

# STRENGTHENING HEALTH SERVICES IN WESTERN PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## BACKGROUND

Health services in Western Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG) were strengthened through two programs, the North Fly Health Services Development Program (NFHSDP) and the Community Mine Continuation Agreement (CMCA) Middle and South Fly Health Program (CMSFHP). Both programs were delivered through a partnership with existing health service providers, including government health services, the Evangelical Church of Papua New Guinea Health Services, and Catholic Health Services.

NFHSDP commenced in 2009 and was an initiative of and funded by Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) and managed through Ok Tedi Development Foundation (OTDF) from 2015. CMSFHP commenced in July 2013, and was an initiative of and managed by OTDF, and funded through the CMCA portion of the Western Province People's Dividend Trust Fund. The programs merged in 2016 (after which time the combined entities were referred to as 'the program') and had a total value of PGK 101 million. Both programs were implemented by Abt Associates and closed on 31 December 2018.

The program was designed to respond to a priority need expressed by key stakeholders: that primary health care (PHC) services were inadequate in the communities in North Fly and along the CMCA corridor. There are 158 CMCA communities in the Fly River corridor that receive benefits from the operations of Ok Tedi Mining.

Support was required to both build the capacity of health service providers and their facilities and deliver health services on the ground that addressed critical gaps. A range of activities were implemented under three key components: support to partnerships and coordination; support to fundamental enablers of health care; support tailored to community needs.

This document provides a summary of major program activities, key results from the end-line evaluation conducted

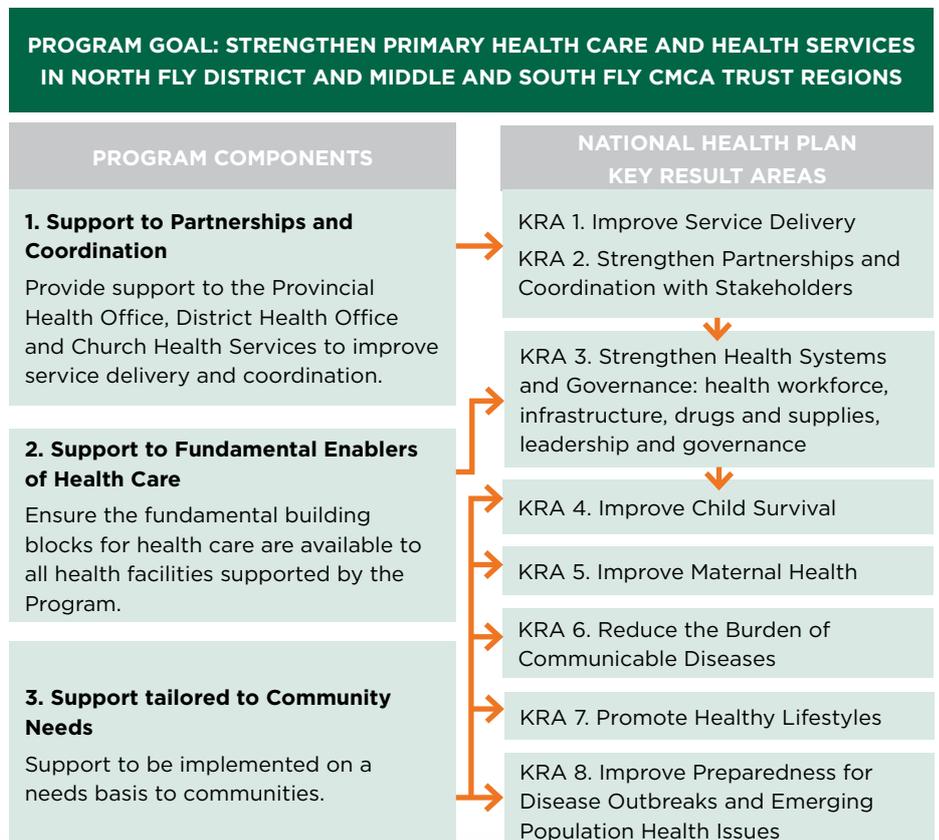
in 2018 and recommendations for further health investment in Western Province. The evaluation was conducted using a mixed-method approach and was underpinned by Contribution Analysis theory. Key informant interviews were conducted with 29 partners and program staff who had been involved with the program, as well as nine health workers and 11 Village Health Volunteers (VHVs), and over 790 community members were interviewed during focus group discussions or via completing a health survey. An independent evaluation was commissioned to focus on the effectiveness of partnership support and sustainability of the program.

