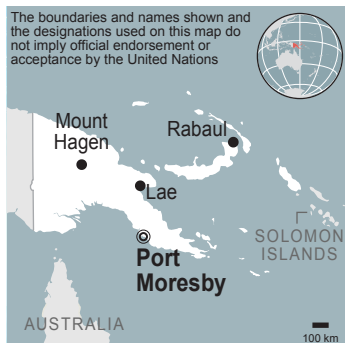


# Strengthening human security for women in mobile populations through health education and HIV/AIDS care in Papua New Guinea



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Papua New Guinea

**Duration:** June 2006 to January 2010

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNICEF; WHO

**Other Implementing Partners:** Department of Health; Constellation for AIDS Competence; UNAIDS; JICA; International Medical Centre of Japan; Japanese Red Cross; NGOs and faith based organizations

**Budget:** \$2,725,461.50

**Key Words:** HIV/AIDS; healthcare; women; capacity building; mobile populations

## BACKGROUND

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), widespread poverty, lack of essential services, perpetual violence and frequent natural disasters have forced large numbers of people to move from rural communities to large cities in search of greater safety and job opportunities. These mobile populations, who were among the country's most vulnerable groups, lived in temporary settlements where they were exposed to a wide range of human security threats. Poor primary health care in general and HIV/AIDS in particular had emerged as the most significant threats to the public health of the

country. Among mobile populations, women – who were often victims of violence, sexual aggression and rape – were especially threatened. The lack of community-based health services; difficulty reaching mobile populations with health information; acute shortage of training opportunities for health care workers; and inadequate institutional capacity to support the effective management of diseases, had resulted in a range of human security challenges facing the country and those most vulnerable.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of PNG's mobile populations by improving their knowledge of and access to health care related services, including HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. In particular, the project aimed to strengthen the capacity of local health care systems to provide quality health care for all those in need, thereby significantly contributing to improvements in human security. More specifically, the project

intended to: (i) provide community-based health education designed for mobile populations, especially women; (ii) extend access to health information as well as health facilities for mobile populations; (iii) strengthen the capacity of community-based health care workers and; (iv) expand and bolster the quality of health care facilities in four locations: Lae, Mount Hagen, Port Moresby and Rabaul.

### BENEFICIARIES

The project primarily targeted PNG's mobile populations, especially women, living in four

communities where HIV/AIDS was prevalent: Lae, Mount Hagen, Port Moresby and Rabaul.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Using the “Constellation for AIDS Competence” approach, the project focused on community-to-community transfer of local knowledge and advanced community-based responses that strengthened the prevention, care and awareness of HIV/AIDS-related threats. With support from provincial AIDS Councils, each community developed and implemented their HIV/AIDS action plans. Meanwhile, to build the necessary capacity among local communities, an AIDS Competence Process (ACP) facilitator’s manual was locally developed. As a result, through the AIDS Competence Process, communities were better equipped to handle HIV/AIDS-related issues including enhancing capacities for the prevention of HIV/AIDS; reducing stigma and discrimination; increasing home-based care; and linking communities with appropriate services. Consequently, in many settlements, there was an uptake in the use of appropriate treatments; a decrease in the prevalence of high-risk behaviours; and a growing knowledge of HIV/AIDS-related issues.

(ii) Through the project more than 650 health care workers were trained in providing comprehensive HIV

care and treatment. The training enabled the scaling up of 59 health care sites in 20 provinces, which greatly improved accessibility and utilization of services. In addition, more than 100 community health workers were trained to enhance knowledge and develop skills needed to provide prevention, education, care and support for people living with HIV. These multiple capacity-building trainings and outreach activities allowed more than 60,000 people to benefit from enhanced HIV/AIDS services.

(iii) Because laboratory support is a crucial component of HIV service delivery, the project also strengthened such services in eight urban clinics. Through the procurement of appropriate equipment in these clinics and the training of technicians in major hospitals throughout PNG, higher quality and more accurate diagnostic services were provided. In addition, as a result of the 270 new testing sites throughout the country, the number of testing/screening visits increased by 100 per day.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the importance of community-based empowerment mechanisms for tackling critical and pervasive threats. By building local capacity and ensuring local ownership, the project achieved significant improvements in the prevention of HIV, as well as the treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. In addition, the community and the empowerment-based approach implemented under the project encouraged communities to come together in order and address other cross-cutting issues such as

those pertaining to literacy, income generation activities, environmental health, drug and alcohol-related issues, among others. Lastly, due to close kinships and cultural values at the community level, the project highlighted the benefits of a people-centred approach where local needs and vulnerabilities are considered in context-specific manner and are strengthened through capacity building mechanisms that are locally driven and sustainable.