

PNG NATIONAL HIV/AIDS SUPPORT PROJECT

Goal:	To minimise the impact of HIV/AIDS in PNG
Purpose:	To support the implementation of the multi-sectoral National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan of PNG
Time Frame:	Commenced in October 2000 for 5 years
Budget:	\$60 million
Location:	All 20 provinces in PNG

The National HIV/AIDS Support Project is a health, governance, education and community development project. It is designed to work in all sectors and at all levels of the community and will empower a number of groups (refer Attachment A) to undertake HIV/AIDS prevention and care activities. A sustainable response to the epidemic will be achieved by facilitating community-led responses and ensuring that PNG's political, legislative and policy environment is supportive of activities to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Component 1 - Education, Information And Advocacy
Component 2 - Counselling, Community Care And Support
Component 3 - Policy, Legal And Ethical Issues
Component 4 - Monitoring, Surveillance, And Evaluation
Component 5 - Clinical Services And Laboratory Strengthening
Component 6 - Support To The National AIDS Council Secretariat

The Project supports PNG's National AIDS Council (NAC) to implement the PNG National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan. AusAID is taking a flexible approach to the Project to facilitate the implementation of the Plan and for the Project to respond to changes in the PNG environment. A study on the Potential economic impact of an HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG was completed in February 2002 .

Education, Information and Advocacy

The Project, through the National AIDS Council Secretariat (NACS), will work with government agencies NGOs, churches and the private sector at the national, provincial and local level to develop and implement training programs in the delivery of HIV/AIDS awareness, education and advocacy programs. The Project also provides technical assistance to develop workplace HIV/AIDS and STI awareness and prevention programs as well as strategies for HIV/AIDS and STI prevention and care. Grants will be provided through the Project to implement such programs. The Provincial AIDS Committees and their Secretariats will play a fundamental role in supporting the implementation of the grants, by both approving these grants and monitoring their conduct.

Given the cultural importance of group identity and affiliation, peer education programs are an effective means for achieving behaviour change. Peer education programs will be implemented under the project with a focus on groups that may engage in high risk behaviour, including mining

and forestry workers, police, defence personnel, students at tertiary institutions, inmates of correctional services, parolees and commercial sex workers.

A condom social marketing campaign is being undertaken and condom distribution networks strengthened to ensure people are able to act on safe sex awareness and education programs.

Counselling Community Care and Support

As the level of awareness of HIV/AIDS increases, there will be an increased demand for voluntary HIV testing and counselling services. Pre and post test counselling will be important for addressing issues associated with living with HIV/AIDS as well as providing a confidential information source on HIV/AIDS and safe sex. The Project, through the NACS is establishing a national network of counselling, community care and support. Counsellors will play an essential role in contact tracing and partner notification and in helping to establish and reinforce community care and support networks. Home-based care programs will also be established, allowing recognition of the role and responsibility of traditional kinship systems as well as reducing the demand for hospital admission.

Policy, legal and ethical environment

The Project has supported an overall review of legislation to provide a supportive legal framework for prevention programs as well as enabling non-discriminatory environments to be created for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) or people who have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

Legislative review areas still to be addressed include:

- Public Health Act;
- Uniform legislation in the context of the New Organic Law;
- Child Welfare Act to make provisions for the protection and care of orphans;
- Juvenile Sentencing Guidelines
- HIV testing of prisoners
- Decriminalisation of commercial sex work;
- Anti-discrimination legislation;
- Workplace legislation; and
- Censorship laws to enable sexual health promotion.

The Project will also support government departments to adapt the PNG National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan into strategies specific to their departmental needs and to develop sexual health policies. These policies and strategies will then be adapted for use at the provincial and local level. The Project will also work with the Department of Personnel Management to develop a Public Service workplace policy that can be adapted for application by the private sector.

Policy and program development is being strengthened by facilitating the involvement of PLWHA groups in local and national decision-making structures. Strategies will also be based on information gathered through improved public health surveillance of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STI) prevalence as well as related behaviour patterns.

Monitoring, Surveillance and Evaluation

Surveillance and monitoring of HIV/AIDS prevalence provides essential data to understand the trends of infection. This is a crucial basis for developing national program and policy responses to enable targeted interventions and the effective delivery of treatment and care. STI surveillance is also a critical component of improving understanding of the likely spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Project works with the National Department of Health and the PNG National Reference Laboratory to improve data collection systems for the reporting of HIV/AIDS and STDs, establish HIV/AIDS and STI surveillance sites and improve feedback mechanisms for HIV/AIDS and STI surveillance data.