## KEY RESULTS

### The Program's Contribution to Primary Health Care

- Communities were aware of what their health needs were and how to achieve access to good health, demonstrating ownership and engagement.
- Over 90% of the population reported their health as 'good', 'very good', or 'excellent' at the time of surveying; less than 10% reported their health as 'poor' or 'fair'.

FIGURE 1. NFHSDP AND CMSFHP PROGRAM DESIGN



# CMSFHP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2013-2018



**55,000+**

OUTPATIENTS SEEN DURING CLINICAL ATTACHMENTS AND OUTREACH CLINICS

**90+**

CLINICAL ATTACHMENTS CONDUCTED AT HEALTH FACILITIES ACROSS 5 CMCA REGIONS

**1000+**

OUTREACH CLINICS CONDUCTED IN REMOTE VILLAGES IN THE 5 CMCA REGIONS

**2,500+**

ANTENATAL CARE PATIENTS SEEN



**1,700 +**

CONDOMS DISTRIBUTED

**844**

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SESSIONS CONDUCTED WITH HEALTH WORKERS

**239,300+**

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SESSIONS CONDUCTED WITH HEALTH WORKERS

**22**

HEALTH RADIOS INSTALLED



**22** VACCINE FRIGDES INSTALLED

**14** VACCINE ICE PACK FREEZERS INSTALLED

**25** WATER TANKS INSTALLED

**31** DINGHIES AND OUTBOARD MOTORS PROVIDED TO FACILITIES

**65,600+**

VACCINATIONS AND VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTS ADMINISTERED TO CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD



**1,600+**

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANTS ADMINISTERED IN MIDDLE AND SOUTH FLY DISTRICTS SINCE INTRODUCED BY THE PROGRAM IN 2015

**98**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS TRAINED AS VILLAGE HEALTH VOLUNTEERS

**10**



VILLAGES SUPPORTED IN REACHING HEALTHY VILLAGE STATUS IN 2018

**14**

SCHOOLS SUPPORTED IN IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOL CONCEPTS IN 2018

**12**



STAFF HOUSES BUILT

**32,500+**

CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD ASSESSED FOR NUTRITIONAL VALUE

**5**

DISTRICT HEALTH MANAGEMENT MEETINGS FACILITATED



**6**

MEETINGS CONDUCTED WITH WOMEN'S COMMITTEE GROUPS AND SUPPORT PROVIDED

**72**

GOOD NEWS STORIES RELATING TO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DISTRIBUTED



"SOME GOOD CHANGES HAPPENED, WE RECEIVED A LOT OF HELP FROM THAT PROGRAM WITH MEDICATION AND OTHERS WHICH WE DID NOT HAVE BEFORE. SO WE HAD A LOT OF HELP FROM THIS PROGRAM SO WE ARE HAPPY WITH THIS."

- COMMUNITY MEMBER, MIDDLE FLY

- Immunisation services, antenatal clinics, medical supplies, and health awareness sessions were the most commonly mentioned services provided by the program, when indicating the significant contribution to improving access and utilisation of health services.
- Communities in Middle Fly were more likely to report that their nearest health facility had improved, compared with other regions.
- Communities that received maximum support from the program were 37% more likely to say that their health service at the nearest facility got better, compared with communities that received lower levels of support, indicating that the program's support contributed to improved quality when there was greater investment.
- A majority of health workers interviewed (78%) stated that changes that had occurred in their health facility in the last five years had improved the way services were delivered to the community, as well as the health of the community.

- Key factors affecting utilisation of primary health care services were medical supply availability, cost for services, and lack of staff available at the facility.

