

**TITLE: SUMMARY REPORT OF HIV/AIDS WORKSHOP LAUNCHING
UPEGU WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION inc. (UWA)
UNGAI / BENA DISTRICT
EASTERN HIGHLANDS PROVINCE**

Completed by

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BACKGROUND

World Situation

In the past decade, great efforts have been made in the prevention, detection, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. Despite these advances, significant political, economic, social, and scientific hurdles remain. In the more than two decades since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, over 60 million people worldwide have become infected with HIV, including more than 20 million who have already died. Women now comprise almost half of adults living with HIV/AIDS with young people disproportionately bear the brunt of the epidemic. Only a fraction of those in need of have access to antiretroviral therapy or are reached by prevention programs and funding for HIV/AIDS from governments and other donors falls far short of projected need.

Papua New Guinea Situation

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is on the brink of an HIV epidemic. While official estimates put HIV prevalence at 0.6% of the population or 15,000 people unofficial estimates are much higher. Since the 1990s HIV prevalence has grown sharply. This prompts fears that PNG's epidemic has the potential to reach Sub Saharan levels, where almost 30 million people are infected (*Source : The World Bank report*).

A recent report by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid) has revealed that PNG faces a potential HIV/AIDS disaster on a similar scale to sub-Saharan Africa. The recent entitled "Potential economic impacts of an HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG" concluded that PNG was likely to follow one of the three African scenarios. In the best case, PNG could emulate "low HIV impact" Kenya, where the population between the ages of 15 to 49 is predicted to decrease by a massive 13% by 2020. However, PNG could have South Africa's "medium impact experience" or Zimbabwe's "high impact" scenario, where the same age group is expected to decline by 34% and 38%, respectively by 2020.

As in Africa, PNG's working-age population will be most affected leaving many children and the elderly as according to the report by Dr Jenny Gordon. She also pointed out that "You end up with a real change in the dependency ration, children and old people dependent on the missing adult group". A whole generation of children will be forced out of schooling to try to find work to provide for their families.

HIV was first reported in PNG in 1987. The number of cases of HIV and fully developed AIDS has been steadily growing since. According to the National Aids Council Secretariat and Department of Health, so many cases have been reported and in record. But the number of reported cases is just an indication of a much wider prevalence of those that go unreported.

PNG has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific region and is the fourth country in the Asia Pacific region to fit the criteria for a *generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic*.

Since the 1990s', HIV prevalence among *women* attending antenatal clinics, blood donors and tuberculosis patients has dramatically grown. *Heterosexual transmission* is the main cause of infection, with around equal *numbers of men and women affected*. The exception is the 15-29 age groups where infection is more common in women than men.

Eastern Highlands Provincial Situation

HIV/AIDS in PNG is now rated as *a generalized epidemic* with a predominance of cases in the 15 to 45 age group. The peak age infected among women is between 20 and 34 and between 25 and 34 for men. This is the age of reproduction and peak economic production. The epidemic is spreading rapidly, most particularly in the National Capital District in Port Moresby where around 47% of cases reported in the last quarter of 2004 were located (Source : National Department of Health 2004).

According to the National Aids Council Secretariat third quarterly report, reviewing the available cases for the rest of PNG the screening and testing for HIV/AIDS varies from Province to Province. Some Provinces are testing more than others. The notable Provinces reporting high number of cases are National Capital District, Western Highlands, Morobe, *Eastern Highlands* and Enga Provinces.

Since Eastern Highlands was seen on the map to be increasing in people diagnosed with HIV infection and is the fourth province to have the highest number of incidents out of the 21 provinces in PNG, I initiated the idea of running a workshop for all the Leaders of various groupings of people in Ungai/Bena district where the rural women's organization is established. The workshop was titled " HIV/AIDS Education and Awareness Raising for Leaders".

The above is a brief background on what the situation is like in PNG and the world over in regards to the deadly epidemic that is incurable and is spreading all over PNG like a bushfire. All organizations in PNG are mandated to address this issue in one way or another in the fight against the epidemic. This workshop was conducted with the support and the endorsement of OSW-HR director and founder and the Eastern Highlands Provincial Aids Council which is the Government body that deals with all HIV/Aids issues. Other stakeholders were invited as trainers or partners in addressing the issue.

PNG's 80% of the population still live in their villages and communities, due to the high level of illiteracy, the workshop was conducted in their own vernacular as well as Melanesian tok pisin interchangeably to really educate them so that they can return to their communities with knowledge about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and carry out similar awareness.

HIV/AIDS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING WORKSHOP REPORT

1.0 Introduction

This report covers tasks undertaken during the Workshop in Upegu Village – Ungai / Bena District from the **6th – 9th of June 2006**. The purpose of the workshop was to educate Community Leaders in Ungai/Bena District about HIV/AIDS, as well as make them aware of prevention, detection, and treatment of those already living with the virus.

The workshop was facilitated in partnership with the Provincial Aids Council and its Board, Goroka General Hospital, Pastor's Fraternal, Provincial Council of Women and the Provincial Government.

The workshop meeting was also an avenue to get to know the established leaders in Ungai/Bena District and to network in partnership in the fight against the epidemic. Further, to identify other areas to address as a group rather than working in isolation. Standing in solidarity together, we can be change agents in our communities.

