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A MOTHER AND CHILD IS THE REASON WE EXIST

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WHPHA

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Malnutrition a leading cause of morbidity



Malnutrition is the leading cause of morbidity in PNG but sadly it has been over-looked by concerned authorities, says a senior medical officer from the Western Highlands.

Dr. Madison Dat, the acting Director for Curative Health Services with the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) said despite this, he was happy that UNICEF had taken the lead in training health workers to help reduce the occurrence of malnutrition in the

country.

Dr. Dat was speaking during the graduation of 14 nurses and health extension officers from WHPHA who had completed a week-long training course on Severe Acute Malnutrition at Hotel Kimininga in Mt Hagen recently.

The course was funded by UNICEF and conducted by two trainers from the National Department of Health, Dr. Michael Landi, a paediatrician and Ms. Helen Palik, a technical officer specialized in nutrition. They were assisted by Alexander Muwape, a Mt Hagen-based Volunteer Service Organization (VSO) nutritionist.

Dr. Dat thanked the three trainers for imparting valuable knowledge and skills to the participants and urged the participants to make use of what they had learnt to help others.

"Malnutrition has been over-looked for so long but as health workers we must do what we can with or without financial support. The little things we do can make a lot of difference in a malnourished person's life and we can get satisfaction out of it", he said.

The acting Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Dr. Paulus Ripa who was invited to officially close the workshop said such training was very important and he was thankful to UNICEF for its continued support in funding such workshops.

He said whilst the training workshop was important, the WHPHA was unable to fund it as

its operational budget for the year had been cut back by the Government due to the financial constraints faced by the country.

Dr. Ripa said there was nothing much the WHPHA could do about the financial situation faced by the country and urged the graduating staff to use the newly-acquired knowledge and skills to do whatever they could to help those in need.

"I am here to close this workshop as the acting CEO but as a paediatrician, my heart is with paediatrics and I am happy and thankful to UNICEF for funding it and to the National Department of Health for providing the trainers to teach our staff", he said.

Sr. Wari Pune, speaking on behalf of the graduating staff said malnutrition was a big problem which had been over-looked for a long time and something needed to be done urgently to address it.

"We must use the knowledge we have gained and teach our other colleagues so that we can speak the same language and act together to save those suffering from malnutrition", she said.

Sr. Pune also thanked UNICEF and the trainers for funding and imparting their knowledge and skills to the participants which she said were valuable tools which they would now use to help others.

Above - the participants take time off for a group picture with their trainers and the Acting CEO of WHPHA, Dr. Paulus Ripa (standing left).

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TRAINING OF CHWS IN MIDWIFERY SKILLS



Graduating students are seated before receiving their certificates

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) has graduated another 10 community health workers (CHW) with midwifery skills under its CHW Up-skilling Training Program.

The five male and five female graduates were presented with their certificates during a graduation ceremony at Hotel Kimininga in Mt Hagen recently. This was the 5th time the course had been conducted.

The students who included two CHWs - a male and female - from Kompiam and Tukasenda Community Health Posts (CHPs) in Enga Province had gone through six months of

intensive training in both theory and practical, particularly in midwifery skills.

The participants from Western Highlands included one each from Lumusa, Kurimb, Waknam, Tipulga, Tigi and Mukapeng Community Health Posts and two from Bonga.

There are five provinces in the country that are conducting the CHW Up-skilling Training Program and the WHPHA has graduated a total of 47 CHWs so far since the commencement of its training program in 2012.

Trainer and facilitator of the course, Sr. Jolly Kulimbua when presenting a report on the training thus far, said CHWs trained under this

program were not going to the rural areas to serve and it has now been decided that those currently serving in CHPs in the districts would be selected to be trained.

She said Enga has had eight CHWs trained so far out of the 47 which left Western Highlands with 39 trained CHWs and this should now cover all CHPs in the province.

Sr. Kulimbua said presentations by two CHWs who had completed their training and were providing the services had shown that such training was important as it helped them save the lives of a lot of mothers and babies and urged responsible authorities to continue to fund the program.

She thanked the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Rural Primary Health Services Delivery Program (RPHSDP) and WHPHA for their continued financial support and in particular, the RPHSDP and WHPHA for sponsoring the program this year.

She also thanked the spouses of the CHWs for their support and urged them to continue to support them as they were providing a vital service which required them to work both day and night to save lives.

"From the two presentations, we have learnt that there have been more successes in deliveries after their training and this shows such training is very important and needs to be supported and funded continually," she said.

Sr. Kulimbua said the training program proved very successful as it helped to improve maternal health services in communities, reduce maternal, perinatal and early neonatal deaths, relieve the burden of overcrowding at the provincial hospitals and empower staff in rural health facilities to do something they could not do previously.

