

## INTERNATIONAL PREMATURETY DAY CELEBRATIONS IN MT HAGEN

The International Prematurity Day on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019 was observed and celebrated by many of the major hospitals in the country and Mt Hagen Hospital was no exception.

Doctors, nurses and community health workers from the Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) Department of the Hospital observed the day on 15<sup>th</sup> November with much enthusiasm as they celebrated their achievements in saving the lives of many of the prematurely-born babies this year.

Two couples whose babies were born after seven months of pregnancy at 1.2kg each and who were cared for in the Special Care Nursery (SCN) until they reached 1.5kg and were discharged as healthy babies were also present to express their gratitude to the staff.

The parents said their babies could have died but through the love and care shown by the staff, they had survived and would now live to tell their own stories. "We are very thankful and proud of all of you for caring for our babies and ensuring they survived", they said.

Deputy Director of Nursing Clinical Services, Sr Joan Okk said she appreciated and acknowledged the efforts of the staff in the SCN for ensuring prematurely-born babies survived.

She said prematurely-born babies usually developed problems in the head, eyes, ears, hands, legs and other parts of the body but the good thing was that the SCN provided an environment that was similar, if not the same as the mother's body to keep her baby warm and this prevented the babies from contracting a lot of the unwanted diseases.

"These kinds of kids will live if given the right care and attention so I encourage you to keep up the good work that you are doing and make those parents happy", she told her staff.

Senior Medical Officer for Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Dr Joseph Kuk said more than 5,000 babies were delivered at the hospital last year and about 50 of them were born prematurely. He said about half of the 50 had also died.

Dr Kuk said many mothers who delivered at the hospital never visited the antenatal clinic for regular checks and this was one reason why many of the babies were born prematurely.

He also added that the SCN needed to be upgraded and installed with one or two incubators to help save the increasing number of prematurely-born babies who died.

He said the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) in partnership with agencies such as UNICEF funded a number of programs which saved many newborn babies and he encouraged them to continue the good work and help save many more lives.

Acting Chief Executive Officer of WHPHA, Dr Jonah Kurubi said the Kangaroo Mother Care program was a good initiative which helped reduce the number of premature deaths by 10 percent and he wanted to see it introduced in rural health facilities as well.

**Top and bottom right - Dr Kurubi and Dr Kuk addressing the gathering respectively and centre, what better way to celebrate the day than to cut a cake.**



Staff of the labour ward and the SCN together with the two babies and their parents gathered to observe the day.

### In this issue:

### Page

International Prematurity Day celebrations in Mt Hagen	1
More WHPHA staff get inducted into the public service	2
Immediate help available for expectant mothers in Tambul/Nebilyer	2
Incentive to increase immunization coverage to herd immunity	3
Hybrid power project for health facilities in Tambul/Nebilyer	3
Santa Claus visits sick children at Mt Hagen Hospital	4



# More WHPHA staff get inducted into the Public Service



Staff of the WHPHA pose for a picture with their CEO, Mr David Vorst (centre) and their trainers.

More employees of the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) now have a better understanding of the National Public Service Code of Ethics and what they are required to do as servants of the public.

This follows their induction into the public service following a number of training courses conducted by the Training Section of the National Department of Health (NDoH) over the last few years.

The Department conducted two such courses recently at the Travellers Hut outside Mt Hagen Hospital from 2-13 December 2019 where 91 employees were inducted.

The training course was conducted jointly by Mrs Juliana Aih, a training officer with NDoH and Sr Jolly Kulimbua, Sr Nellie Newman and Mrs Lilian Urae from the WHPHA Training Unit. It was scheduled for one week but was conducted over two weeks due to the big number of employees waiting to be inducted.

The employees who included doctors, nurses, community health workers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, hygiene and general support staff had served the organisation for various numbers of years ranging from one to five years.

A spokesperson for the inductees, Dr Stanley Malen said many of them had been working for

5-6 years but did not know much about the public service code of ethics and their duties as public servants and the training was a big eye opener for them.

He said the employees would now use the skills and knowledge gained to do the right things for which they were paid to do – serve the people - and thanked the management of WHPHA for approving and funding the training.

Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Mr David Vorst when closing the training course said it was wonderful to see the staff go through such training and understand what they needed to do as servants of the public.

"We are here to serve the public – patient care is our core business to make Western Highlands a healthy place in which to live.

"It is important that you understand and practise the things you have learnt, particularly the code of ethics. We must believe in our core business and do the right thing - don't let anyone or anything get in the way," Mr Vorst said.

He also told the participants that WHPHA was one of a few PHAs that was using village health volunteers (VHVs) to help save expecting mothers and newborn babies and their involvement was having a profound impact on maternal and child mortality in the province.

He said through the use of VHVs, the number of deliveries in health facilities had increased by 30 percent this year and this was welcome news for everyone including village leaders, councillors, health workers and the general community.