2.0 Aims/Goals of the Workshop

- Introduce and make aware of the Prevention, Detection and treatment of the deadly virus that is on the increase in PNG, EHP, Ungai/Bena District down to the fabric of our local communities.
- Establish network with other stakeholders/partners in the fight against the epidemic
- Establish understanding among all leaders that the fight against HIV/AIDS is not only for the general public but has to start with the Leaders as Role Models to lead the way in the fight
- Establish understanding to share responsibilities equally regardless of status, gender, color etc.
- At the end of the workshop, all leaders to complete an awareness action plan to use when they return to their own communities

3.0 Activities / Program

The activities for the 3day workshop were various and very informative. The facilitators / trainers were invited from various agencies ie. Government, NGO, Faith Based, Community Based, who were all involved in one way or another in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The following is a list of personals who were invited to speak and topics delivered:

- Basic introduction to HIV/AIDS infection – Sr Ruth Paliau – PAC
- HIV/AIDS in Ungai/Bena District – Mr Boko Mehiyo – Dept. of Health
- STI Prevalence in EHP – Mr Jackson Apo
- Education on Prevention by Government – Dr. Koimbo – PAC Chairman
- Partners Outreach Program – Save the Children , Poro Sapot
- Peer Educator Study – Institute of Medical Research, Mr T Lupiwa
- Churches Support – Fraternal Ministry , Pastor John Kerari
- Eastern Highlands Provincial Aids Council's Direction, Mr Ken Wai
- Resolution – Plan of Action for the District, Mr Mehiyo / Sr Paliau

After every presentation, there was enough time allowed for general discussion and deliberation. This ignited a lot of important issues which many of the leaders were not aware of especially the increase in the epidemic in their own location & the nation as a whole as well as other related social and economic issues. All issues raised were so important that the leaders were overwhelmed to have general knowledge and expressed that this type of workshop should be ongoing preferably quarterly.

The UWA guaranteed them that the association will try to hold three workshops annually as a follow up of this new initiative for all leaders to network effectively in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other related issues.

The afternoons were used for group discussions on “**How would each leader assist effectively in the education of prevention, counseling, care giving to people living with the virus and the list goes on**”. Again, the afternoon sessions were very successful and educational and the leaders also expressed that some of these issues are very new to them and so were very pleased to be attending this workshop.

The nights were used for Video shows on experiences in other countries especially African nations and the Asia Pacific Region. Again, in a community with 80% illiterate, by visualizing things, this was like putting icing on the cake; the leaders and the community around were overwhelmed because they can actually see the real situation of how HIV/AIDS is a development issue and not just a health issue. For the night video sessions, the general community was invited to attend.

Educational materials such as pamphlets, posters, condoms were distributed to respective leaders during the workshop. STI slides were also shown by personal from Goroka General Hospital and also conducted an awareness session thereafter. All these supplementary activities were well organized to gather with the main program that the participants of the workshop were very thrilled to have gained so much in the three days.

Total Participants: 10 women leaders, 10 church leaders, 10 youth leaders, 22 Ward Councilors, 10 Village Court Magistrates and 10 Community traditional leaders. Out of the total invited only 60 attended.

4.0 Problems / Issues

- All leaders expressed that there need to be a lot of awareness raising in the communities especially for each of the 22 ward council areas on HIV/AIDS and other related issues. Many are ignorant about the increase in the spread of the epidemic and commended UWA for the initiative to facilitate this information knowledge based workshop to be an eye opener to all of them.
- Due to insufficient funds and resources many educational awareness are hampered as expressed by the leaders.
- Many could not make it due to communication not reaching them. The most remote areas that needed to walk for distance could not make it in time. Transport was provided for those on the road routes.

5.0 Viability of the Workshop

All participants, leaders, trainers, facilitators and partners expressed that this is a very viable workshop and that similar ones should be carried out in all 22 Wards of the district. Regular ones should be held for the leaders as expressed by the participants. As this workshop was initiated by OSWHR & UWA, the workshop will be held three times in a year in Upegu Community. This workshop has been very informative that the leaders unanimously suggested for another major one in September for a week before the end of 2006. We are now in the planning stage.

6.0 Conclusion

While it is very difficult to determine the actual number of men, women, youth and children who are either affected or infected by HIV/AIDS that go unreported plus reported cases, the workshop revealed that they constitute a humongous social concern for our society. Community involvement to address the issue with the infected and affected is through agencies such as community based organizations (eg.UWA), Churches, NGOs and even individuals. The services that these organizations provide are dependent on what ever resources are

available and although limited, they play important roles in the lives of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged groups in the communities.

The workshop was an avenue where all leaders that attended (**60 altogether**) have gained knowledge, empowered and are determined to join in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other related issues. Their determination has led them into going back with an action plan for their communities for the rest of 2006 to how best they can assist in the fight.

The numbers are growing all the time at an unbelievable rate that it is becoming a very serious social and economic problem for PNG. Adequate and appropriate assistance must be given to help small agencies like the **Upegu Women's Association** who have taken the initiative to facilitate a major successful workshop for the Leaders of Ungai / Bena District in the Eastern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

Thank you.