## The Program's Contribution towards Improving the PNG National Health Plan

- The program contributed significantly to direct health services in under-supported areas, through supplementing routine immunisation coverage, and increasing access to micronutrient supplementation, which are recognised globally as major facilitators for improved child health.
- Cold chain and vaccine distribution has been strengthened, but the success of this activity has been hindered by geographical constraints and nationwide shortages.
- Significant investment in upskilling the health workforce in maternal health was a priority of the program, in concert with community-level awareness and health infrastructure improvements. Issues remain with increasing supervised deliveries and antenatal care coverage, and communication and relationship-building between the health facility and community is imperative to enable continued improvement.
- The program was most successful in contributing towards disease outbreak response through direct service delivery and support to partners, evidenced through coordinated approaches to control measles, whooping cough, and cholera outbreaks.
- Water and sanitation is a fundamental enabler of health, and was thus a core activity of the program to improve healthy lifestyles and reduce

FIGURE 2. CMSFHP CONDUCTING CLINICS IN PEDAEYA 1 VILLAGE



# NFHSDP PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS 2009-2018



**151,000+**

OUTPATIENTS SEEN DURING CLINICAL ATTACHMENTS AND OUTREACH CLINICS

**75+**

CLINICAL ATTACHMENTS CONDUCTED AT HEALTH FACILITIES ACROSS NORTH FLY

**450+**

OUTREACH CLINICS CONDUCTED IN REMOTE VILLAGES IN NORTH FLY

**4,800+**

ANTENATAL CARE PATIENTS SEEN



**192,200 +**

CONDOMS DISTRIBUTED

**1,989**

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SESSIONS CONDUCTED WITH HEALTH WORKERS

**141,500+**

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SESSIONS CONDUCTED WITH HEALTH WORKERS

**23** HEALTH RADIOS INSTALLED



**19** VACCINE FRIDGES INSTALLED

**8** VACCINE ICE PACK FREEZERS INSTALLED

**38** WATER TANKS INSTALLED

**6** DINGHIES AND OUTBOARD MOTORS PROVIDED TO FACILITIES

**54,200+**

VACCINATIONS AND VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENTS ADMINISTERED TO CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD



**1,670+**

CONTRACEPTIVE IMPLANTS ADMINISTERED IN NORTH FLY DISTRICT SINCE INTRODUCED BY THE PROGRAM IN 2015

**26**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS TRAINED AS VILLAGE HEALTH VOLUNTEERS

**2**



VILLAGES SUPPORTED IN REACHING HEALTHY VILLAGE STATUS IN 2018

**2**

SCHOOLS SUPPORTED IN IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOL CONCEPTS IN 2018

**10**



STAFF HOUSES BUILT

**138,000+**

CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OLD ASSESSED FOR NUTRITIONAL VALUE

**37**

DISTRICT HEALTH MANAGEMENT MEETINGS FACILITATED



**8**

MEETINGS CONDUCTED WITH WOMEN'S COMMITTEE GROUPS AND SUPPORT PROVIDED

**79**

GOOD NEWS STORIES RELATING TO PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DISTRIBUTED



**"BEFORE FIVE YEARS, WE DO NOT HAVE AN URBAN CLINIC. HOWEVER, NORTH FLY HEALTH AND [ABT] BUILD TABUBIL URBAN CLINIC WHICH HELP ALMOST THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN THE TOWN. FROM MY PERSONAL OBSERVATION, I WOULD STATE THAT, TABUBIL URBAN CLINIC PROVIDE THE BEST SERVICES."**

- TUC, SURVEY RESULTS

communicable diseases. This was predominately through hardware – procurement and installation of water tanks and ventilated improved pits – as well as health promotion to a lesser degree. Behaviour change strategies and education are vital components of improving water and sanitation and demand more attention.

## Overall Effectiveness of the Program

- All partners commended the program for its contribution to improving communication and health service delivery but there was concern that district and provincial government would not live up to their responsibility to maintain the positive contribution following program closure<sup>1</sup>.
- Of those community members who had heard of the program during the survey, 75% felt that the program had contributed positively to their community.
- Collaboration and trust was evident among partners – resources were shared, stakeholders met more frequently, and routine data was discussed to inform effective health service planning.
- External factors, such as extreme weather conditions, political elections, and nationwide shortages of health resources, as well as some contention regarding catchment boundaries, affected the ability of the program to implement activities as planned; program resources often had to be diverted or downscaled in response to external factors.
- Consultation and alignment of the program with the

National Health Plan and government strategies, coupled with locally-informed planning, was considered a major success of the program, along with engendering accountable and data driven decision-making, ensuring an early transition planning process and transparency over impending program closure.

