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## **SUMMARY OF THE MOMASE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2012**

*Held at the SVD Auditorium, Divine Word University*

*Madang*

12-13 April 2012

**“How to Improve Accessibility to Quality Health and Education Services”**

**ORGANIZED BY:**

**CONSULTATIVE IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING COUNCIL**

**SPONSORED BY:**

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PLANNING AND MONITORING  
AUSTRALIAN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>ATTENDANCE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Highlight</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Lowlight</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>PRESENTATIONS</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Issues</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Area 1: Resourcing and Capacity Building</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Area 2: Improving Accessibility</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Area 3: Governance Mechanisms</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Area 4: Harnessing Linkages and Partnerships</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Recommendations:</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>EVALUATION</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>9</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2012 Momase Regional Development Forum was held on 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at the SVD Auditorium, Divine Word University, Madang. The theme of the Forum was “How to Improve Accessibility to Quality Health and Education Services.” The broad aim of this Forum was to critically look at and discuss key government policies and strategies in the health and education sectors, identify obstacles that hinder improved service delivery and to provide appropriate options for government to undertake to improve accessibility to quality health and education services.

## **ATTENDANCE**

The Forum registered a total of 105 participants. This included key ministerial and departmental staff, provincial government executives, business and NGO (CSO) executives, researchers and members of the academia, members of hospital boards, and members of the general public. The registration figure would have easily doubled had it not been for the security restrictions imposed on public entry into the campus. Attendance generally varied from session to session with an average of 70 participants per session.

## **Highlight**

It was the first time in several years that the CIMC witnessed a high level delegation from the Department of National Planning and Monitoring attending its Forums. The delegation included Hon. Sam Basil, MP, former Minister for National Planning and Chairman of CIMC, Dr. Peter Kora, Secretary, Department of National Planning, Joe Kapa, Deputy Secretary Policy, and other key members of the departmental staff.

## **Lowlight**

The real disappointment, however, was the lack of representation by the National Departments of Health and Education. The forum theme was theirs. It was about improving accessibility to

quality health and education services. They were the key lead agencies that were meant to own and be at the forefront running the forum. Their lack of representation to the contrary left a lot to be desired. It portrayed a serious lack of ownership by these key government departments at the national level. It is in the best interest of the country that this does not get repeated in future.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Presentations at the Forum ranged from welcome addresses by Deputy Governor of Madang, Hon. Bob Wati, to keynote address by Hon. Sam Basil, MP, former Minister for National Planning and Chairman of CIMC, to purpose of the Forum by Wallis Yakam, Executive Officer, CIMC, to central government policies, plans and priorities by Dr. Peter Kora, Secretary, Department of National Planning, to budget tracking initiatives and experiences of accountability mechanisms by Dr. Nao Badu, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, National Economic and Fiscal Commission (NEFC), and Elizabeth Avaisa, Senior Project Officer, CIMC, to provincial and independent perspective on implementation of health and education plans and priorities at the provincial level by Coretta Naig, Principal Adviser Education, Sandaun Provincial Administration, and Professor Peter Siba, Director, PNG Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) to NGO and private sector perspectives on health and education services delivery by Jerry Hendingao, Principal, Balob Teachers College, and Nancy Sullivan, Founder and Managing Director, Nancy Sullivan and Associates, to role of churches and civil society organizations in the delivery of health and education services by Fr. Jan Czuba, President, Divine Word University, to information access reforms and innovative ICT strategies to improve accessibility to quality health and education services by Joseph Suwamaru Kim, PhD candidate, Divine Word University, and Johnny Lo Yep, Senior Project Officer, CIMC, to private sector perspective on public-private partnership in the delivery of health and education services by Michael Butler, Pilot, Sunbird Aviation.

## **Key Issues**

There were several issues that were being looked at in this forum. However, one that came up strongly was the need to construct, upgrade and maintain to better condition all roads and

transport infrastructure. This call was well summed up by what Coretta Naig, Principal Advisor Education, Sandaun Provincial Administration, had to say. She said when the service delivery monitoring mechanism (SDMM) team visited Sandaun Province, the people in one of the districts visited said and I quote: **“give us a road and forget about us.”** Their message was clear. They were prepared to deliver to meet the requirements provided that their real issue of road accessibility was taken care of. The forum reinforced through presentations and discussions some of the fundamental principles and issues upon which workable strategies could be adopted to move the country forward in terms of improving accessibility and delivering quality health and education services. These principles and issues included: resourcing and capacity building; improving accessibility; governance mechanisms; and harnessing linkages and partnerships. The following recommendations were then derived from these principles and issues.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations from the Forum were divided into four key areas as summarized below but not necessarily in their order of importance.

