

THE INFORMER

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A MOTHER AND CHILD IS THE REASON WE EXIST

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WHPHA

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New Isolation Unit for Mt Hagen Hospital

A new Isolation Unit for Covid-19 patients admitted at Mt Hagen Hospital in the Western Highlands Province has been officially opened.

Funded by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the unit has a capacity to accommodate 12 patients. It also has a delivery room for expectant mothers, toilets and showers, PPE donning and doffing stations for staff, a tea room and an area for disinfection and waste management.

Speaking during the opening, Head of ICRC Sub Delegation in Mt Hagen, Stephanie Probst, said Covid-19 was an additional burden for vulnerable communities who were already experiencing difficulties to access basic services and sustain their livelihood.

"We provide basic information and awareness so that they can better understand in order to keep themselves safe and healthy from Covid-19 in their respective communities", she said.

Ms Probst said ICRC was happy that it could support the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) in its efforts to prepare well for Covid-19 should it enter the province.

A member of the Provincial Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee, Archbishop Douglas Young, thanked the ICRC for upgrading the Hospital Chapel into what has now become the new isolation unit.

He said if all concerned parties including the provincial administration, city authority, police and the political leadership in the province worked together with the WHPHA as a team, there would be improved health services in the province.

Archbishop Young added that during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, urgent financial resources were needed to put up infrastructure, carry out awareness and surveillance, buy PPE and drugs as well as medical equipment.

"Help during such crisis is very much appreciated but unfortunately we have not received any funding support from our Members even though they have made commitments to help", he said.

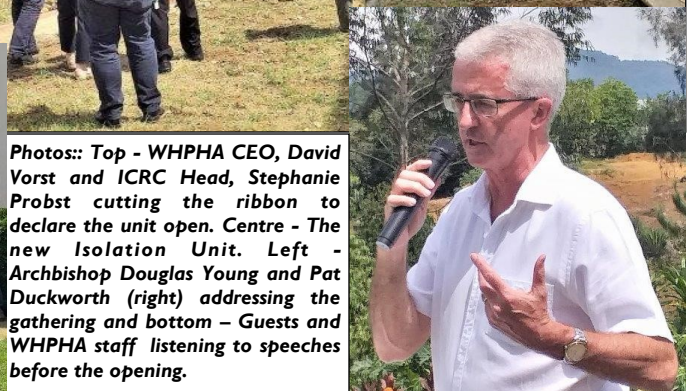
"We want the Mt Hagen Market to re-open but it must first be refurbished and made hygienically fit

and healthy with a proper management in place to ensure it is Covid-19 compliant.

"Our people lack basic information on Covid-19 and we need to get out there and conduct more awareness but we cannot because it requires materials, transportation and communication. At the moment we are financially handicapped".

The Tingina Group of Companies has also assisted heavily in the preparations for Covid-19 by providing both cash and kind.

Managing Director, Pat Duckworth said the company wanted to give something back to the community and saw that investing in the WHPHA was the best way because it had a good management team that would run an effective health service for everyone to enjoy.



Photos: Top - WHPHA CEO, David Vorst and ICRC Head, Stephanie Probst cutting the ribbon to declare the unit open. Centre - The new Isolation Unit. Left - Archbishop Douglas Young and Pat Duckworth (right) addressing the gathering and bottom - Guests and WHPHA staff listening to speeches before the opening.



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Training of Health Workers on Covid-19 Preparedness and Response

Front line health workers involved in the fight against Covid-19 in the Western Highlands have been provided with enhanced training to help them prepare well in case of an outbreak.

The training titled "Training of Health Workers and Managers on Covid-19 Preparedness and Response" was conducted for them at Hotel Kimininga in Mt Hagen over three days in late June this year.

Western Highlands Provincial Administrator, Mr Joseph Neng who is also the Chairman of the Provincial Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee officially opened the training workshop.

Funded by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the workshop was conducted jointly by trainers from the World Health Organisation (WHO), the National Department of Health (NDoH) and the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA).