- The experience of the program team and location of the head office, logistical capacity; and quality of national reporting systems influenced the overall effectiveness of the program and offer valuable lessons for future implementation of health services.

## NFHSDP AND CMSFHP HEALTH INDICATOR IMPROVEMENTS

The Sector Performance Annual Review (SPAR) is compiled annually by the National Department of Health. It summarizes performance at a provincial and district level across core health sector indicators, providing a monitoring tool to measure annual progress, as well as compare trends over the previous five years.

In the 2017 SPAR, Western Province was ranked first out of 22 for most improved provinces across 16 indicators. Overall performance is based on the comparison performance for each province in 2017 to performance in 2016 using selected indicators. Improvements of more than 2% are scored 1, deterioration of more than 2% are scored -1 and any change less than 2% are scored 0.

<sup>1</sup> Results from the independent evaluation.

## PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN WESTERN PROVINCE

Priority Focus Area	Recommendation	Rationale and Implications for Primary Health Care
Governance	Strengthen capacity to streamline outreach services	Frequent visits by the program to deliver outreach services were noted by communities. Targeted coordination and logistic support is required to enable continuous outreach activities in line with health facility management plans to facilitate consistency and quality of visits.
	Support to Provincial Health Authority (PHA) through engaging all stakeholders in planning and delivery with clear roles and responsibilities	Crucial to success in Western Province is coordination among implementing partners across a geographically diverse and resource-constrained area; supporting delivery of the Western Provincial Health Authority (PHA) strategy through support to the Western PHA Stakeholder Group meetings is essential.
	Maintaining links with national and provincial government	Western Province is sometimes considered isolated or forgotten, in that it doesn't have the same connection to national directives as other provinces. The program sought to address this through establishing and strengthening relationships and links between governing bodies, including National Department of Health and provincial health and district and subdistrict health services.
Health Workforce	Engage young local people in potential health careers	The shortage of skilled staff in Western Province remains a significant challenge, leading to health facility closure and inconsistent service delivery. Skillsets must be continuously invested in and valued for a motivated and capable workforce. There were several references to the importance of locally-trained young health workers from the community and this must be prioritised in rural settings. There was also inadequate management supervision taking place at health facilities.
Medical Supplies	Prioritise development of a medical supply system in Western Province	The national medical supply shortage had a substantial impact on the ability to improve flow and availability of supplies, and this was a key barrier to improving PHC outcomes. Through establishment of the PHA and links with governing bodies, significant attention is required to strengthen medical supply distribution from national through to local level.
Health Promotion	Social development programs needed to build understanding of individual and community health	Most people in the survey defined 'being healthy' as 'not being sick', indicating that health is seen as being an absence of disease, rather than something that can be promoted through environmental, economic, and social factors. Focus on improving understanding of good health through community-level initiatives, including VHV and Healthy Village concepts is instrumental in improving healthy behaviours if jointly supported and advocated by service providers and the community.
Maternal Health Care	Innovative strategies to increase antenatal care and supervised deliveries	While communities receive significant health promotion awareness during outreach and ad hoc events, the importance of supervised deliveries and antenatal care has not led to improved outcomes. Cultural and logistical barriers persist that must be explored and alleviated to achieve desired maternal health targets.

In accordance with the 2017 SPAR Report, Western Province performance compared to other provinces is displayed. Improved performance in Western Province exceeded all other provinces, where the majority have deteriorated in performance.



### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

NFHSDP and CMSFHP were longstanding, comprehensive programs that were designed to operate within existing health system constraints, while working to improve core primary health care components. The program team faced many of the challenges experienced daily by local health service providers, and

developed evidence-based strategies to overcome them. Partners commended the program for achieving several of the objectives it intended to deliver.

While the province performs better than the national level for a number of key health indicators, there is still significant strengthening to occur. Continued health investment in Western Province relies on a sustained partnership among key service providers, in combination with a consistent flow of fiscal resources, a valued and supported health workforce, and quality infrastructure. OTML and OTDF look forward to supporting the provinces initiative to embed a Provincial Health Authority to sustain the elevated levels of health care and support delivered by these programs.

### CONTACT US

If you would like further information please visit our website <https://www.abtassociates.com> or contact us on +61 7 3891 4100.