### **Area 1: Resourcing and Capacity Building**

The Forum participants strongly felt that one of the key areas that require serious thought and considerable attention by government is adequate resourcing and capacity building at all points of service delivery.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Training incentives must be provided which should include:
  - Recognition for formalized trainings at all levels;
  - A fair award system for all persons undergoing officially sanctioned trainings at various levels while on their jobs;
  - Budget allocations being prioritized in a timely manner to appropriately reward those who up skill themselves through formalized trainings.

2. Adequately resource and upgrade to international standards training facilities and infrastructure at all educational and health establishments around the country;
3. Adopt innovative information and communication technology (ICT) strategies such as PNG ARNET, e-Health, e-Education, etc to be on par with international best practices;
4. Unlock land and make it accessible for the upgrading, development, and expansion of health and education infrastructure and facilities around the country;
5. Promote public private partnership (PPP) encouraging government to provide the necessary legislative and policy frameworks upon which private sector expertise and capital can be injected to deliver quality health and education outcomes.

## **Area 2: Improving Accessibility**

The Forum participants generally consented that improving accessibility is another key area that requires serious thought and considerable attention by government. Providing services at points that are out of reach and not accessible by the vast majority of citizens who may usually need them is next to useless.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Revive and upgrade all health and educational infrastructure in rural areas including classrooms, staff houses, teaching and learning equipment and facilities, health centres, aid posts, water supplies, lighting and cooling facilities (e.g. solar power, refrigerator), etc.
2. Revive and upgrade all road and transport networks by reviving government charters, opening up new roads and jetties, maintaining and upgrading rural airstrips, government boats, and encouraging the use of the Royal Flying Doctors Service (as done in remote parts of Australia).

3. Promote and encourage the use of innovative information and communication technology (ICT) strategies such as PNG ARNET, e-Health, e-Education, mobile phones, two-way radios, etc to improve accessibility in rural areas.

### **Area 3: Governance Mechanisms**

Weaknesses created by loopholes in the public service management system contribute to poor performance and abuse and misuse by public servants.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Address weaknesses in the public service management system by tightening up the loopholes and instilling strong governance mechanisms in the system;
2. Streamline both the public service management and procurement processes so that there is clear demarcation of responsibility and inbuilt accountability mechanisms within the public service management system;
3. Review the current public service structure and make voluntary retrenchment attractive so that older people ship out and make way for new and appropriately qualified people to be recruited to perform on the jobs;
4. Establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems in the provinces including staff databases so that officers down the rank and file are able to report to their superiors meeting mandatory targets and deadlines;
5. Cut down on the usually unnecessary prolonged delays in the release of budgeted and appropriated funds. Projects get interrupted unnecessarily along the way when funding is delayed as most of them have mandatory time limits that must be complied with.

6.

#### **Area 4: Harnessing Linkages and Partnerships**

The Forum participants strongly consented that each of the key government agencies responsible for delivering health and education services cannot do it entirely on their own. They need to partner with other agencies that have a role to play so that they collectively contribute in a coordinated manner to getting services from where they are to the points of delivery.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Make it mandatory for all projects to be properly identified so that there is clear demarcation of responsibilities between the various levels of government (i.e. national, provincial, district, and local level government) in terms of ownership and jurisdiction so that there is no unnecessary duplication of responsibilities, overlaps and confusion.
2. Thorough stakeholder mapping should be done so that every partner that has a role to play in the delivery of a particular health or education service is streamlined into the service delivery process (chain) so that they all contribute in a more coordinated manner towards delivering that service.
3. There should always be local buy-in and ownership for every project initiated that is aimed at delivering health and education services at the village, community and ward level as this will go a long way in ensuring the project's long term sustainability.

#### **EVALUATION**

Evaluation feedbacks gathered from participants were generally positive and forward looking. Many hailed the Forum a success and a rewarding experience. They said by engaging public servants in the Forum, the community got a better understanding of how the bureaucracy works, and what the functions of agencies are, as well as the constraints they face. They said the Forum also provided an opportunity for government to talk across agencies and levels, as well as for people to network with others. In terms of the presentations, many participants said the line up of



presentations was good. Just that timing was limited. They said the volume of information presented was too much to be digested within the two day period. They suggested that for future Forums, the number of Forum days be increased from the current two to either three or even a week. They said two days is not sufficient. Participants needed ample time to fully digest the information given by presenters to be able to meaningfully participate in the Forum deliberations.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is our hope that the recommendations contained herein will be given serious thought and due consideration at the National Development Forum and that a way forward can be collectively charted to improve accessibility to quality health and education services in the country.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Finally, the CIMC Secretariat would like to convey its sincere thanks to the Governments of PNG and Australia through the Department of National Planning and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) respectively for their funding support. The coordination of this important Forum would not have been possible without their generous funding assistance. Thanks also to Divine Word University for the use of their conference facility, Madang International School for singing and reciting the National Anthem and Pledge at the Forum opening, the many speakers and participants who have taken time from their busy schedules to participate, and other stakeholders/partners that may have contributed to make this Forum a success.