HIV Cooperation Program Indonesia: **HIV IN PAPUA**

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Containing the HIV epidemic in Indonesian Papua through Combination Prevention

Combination Prevention: rising to the challenge

Significant HIV programming in the easternmost provinces of Indonesia, Papua and West Papua, commenced in 2002, with assistance from the Australian Government. This was in response to a low-level generalized epidemic, with the objectives of preventing transmission of HIV and, later, increasing access to clinical services. The prevention programs targeted the general population and also addressed the needs of sex workers and clients, people who have multiple concurrent partners, youth, and men who have sex with men. Mass media campaigns for the general population commenced in 2005, subsequently supported by more intensive community-based health promotion activities *(note that this assistance was provided under the Indonesia HIV Prevention and Care Project- IHPCP, 2002-2008)*

Combination prevention reaps results

The HIV prevention programs in the two provinces funded by the Australian Government were based on the Provincial AIDS Commissions' Strategic Communication Plan for HIV and AIDS for Papua and West Papua (2008). A three-pronged approach has been at the core of the strategy: advocating with policy makers and community leaders, behavior change communication, and community mobilization. The programs also emphasised linking communities with local clinical services for testing and treatment. This approach has had positive results.

Most significantly these efforts have contributed to an apparent stabilisation of the epidemic with the Ministry of Health's Integrated Biological and Behaviour Surveys (IBBS) conducted in 2006 and 2013 reporting the same HIV prevalence of 2.9% among indigenous Papuans. Many coordinated programs and approaches have contributed to this, including: mass media campaigns; sexual health promotion through community and faith-based organisations and a professional football team, radio and theatre groups; and improvements in and increased access to HIV and STI testing and treatment.

Papua Mass Media Campaign

The 2015 evaluation of the HCPI-supported mass media campaign showed that 96% percent of respondents knew that condoms prevent HIV transmission and 88% reported learning from the mass media campaign that mutual monogamy prevents HIV. This compares to the IBBS in 2006 where 52% reported being unclear about HIV transmission. The mass media campaign has informed the general population about HIV with 100% of 600 people in four towns surveyed through a random sample knowing about HIV and being able to recall campaign messages. The evaluation also reported that the combination prevention approach, through its involvement of a wide range of partners and approaches, is resulting in changing attitudes towards HIV and AIDS, with more people discussing individual and community responsibilities in relation to HIV prevention.

There are also indications of behaviour change resulting from the three-pronged communications strategy. Notably, condom use at last sex with a casual partner improved significantly. Between 2009 and 2015, the the proportion of female program participants using condoms at last sex with casual partners doubled to 70%, while for men it increased from 55% to 75% (HCPI Annual Client Surveys 2009 and 2015).

Several other surveys show that fewer Papuans now have casual partners. The number of clients per day of female sex workers has decreased overall. There are also more health services available for HIV testing and treatment.

To control a generalized epidemic in communities that are difficult to reach with limited access to education and health services, there needs to be synergy among all interventions, including mass media, community-based

health promotion, schools and health services. The combination prevention approach provided an appropriate strategy to ensure interventions were coordinated and targeted at promoting risk reduction and treatment seeking behaviours.

> "Ninety-six of HCPI client survey respondents knew where to obtain an HIV test (97% of those from from Papua, 96% of those from West Papua) and, in 2015, over one third of HCPI respondents had been tested for HIV and knew their HIV status, including 43% in Papua and 30% in West Papua.