More than 20 senior health officers including district health managers, members of the WHPHA senior management, facility officers-in-charge and senior nurses attended the training. Health Authority trainers also attended to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to train others.

Mr David McLoughlin, the UNICEF Country Representative in PNG and Dr Ghanashyam Sethy and the World Health Organisation's Dr Anup all participated in the opening of the training workshop through Zoom conference.

Mr Neng acknowledged the participation and support of their respective organisations and thanked them not only for their contributions towards the fight against Covid-19 but other health programs as well such as immunisation activities for children.

He said the Government's prompt action to put a ban on overseas flights and ships entering the country and declaring the state of emergency (SoE) during the peak period of the pandemic had assisted greatly in stopping its spread.

He added that in the Western Highlands, a Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee was formed soon after the declaration of the SoE and its orders were implemented immediately despite the province's limited financial capacity.

Mr Neng said this action was made possible through the kind assistance of donor agencies and



The participants pose for a picture with the theme of the workshop displayed in front of them.

local business houses who helped the WHPHA to set up infrastructure and other necessary facilities at Mt Hagen Hospital to prepare for Covid-19.

He said despite the financial situation, the province had managed to buy the necessary medical equipment, drugs and personal protective equipment and put up the necessary infrastructure and was now ready to manage the first case of Covid-19.

UNICEF Country Representative, David McLoughlin said the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority was ahead in its preparations for Covid-19 as well as training of its staff.

He said as such, this training was conducted to further enhance the knowledge and skills of the staff on their preparedness and response to Covid-19. He went on to say that WHPHA was also the first organisation in the country for this training to be conducted.

Mr McLoughlin said because the training also involved staff from the districts and rural facilities, he wanted the knowledge gained to be cascaded down to these

institutions so that everyone knew what to do during a Covid-19 emergency.

He said UNICEF has spent more than K3 million to help the Government purchase medical equipment as well as personal protective equipment and it would continue to support it to improve the lives of everyone in the country.



Mr Joseph Neng addressing the participants.

WHPHA receives much needed PPE from UNICEF

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) is one of the many Provincial Health Authorities in the country that has benefited from more than 600,000 pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) donated by UNICEF.

The Authority received its share on 13th August 2020 and started distributing them to the various health facilities in the province including Mt Hagen Hospital which has been selected and prepared to

screen, test and swab persons of interest (POIs) for Covid-19.

The PPE which arrived in 25 boxes included 10,800 hand gloves, 13,450 surgical masks, 6,060 N95 masks, 1200 protective goggles, 1,560 face shields, 744 gowns, 300 coveralls, 200 shoe covers and 200 caps.

Prior to the distribution of the PPE to the selected rural health facilities, staff who would be directly involved in the screening and swabbing of the POIs were brought to Mt Hagen Hospital and put through intensive training on the proper ways of screening, swabbing and donning and doffing of their PPE.

An average of three clinicians each including nurses, community health workers and health extension officers from Tinsley District Hospital, Kotna, Bukapena, Togoba, Tambul and Pabrabuk Health Centres and the Susu Mamas Urban Clinic in Mt Hagen City were brought in and trained.

The distribution of the PPEs

Pictured left and right - WHPHA staff trying out the new PPE during their training.



throughout the country is being supported by the World Bank as part of its US\$20 million emergency package for the PNG Government's Covid-19 response.

The support also includes the setting up of a container-based testing laboratory in Port Moresby as well as support for faster Covid-19 testing.

Chief Executive Officer for WHPHA, Mr David Vorst on behalf of the staff and people of Western Highlands has expressed his heart-felt gratitude and appreciation to UNICEF and the World Bank for donating and facilitating the delivery of the PPE.

He said clinicians being the frontline workers in the fight against Covid-19 were vulnerable to the pandemic and having more PPE would enable them to change regularly and avoid contracting the virus.

WESTERN HIGHLANDERS RAISE FUNDS TO FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19



Pictured are lawyer, Mr Desmond Kipa (3rd from right) and his team presenting the donation to WHPHA Deputy Chairman, Michael Pundia as CEO, David Vorst and his management team look on in appreciation.

