

Grow Healthy, Grow Strong

Newsletter Issue #19 - Sept 2024



Photo: Grow Project Officer Mary Kuam, facilitating a parent group discussion in Karapa, Rieit Ward, Sinivit LLG



COMING NEXT MONTH

In October, Senior Project Manager Anna Roberts and Technical Specialist Shan Huang, will visit the team in Kokopo.

Anna will help to facilitate the October Nutrition Advisory Committee meeting which will be held in conjunction with the Zero Dose immunisation project to present the findings of the Mid-Term Review. Shan will conduct another health care worker training on healthy diets for families.

The visitors will also be attending the final CNAG for the Sinivit Local Level Government to present the group with certificates for their outstanding contribution to GROW.

GROW PROJECT UPDATE

This month, we have made significant progress in project activities far and wide. We start with the Annual PNG Medical Symposium, where our abstract on father engagement in early childhood feeding was accepted for an oral presentation. Senior Project Officer, Onawuta Kesuwao presented at the symposium in Mount Hagen as he has been instrumental in setting up the community engagement activities. His story on the symposium is shared on the next page.

We have also held crucial orientation meetings with the Kokopo District to set up the Community Nutrition Advocacy Group (CNAG) with the Local Level Government, who have all expressed enthusiasm for project activities. This district, like Pomio (our first district to start community engagement), has never been asked to be involved in nutrition tasks before. Hence why they are keen to learn new skills and reach out to their communities.

The health worker component has also progressed well, with our monitoring reports now being routinely shared between the facilities and the PHA. This is an important step to keep all stakeholders accountable to the agreed tasks and for those in leadership to understand the challenges that might be faced by staff and recognise the achievements made for their patients.

As we come to the final year of project implementation, we are pleased to see that the momentum for activities has continued to grow and be sustained. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the project funders for their support including the Australian Government, Digicel Foundation, and private donors through the Burnet Institute.

Senior Project Officer, Onawuta Kesuwao presented at the annual PNG medical symposium. The presentation was done during the Specialty Meeting hosted by the PNG Public Health Association on Thursday the 5th of September. The abstract presented was on “A qualitative look at the impact of paternal involvement in childhood nutrition and development during community engagement in Rieit Ward, Pomio District, East New Britain Province.”

One suggestion received after the presentation was that the GROW project (Community Component) could do a follow up after the Parent Group Discussions are held. This way, we might monitor which parents may have changed or improved their behaviour or practices from what they have learnt during the sessions. Such behaviours might be on infant and young child feeding practices, the importance of spending time with children to play which helps improve psychosocial development, etc. It also includes following up on children at the Rieit Ward that have been identified as being stunted to see if they have improved or not.

Other interesting abstracts were also presented at the conference that complemented our GROW project. One of these was on “Nutrition of children under five years: Participatory Action Research in Two Communities in Madang Province, Papua New Guinea,” presented by Laei Bubun (MPH student, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, DWU). Her research aimed to identify socio-cultural and economic factors that influence mother’s feeding practices for children under 5 in two communities in Madang province. The findings showed that there were inappropriate feeding practices in breastfeeding and complementary feeding. It indicated that socio-cultural beliefs and economic factors influenced the feeding practices of children under 5. The mothers also stated a change in feeding practices from garden foods to more processed/ store foods. This was also similar to some of the feedbacks we have received from parents at Rieit Ward that attended our parent group discussions. Many stated that they lack knowledge about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, colostrum, complementary feeding and psychosocial stimulation and the importance of play.

Another abstract presented was on “Clinicians’ knowledge and skills in assessing nutrition status, and diagnosing and managing children’s under five malnutrition in North-East district of the National Capital District- Papua New Guinea.” This was a cross-sectional survey of 55 clinicians working in three clinics in the nation’s capital who self assessed their knowledge and skills on nutritional status assessment, diagnosing and treating malnutrition among children under 5. The study found that only 42% had very good or good knowledge in assessing nutritional status, while 40% admitted very poor knowledge. Similarly, only 42% had good or very good skills in diagnosing malnutrition, while 32% admitted very poor knowledge. Only 19% had very good skills in treating malnutrition, and 31% had very good skills in counselling mothers with malnourished babies. While 24% of the clinicians stated that they had previously attended short nutrition trainings. Summarizing that less than 25% of the clinicians had very good knowledge in assessing nutritional status and diagnosing undernutrition. Studies like this highlights the importance of the healthcare worker trainings, like the ones facilitated by the GROW project every month.

Overall, this was a great experience and we look forward to presenting more of GROW’s work in the future.

Senior Project Officer for GROW, Onawuta Kesuwao presenting on Parental Involvement in Childhood Nutrition and Development at the Annual PNG Medical Symposium