The graduation was witnessed by the acting Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Dr. Paulus Ripa, the Chief Executive Officer of the Enga Provincial Health Authority, Mr. Aaron Luai and other senior executives of both organizations.

Health workers urged to do what they can to help others

Health workers in the Western Highlands have been told to do what they can within their own means to help those in need instead of waiting for their employer to make financial resources available.

Acting Director for Curative Health Services with the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA), Dr. Madison Dat said the country was going through a tough financial situation which affected all government organizations including health and employees must not wait for it to provide funds but do what they can to help others.

He was addressing health workers at a recent graduation of community health workers who had attended a six-month training program in CHW Upskilling Training in Midwifery at Hotel Kimininga in Mt Hagen.

The training course was the 5th to be conducted by the WHPHA since its inception in 2012 and had attracted 10 community health workers from rural health facilities in both the Western Highlands and Enga Provinces.

Dr. Dat said the WHPHA had invested its money in the right area because patient care

was its core business and thanked all those involved in making the training successful including the trainers as well as the participants.

"We need to see where our needs are and try and fill those gaps to help everyone. I encourage you to do the best you can to help those in need during this time of financial problems", he said.

"Treat all those in need as you would want others to treat you and you will get all the satisfaction".

Enga Provincial Health Authority Chief Executive Officer, Aaron Luai said the training staff had done a tremendous job in the last five years to graduate many community health workers in midwifery skills and encouraged them to continue their good work.

Mr. Luai said he was very impressed with the presentations made by two previously trained CHWs which showed big improvements in the area of midwifery and added that he was encouraged to send more CHWs to undergo such training.

"Community Health Workers are the backbone of this country and I thank the Rural Primary Health Services Delivery Program (RPHSDP)

and WHPHA for funding this program.

"I want to see the four PHA provinces in the highlands working together and training more CHWs so that together we can help reduce the mortality rate in the region and the country", he said.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Dr. Paulus Ripa when officially closing the training workshop said he was overwhelmed by the two presentations which showed the WHPHA had invested its financial resources in the right areas that produced positive results.

"Doctors cannot do everything on their own. Doctors, nurses and community health workers need to work as a team to help reduce the maternal and child mortality rate in our region and the country", he said.

Dr. Ripa said he was part of the team that put together the CHW training curriculum several years back and was proud to see and hear of the success stories of some of the community health workers and pledged his support for the CHW upskilling training program.

New Alkena CHP Opened

A new state-of-the-art community health post in the Lower Kagul area of Tambul District in Western Highlands was officially opened on Thursday, 1st December 2016.

The new health facility located at Alkena would significantly boost primary health services to more than 15,000 people from nine council wards in the Tambul area including staff and students of nearby Tambul Secondary School.

The facility was built under the Rural Primary Health Services Delivery Project at a cost of K4.7 million and funded jointly by the Asian Development Bank, the Governments of Australia and PNG, the OPEC Fund for International Development, Japanese International Corporation Agency and the World Health Organization.

It comprises of the main clinical building as well as three fully furnished 3-bedroom staff houses, solar and standby generator power, incinerator, patient ablution blocks, street lights powered by solar energy and perimeter fence surrounding the whole facility.

Construction of the project started in June last year and was completed in November this year with assistance from the local community. It is the second state-of-the-art CHP to be opened in the country after Buhaileta CHP in Milne Bay Province.

The project is aimed at increasing the coverage and quality of essential primary health care in rural areas by upgrading existing health facilities and developing capacity to deliver services where they are most needed.

The new CHP would also introduce a new approach where fathers would be involved in family planning by allowing them or members of the immediate family to be in the labour ward with the mother during childbirth, an initiative aimed at changing the mindset of men in society.

The Alkena CHP is among eight target project provinces namely West Sepik, West New Britain, Enga, Morobe, Eastern Highlands, Western

Highlands, Milne Bay and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Under this project, 32 more are expected to be built in these provinces.

Representatives of donor agencies including Western Highlands Governor, Rt. Hon Paias Wingti were hosted by the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Dr. Paulus Ripa for the opening. Hundreds of people, some of them dressed in traditional costume also braved continuous rain to witness the opening.



The new state-of-the-art CHP at Alkena



Pictured right is the back view of the new CHP and the rest of the pictures above and below show the various activities that took place during the opening of the new state-of-the-art CHP.



HEALTH SERVICES TO BE REDUCED

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) regrets to advise the public that the current level of services in all WHPHA-run health facilities will not be fully sustained due to the current financial constraints faced by the country.

Acting Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Paulus Ripa said as a result of this situation, some of the services provided by the WHPHA in its rural facilities as well as at the Mt Hagen Hospital would be reduced.