Kind hearted citizens from Western Highlands have raised more than K30,000 to assist the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) in its preparation and response to Covid-19.

A total of K32,057.39 was raised through various fundraising activities and donations by businessmen and women, public servants, private sector employees, University of PNG students and friends who live, work and operate businesses in Mt Hagen, Port Moresby and elsewhere including overseas.

A team led by lawyer, Desmond Kipa travelled to Mt Hagen to personally deliver the cheque to the WHPHA on Friday, 5th June 2020 on behalf of the concerned citizens.

Mr Kipa said it was sad to hear that the WHPHA was not able to fully implement its Covid-19 preparedness plan due to lack of financial support from the Government and he hoped the contribution his team made would help meet some of its plans.

"We raised the funds through social media by putting out messages that WHPHA needs our help. We have heard from our parents and relatives that Mt Hagen Hospital is now a better place with improved services so that's why we decided to raise funds to help", he said.

Mr Kipa said many of those who helped were

friends who started their education in Western Highlands and others who had a giving heart as well as University of PNG students from Western Highlands who contributed K1,000.

Another lawyer, Daniel Piam of Doa & Piam Lawyers of Mt Hagen joined the team at the presentation and added another K2,000, bringing the total amount raised by all the concerned citizens to K32,057.39.

Mr Piam said his firm was very thankful and appreciated what the WHPHA was doing for the people of Western Highlands, adding that it was this leadership and heart for serving the people that made them want to help.

"Your leadership and heart to serve our people is good so we are helping. We assure you we are behind you in this cause", he said.

WHPHA Deputy Board Chairman, Michael Pundia in accepting the contributions on behalf of the board, management and staff, applauded the team for taking the initiative to raise such a huge amount of money that would help their people when they are affected by Covid-19.

Mr Pundia said the outbreak of Covid-19 was a national issue and while the WHPHA has done its best with its limited financial resources to make preparations to prevent the spread of the

virus, there had been very little support from the National Department of Health (NDoH).

"What is even worse and frustrating is that the Members of Parliament from the province had made a commitment of K1.5 million more than six weeks ago but to date, their only contribution has been words.

"We have used up our operational funds to build infrastructure and buy personal protective equipment, drugs, reagents, cartridges and other medical equipment to prepare for Covid-19 but how long will they continue to delay this", he asked.

Mr Pundia said that for PNG to know if it was free from Covid-19, it needed to do more tests not only of people with symptoms of the virus but others as well and this meant more swabs, cartridges and reagents were needed and the WHPHA did not have enough of any of them.

"The government has given K200,000 and I am very disappointed with the NDoH for not doing much to help us as well as other provinces to prepare for the onslaught of Covid-19", he said.

Mr Pundia said despite not receiving the much needed funding support, they were very fortunate to have the support of some members of the business community in Mt Hagen who have helped to prepare for Covid-19.

He said the Tininga Group of Companies in particular had been very supportive from day one by providing cash and materials and thanked them as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross who had helped set up the isolation unit and the fence around the second quarantine tent.

"I am so much grateful to you Mr Kipa and your team who have gone out of your way to help raise these funds. This signifies your concerns towards the health of your people and on behalf of the people of Western Highlands, we (WHPHA) say thank you very much for the great initiative and gesture you have shown us".



Mr Kipa (centre) and his team are about to hand over the donation to Mr Pundia as Mr Vorst watches.

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.

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 Tininga's stores.

Preliminary discussions with Mr Pat Duckworth, Managing Director of the Group have been very positive and it has been suggested that WHPHA 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 for WHPHA, Mr David Vorst, an incentive program represents a substantial investment and a sufficient return on investment requires the full participation of the program participants.

He said programs 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 SIA, there were significant opportunities for health workers to make money through travel, accommodation,

overtime and camping 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 this 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.

NGO donates cash to fight against COVID-19 in WHP

The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) this week received a donation of K15,000 from a kind-hearted Non-Government Organisation (NGO) to help with its preparations for the onslaught of the Corona virus in the province.