## Immediate help available for expectant mothers in Tambul/Nebilyer

Expectant mothers in the Tambul/Nebilyer District of Western Highlands can now expect immediate help to prepare them for delivery at the nearest health facility.

This follows the training and graduation of more than 80 Village Health Volunteers (VHV) on how to help expecting mothers when they go into labour and later take them to the nearest health facility to deliver.

The VHVs were trained in four batches of about 20 participants each with each batch undergoing four weeks of intensive training in both theory and practical at the Mt Hagen Hospital campus during the whole of 2019.

The last batch comprising 25 participants graduated at the Kapal Haus Conference Centre in Mt Hagen on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

The participants have been selected from all parts of the district to ensure there was a VHV in each Local Level Government Council Ward to help mothers from that ward deliver safely.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), as part of its ongoing efforts to help reduce child mortality in the country has funded all the four trainings in collaboration with the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA).

Clinical trainers from the WHPHA conducted all the four trainings at Mt Hagen Hospital where the women had been accommodated, fed and trained.

The practical sessions included among others, visits to the labour ward's early essential newborn care section, special care nursery, maternal and child health clinic and family planning.

The District Health Manager for Tambul/Nebilyer, Smee Rank said he was very happy with the program as it has helped increase the number of deliveries in health facilities from just 34 in 2018 to 136 this year.

He said this was a very big improvement, given the size of the district and thanked the husbands for allowing their wives to be trained as VHVs and the local councillors for taking the lead in encouraging the local women to take up such training to help their pregnant colleagues deliver safely.

WHPHA's Deputy Director Family Health Services, Dannex Kumamu thanked UNICEF Australia for funding the program, saying if it was not for this international organisation, many mothers and newborns in the Tambul/Nebilyer District would die.

He said the Saving Lives Spreading Smiles (SLSS) program which was part of this program to help save lives of prematurely-born babies was a joint initiative of UNICEF and WHPHA and he was proud this program was now being used across the country to save babies.

"The importance of this gathering is these volunteers. Without them many mothers and children can die and I say that you mothers are very important people", he said.

Mr Kupamu told the graduates that as health volunteers in the province, they would also enjoy the same privileges as other health workers and would be issued with WHPHA identification cards to allow them to access free health services for themselves

and their husbands and children.

Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, Mr David Vorst said what had been witnessed during the day was a team effort to save the lives of expectant mothers and newborn babies and thanked the VHVs for offering to be trained.

"Communities in the district need to understand what VHVs do and councillors must go back and tell everyone in their respective wards about what this program can do to help save lives.

"You all must be proud of the high impact this program has on newborns in your district and support more mothers to be trained. They are not to deliver babies but take expectant mothers to hospitals to deliver safely", he said.

The participants said they were thankful for the training they had received which had equipped them with new knowledge to help mothers deliver safely.

They were also presented with certificates as well as handbags, wool caps, jackets, gum boots, umbrellas, solar lights/torches and CUG mobile phones to help them carry out their work effectively.



The VHVs pose for a picture with their trainers.



## Incentive to increase immunisation coverage to herd immunity



The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) is embarking on a program which when implemented this year will see an increase in the number of children being immunised against major diseases such as measles and polio.

The proposed incentive will involve the participation of major Mt Hagen-based retailer, Tininga Group of Companies as part of its contribution towards helping the WHPHA meet the health needs of the local community and the surrounding provinces.

Under the incentive, it is proposed to issue a K15 voucher to a parent who presents a child with a Child Health Book to a health facility at the appropriate time for the child to be immunised. It is envisaged that the voucher would be issued for redemption at any one of the Tininga Group of companies' stores.

Preliminary discussions with Mr Pat Duckworth, Managing Director of the Group have been very positive and it has been suggested that WHPHA

should offer participants the right products and or services based on their unique interests and diverse needs and WHPHA believes it has developed the rewards carefully to keep participants eager to approach a new goal once they have achieved a reward.

The proposed incentive is aimed at minimising Special Immunisation Activities (SIAs) which are considered to be very costly which the WHPHA can ill-afford to spend given its limited financial resources.

Mr Vorst said SIAs had been labelled a celebration of failure by WHPHA and it was common knowledge that some health workers would not immunise children as that would lead to an outbreak of some vaccine preventable disease.

He said with the implementation of an

*Pictured above and right - file pictures of two children being immunised against measles and polio.*

would buy the vouchers at a discounted rate from their face value.

This would allow Tininga to maintain its long history of support for initially Mt Hagen Referral Hospital and more recently the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority.

According to the Chief Executive Officer of WHPHA, David Vorst, an incentive program represents a substantial investment and a sufficient return on investment requires the full participation of the program participants both providers and consumers.

He said programs

SIA, there were significant opportunities for health workers to make money through travel and accommodation allowances, overtime and camping out allowances and WHPHA was not in a position to pay such allowances.