"This is an unfortunate situation where WHPHA as the provider of health care services in our

province is forced to take such action as we cannot operate without sufficient financial resources", Dr. Ripa said.

He said this year the government had made available only 65 percent of the total amount allocated under the WHPHA's operational budget and this was not enough to keep all operations functional.

He said services in all facilities that were likely to be affected included out-patients and in-patients, immunization programs, health promotion and maternal and child health clinics among others.

Dr. Ripa said emergencies would be attended to as usual but other services such as those mentioned would be reduced and urged the public to look after themselves well and avoid situations or conditions where they may get sick.

He said the Caretaker Board and Senior Management of the WHPHA were working hard to secure additional funding and the Interim Board Chairman and Provincial Administrator, Mr. Joseph Neng said he hoped local Members of Parliament would support the health services in the province.

More HIV-Negative children released

The Western Highlands Provincial HIV/AIDS Services has recently graduated more than 60 HIV-negative children, the biggest number ever to be released under its Prevention of Parents to Child Transmission (PPTCT) program.

The PPTCT program which has been running for the last six years provides continued care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS and has had a high success rate with more children born from HIV-positive parents testing negative to the disease.

On Thursday, 24th November 2016, 63 babies who had been cared for under this program at Mt Hagen Hospital over the last two years were released as HIV-negative children, bringing the total number of children released so far under this program to 188.

The PPTCT program has been set up jointly by the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) and Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), a partner in the delivery of health services in the province to provide continued care and treatment for those living with the virus.

When the mothers test positive to HIV during maternal and child health and antenatal clinics, they are put on anti-retroviral therapy programs starting from the first month of pregnancy to delivery to prevent the unborn babies from being infected with the virus.

Upon delivery the babies are then tested three times for HIV – first at six weeks old, then at 18 months and the last at 24 months old. The children released recently tested negative to all three tests, resulting in their release as normal healthy children.

The children tested negative after their parents had faithfully gone through the program, taking their medications on time. The occasion to discharge them was an emotional but a happy one for both parents and children who were



Some of the HIV-negative children are pictured with their parents during their graduation.

issued with Certificates of Release.

Coordinator of the Western Highlands Provincial HIV/AIDS Services, Petrus Kombea urged parents living with the virus to look after themselves and their children well and take their medications faithfully in order to live a long and positive life.

He also thanked the parents for being faithful and participating fully in the two-year program which resulted in the release of the 63 happy children.

Staff of the antenatal clinic, labour ward and the

Hilary HAART Clinic at Mt Hagen Hospital who have been directly involved in caring for and treating pregnant mothers infected with the HIV virus said they were happy for the continued support that they had received from the WHPHA and CHAI over the years.

They said through their support more children born from HIV-positive parents had been taken care of, resulting in them testing negative to the virus and urged the two organizations to continue their support in the years to come.

SDA Church donates food to Mt Hagen Hospital



SDA Hagen Central District members displaying their food and vegetables before donating them to Mt Hagen Hospital.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church Hagen Central District has donated much needed garden food and vegetables to Mt Hagen Hospital to feed its in-patients.

The church's Hagen Central District which also includes churches in the Dei District of Western Highlands made the donation early last week as

part of its Adventist Community Service Program where it helps those in need.

The District has 10 organized churches and 43 hand churches and the food items were contributed by its 1,000-plus members.

The food items included kaukau, banana, taro, pineapple, pawpaw, pumpkin, cabbages and onion, carrots and other vegetables and were brought in by the members themselves through privately-organized transport.

The Director of the church's Hagen Central District, Pastor Leighton Kasimo said the donation of the food items was done for the service of God and was to show the members' love for the sick patients.

Pastor Kasimo said the country was also facing a difficult financial situation and his group felt the hospital may also be experiencing the same

situation and had decided to help.

He said the food items may not be enough to last a longer period but at least the church wanted to have a hand in helping to feed the patients.

"We see the value of our currency is low and we feel the hospital may have problems feeding its patients so this is why we have brought these kaukau and other vegetables to help you feed the patients", Ps Kasimo said.

He said garden food was good because it had good nutrients that would make a person live a healthy and longer life and was particularly good for patients to eat and recover fast and go home.

He added that starting next year his group would donate garden produce to Mt Hagen Hospital on a quarterly basis to help feed its in-patients.

Deputy Director Finance and Administration with the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA), Yasi Anuma accepted the food items on behalf of the management.

He said the National Government did not have the funds to adequately support public hospitals and other institutions in the country and their assistance was very much appreciated.

Mr. Anuma said the WHPHA had a difficult time trying to provide a balanced diet for its in-patients and such donations were most welcome and appealed to other interested groups to do the same.