife with the Community Health Service), did a Village Health Volunteer (VHV) follow-up site visit to Papuan villages down the Fly River, and the other remaining villages: Joot, Kaikok and Niogamban. It took six days to visit the three villages. As is expected, flooding caused some delays but otherwise they were completed ahead of the National Election cut-off period.

Just before the national elections in July 2017, Cathy Yaki did similar visits to Tarabits. Three villages were covered; Betenok, Binkauk and Minipom. Once again, the purpose of the visits was to monitor and supervise VHV activities and as is our practice, these were integrated patrols with Mercy Works (MW) and the Community Health Service (CHS) Health Program. The VHV and Village Birth Attendants (VBA) managed to help antenatal mothers, as well as several women who were birthing at that time. More people are getting to Health Outposts in time for births but transport continues to dog their efforts. VHV is helping the Maternal Child Health (MCH) team when the nurse comes to each village.

Cathy Yaki noticed that each village has water tanks but less material and supplies to actually access the water for drinking (buckets, pots etc). VHV's applied first aid before sending patients to the closest health centre.



VHV Training Session

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Cathy also met the ward councillor and community elders in an effort to keep the VHV program sustainable. Further patrols are being planned for the second half of the current financial year when the current floods have subsided.

CHALLENGES

Flooding about three times each year

- Two villages were not visited because of a National Security alert (too close to the West Papuan Border)
- Some mothers still end up birthing in the bush
- Inadequate phone coverage is an ongoing problem (Digicel is the only provider)
- Female Village Health Volunteers are not as readily accepted as Male Village Health Volunteers
- When the aid posts are closed the people are left to walk longer distances to get help at a health facility
- It has been difficult to pick up the momentum since the National Election results
- Recent test results have confirmed 50 newly diagnosed TB patients in Lower Bamu area
- Hard to keep nursing staff in the very remote areas given the arduous conditions for living and working
- A few ADI doctors have been part of the patrols in recent times but twice as many could be easily accommodated



Map shows the area covered by the Village Health Service Program. The red dots depict where the health clinics and outposts are situated.

LEARNINGS

- Village Health Volunteers and Village Birth Attendants have done quite well with the VHV program with each village saying that they wanted more of this training and support
- Gender discrimination can be discouraging but we acknowledge that this takes time
- Patrols are very exhausting for the MW and CHS teams and resources like Mozzie domes, life jackets and adequate food supplies are very important
- Several Patrols are planned in the first six months of 2018.



We train villagers to build infrastructure for safe food and water storage