He added that given the high cost of SIAs and the cyclical nature in PNG of some epidemics such as measles, discussions were held with UNICEF in 2019 about trialling an incentive program in 2020 for success rather than funding another celebration of failure.

Mr Vorst said this was well received by UNICEF and it is understood an amount of K250,000 was to be put into the Australian UNICEF budget for a trial to be conducted in the Tambul District of Western Highlands Province next year.

"Our efforts to immunise all children under the age of five years against major diseases such as measles is expected to achieve positive results with up to 99 percent of the catchment population immunised as we expect the low-income families in villages to grab the opportunity in numbers to benefit from the incentive", Mr Vorst concluded.

The aim of the incentive is to enhance change in the behaviour of parents to feel responsible for the health of their children and take them to clinics for compulsory immunisation.

It has been reported that this program has worked well in Brazil among low-income families where such practices showed a positive impact on health care outcomes and the WHPHA is optimistic of achieving the same results, if not better.



## Hybrid Power Project for health facilities in Tambul/Nebilyer

A new Hybrid Power Project will soon be set up in the Tambul/Nebilyer District of Western Highlands, aimed at providing continuous power supply to health facilities.

UNICEF is spearheading this innovative program which, if successful, will save many lives throughout the province.

Hybrid power involves the generation of energy from three different sources to supply power 24-hours a day for the use of electrical equipment such as suction machines, patient monitors and vaccines fridges as well as to provide lights.

The project would initially be set up at the newly-renovated Tambul Health Centre and later rolled out to other health facilities in the district and the province.

The three different sources of energy to provide power are wind, solar and generator. The first two will supply energy continuously to generate power but when there is no strong wind or sun, the generator will be used.

The Western Highlands Provincial Health

Authority's Director for Population Health, Benson Safi said the availability of power in the rural facilities was important because staff needed it not only for lights but to use medical equipment to examine and treat patients as well as to deliver babies.

In preparation for the project to commence, UNICEF has spent in excess of K50,000 to renovate and extend the labour ward to take in six mothers instead of two originally and also extended the delivery room to accommodate a baby cot and a suction machine for use on newborns.

The contractor for the project, Summit Pharmaceuticals, has mobilised the equipment from Port Moresby and is expected to arrive in Tambul soon for work to commence.

Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, David Vorst has welcomed and thanked UNICEF for setting up yet another life-saving project in Western Highlands. He went on to say his staff would give whatever support they could to enable

the smooth implementation of this very important project.



*A windmill and solar panel that will be used to generate energy to supply power to the health centre.*



# Santa Claus visits sick children at Mt Hagen Hospital



*Santa Claus accompanied by her helpers prepares to give some lollies and a present to a child and her mother.*

Tininga Group of Companies has once again put smiles on the faces of sick children at Mt Hagen Hospital this Christmas by visiting them at their beds and giving them lollies and presents.

Father Christmas in his usual happy mood, accompanied by company owners, Pat and Margie Duckworth and their children, made the children happy when they made a surprise visit on them on Christmas Day and distributed the presents.

The children and their parents or guardians were visibly surprised and happy to see the visitors when they visited them at each of their beds in ward six and gave them the lollies and presents and wished them speedy recovery.

Father Christmas (or Mother Christmas as it was a she) then made his way to the surgical ward where some children were recovering from various surgeries and gave similar presents and wished them well.

The final visit was to the Children's Out-Patient Department which was not as busy this festive season and those children present received their share and more as there were plenty of lollies and presents left. Santa Claus also made the hardworking nurses happy by giving them what was left as well.

Pat and Margie were obviously happy to brighten up the day for the sick children but they were also saddened to learn that some children with chronic illnesses had been hospitalised for months, even up to a year.

As a retailer based in Mt Hagen, Tininga has been partnering with the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) in many ways and the presentation of lollies and presents was one way of helping the wider community of Western Highlands and the surrounding provinces.

In the past several years, the company has been assisting the WHPHA with its Heart Patient Project by meeting the cost of travel and accommodation for paediatric heart patients from Western Highlands and other neighbouring provinces to travel to Port Moresby for open heart surgery.

It has also spent money on the Well Women's Clinic where women go for screening of cervical cancer, one of the main causes of death in women as well as counselling following domestic violence.

Chief Executive Officer of WHPHA, Mr David Vorst who accompanied Pat and Margie on their

visit to the hospital thanked them for their continued support which he said helped many people, especially women and children in the Highlands region.



*Managing Director of Tininga, Pat Duckworth (top) chats with a child and his mother while above, WHPHA CEO, David Vorst meets another child and his mother.*



*Hardworking COPD clinicians pose for a picture with Pat Duckworth and David Vorst (above) and below, Tininga owners, Pat and Maggie Duckworth chatting with a mother and her child.*