Lesfordlati Health Promoting Foundation Inc., a Mt Hagen-based NGO which assists and promotes health and church activities in Western Highlands and elsewhere made the donation during a small ceremony at Mt Hagen Hospital on 21st April 2020.

The Public Officer for the Foundation, Mrs Yank Rut said when presenting the cheque that she was a patient who visited Mt Hagen Hospital regularly for treatment and had decided to help after learning of its struggles to build proper facilities to prevent the spread of the virus.

"I am not a big businesswoman but I am a Christian and I have conviction to help the hospital. I usually come to the Emergency Department and see Dr McKup to help me and now I see you are in need so I have decided to help", she said.

Mrs Rut said corona virus was a serious disease that needed a concerted effort from all sectors of the community to prevent its spread and urged everyone, especially business houses and Members of Parliament from the province to help.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer for the WHPHA, Ms Jane Holden told Mrs Rut that there were many things that the PHA needed to do to contain the virus but funding was a major obstacle and the donation by the Foundation was very much appreciated.

"There are wide range of things we have to spend money on to help the community, districts and council wards and your donation will absolutely help us to meet these needs – examples are preparing



Ms Jane Holden receiving the cheque from Mrs Yank Rut, witnessed by Mr Benson Safi and Dr John Junior McKup (1st & 2nd from right respectively) and an employee of Lesfordlati.

health information sheets, buying personal protective equipment, extra fuel for the community awareness programme", she said.

Other members of the WHPHA COVID-19 Task force including Emergency Physician, Dr John Junior McKup and Director Population Health, Mr Benson Safi also expressed their gratitude and thanked Mrs Rut for the kind gesture.

The donation is the first by a private organisation. Others whose donations have already been spent include Western Highlands Provincial Government K200,000, Member for Tambul/Nebilyer and his

people K20,000 and the National Government through the Health Service Improvement Program K200,000.

The Member for Hagen Open and Minister for Commerce and Industry, Hon William Duma has advised that the Hagen City Authority has approved a sum of K 400,000 as its contribution towards the costs of managing the Corona virus pandemic which is also gratefully received and of huge importance to the PHA in moving purposely forward in implementing its plans.

Health workers concerned about stubborn attitudes of travelling public



Passengers arriving on a Port Moresby flight going through the Covid-19 protocols at Kagamuga Airport.

Western Highlands Covid-19 frontline health workers have expressed grave concern that the virus may spread fast in the province due to the arrogant and stubborn attitudes of the travelling public.

They are particularly concerned that many of those travelling into the province by air from hotspots such as the National Capital District are refusing to be screened and temperature-checked for Covid-19 at Kagamuga Airport, Mt Hagen.

Team leader of the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority (WHPHA) team screening passengers at the airport, Dannax Kupamu said the worst culprits were businessmen, politicians and

other national and provincial leaders.

He also said that passengers were not only from Western Highlands but other neighbouring Highlands provinces as well and he feared the pandemic may spread fast throughout the region.

Mr Kupamu expressed his team's concern recently after a former Prime Minister who visited the province for a funeral service and a Chinese company

executive as well as some other passengers had refused to be checked by the health team at Kagamuga Airport.

He said national leaders should be leading by example but when this kind of attitude was displayed in public, it defeats the whole purpose of screening everyone to prevent the spread of the virus.

Chief Executive Officer of the WHPHA, David Vorst said the surveillance team had reported a number of such incidents in the past involving not only leaders but others as well and it was sad that people were not concerned about the spread of the virus which can wipe out families and communities through community transmission.

He said the Western Highlands Provincial Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee had also expressed concern about allowing flights into provinces out of Port Moresby. He said unrestricted flights into Kagamuga and the poor attitude of some passengers including some political leaders placed the entire Highlands region at risk.



A PNG Air employee, Melinda Noki (left) assists a mother and her sister with their twin baby boys to the arrivals terminal for Covid-19 screening.