Clinical Services and Laboratory Strengthening

One of the main interventions for decreasing transmission of HIV is the prevention and early management of other STIs. The project works with the National Department of Health and the Central Public Health Laboratory to improve management and administration of STI and HIV/AIDS health service policies at the national and provincial level; upgrade physical facilities for STD services and laboratories in the provinces and districts; provide training for health staff to improve the quality of STD and HIV services and clinical care; and ensure health services receive regular supplies of drugs and condoms. A major upgrade of clinical facilities across the country will commence in 2002. The Project also focuses on PNG's international border areas with West Papua, Solomon Islands and Australia as these are potential areas for increased transmission of STIs and HIV.

Management support to the National AIDS Council Secretariat

The Project supports the National AIDS Council to strengthen its capacity to coordinate the multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS in PNG. Activities include establishing a nation-wide HIV response structure and strengthening coordination amongst community groups, NGOs and government.

Research on HIV/AIDS and STIs

Each component of the Project is supported by practical and action-oriented research in each of the areas outlined above. This research informs program responses to the epidemic. The Project will continue to emphasise the transfer of skills in research methods to people in PNG's research institutes, government departments and NGOs.

Supported by AusAID's Development Assistance Program to PNG

The Project is supported by broader activities undertaken through the Australia - PNG Development Cooperation Program. In particular, initiatives to alleviate socio-economic disparities, a focus on gender, domestic violence and improved education, literacy and law and order assists in addressing the conditions that contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National AIDS Council (NAC) - a statutory authority comprising representation from each government department, the National Council of Women, the Council of Churches, the Chamber of Commerce and the non-government sector. • The NAC Secretariat (NACS) - supports the NAC by coordinating the national HIV/AIDS response, developing national policies, implementing national programs, developing guidelines and administering funding for HIV/AIDS activities. • National Centre for Sexual Health at Port Moresby General Hospital - will be established under the project to provide a specialised training, research and reference centre for STD and HIV clinical management. • National Reference Laboratory - the central reference laboratory for monitoring HIV/AIDS surveillance. • Central Public Health Laboratory - the central referral laboratory for HIV/AIDS and STD testing and diagnosis and implementing other Public Health legislation. • The Media - a tool for changing public opinion through raising awareness and generating debate on issues such as legalising prostitution, attitudes to women and sexual violence and acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial AIDS Committees - subcommittees of the NACS and endorsed by Provincial Executive Council. Plan and coordinate provincial program implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Include representatives from government departments, churches, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. Committees may also undertake some implementation, such as World AIDS Day programs. • PACs Secretariats (PACS) - will comprise of a HIV Response Coordinator and a Counselling and Community Care Coordinator. HIV Response Coordinators will facilitate and coordinate activities at the provincial and district level on behalf of the PACs. Counselling Coordinators will serve as the focal point for the provincial counselling network, will support service providers at the district level and assist referrals between community and hospital. • STI clinical and laboratory services - to provide care for PLWHAs as well as a point for people to go to for testing.

Local

- **District AIDS Committees** (in some provinces) - act as a community focus and reference point for HIV/AIDS activities and may implement some awareness and counselling activities. Usually comprise of district officers, Local-level Government leaders and ward councillors.
- **NGOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)** - to provide awareness raising programs, outreach, peer education, counselling and care services. Provide peer education programs as an effective means for reaching high-risk groups such as out-of-school youth, mining, transport, defence force and commercial sex workers.
- **Community home-based care teams** - to provide care for PLWHA as well as being an information source for the wider community.
- **Peer groups for PLWHAs** - supportive networks to encourage PLWHAs to become involved in prevention and care programs. Involvement increases the visibility of those living with the disease within the community and results in a greater level of acceptance and support along with increase response to prevention activities.
- **Churches** - recognised as an effective network for targeting out-of-school youth as well as providing care services.
- **Private Sector** - to target workplace specific needs to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as caring for and supporting those affected.
- **Teachers, welfare officers, community health workers and community leaders** - will be supported to undertake HIV/AIDS, STD and sexual health promotion programs.