

PAPUA NEW GUINEA MIDWIFERY LEADERSHIP Buddy PROJECT 2018 – 2025



The Rotary Clubs of Morialta and Port Moresby, in partnership with the PNG Midwifery Society (PNGMS) and the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) have completed 3 rounds of an innovative **Buddy Leadership** Program for Papua New Guinea and Australian midwives. The *Buddy Program* aims to build midwifery leadership with the ultimate purpose of improving maternal and neonatal outcomes. Participating midwives, undertake a 4-day workshop in Port Moresby focusing on leadership and advocacy. During this time, the midwives are allocated a buddy, who they work with through varied means of communication over a 12-month period. Our 24 graduates have built networks in their regions with advocacy and local community health initiatives to improve maternal health services. Quality projects have provided positive results. All participants are volunteers.

The innovative model of a buddy health professional, assisting another buddy health professional, in sustainable leadership development over a 12-month peer support period, was developed specifically for this project and has **implications for use by other professions and other Western Pacific Island nations**. The key outcomes of the Buddy program have been based on the Member Association Capacity Membership tool (MACAT) developed by the International Confederation of Midwives. Project evaluations undertaken by Dr Kimberly Crawford, Monash University and Professor Helen Hall, Federation University, are available on request to the Project Committee.

Project History

In 2019, following a call to action from the PNG Midwives Society, the Rotary Club of Morialta, Adelaide, initiated the project and joined with the other organisations named above, in a mission to improve maternal and newborn health outcomes in PNG. There are an estimated 250,000 births in PNG per year with most of these in rural and remote areas. Only 55% of women give birth in a health facility and only 56.5% of women can be assured of a skilled provider at birth. PNG has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios and infant mortality rates in the Asia-pacific region. It is estimated that there are less than 1200 trained midwives in PNG where at least 8000 are required to meet current needs. The WHO have published many articles which states that *Midwives Save Lives*.

Stage One of the project, was successfully completed in November 2023, which included 3 cohorts of PNG and Australian midwife buddies. The program was due to run from 2018 - 2021 however Covid intervened. **Stage Two** of the project, to be conducted between 2024- 2026, will, at the request of the PNGMS, extend the program by 26 more senior midwives to ensure that each province in PNG is represented. A total of 50 PNG midwives will, by 2026, have benefited from the program and will have the skills and expertise to train others in this work. They will be supported by the overarching link to two professional organisations of the PNGMS and the ACM.

The project is funded through the generosity of Rotary Clubs in PNG, South Australia and Queensland, through private donors and with the assistance of a Rotary district and global grant. The project team are currently seeking funding for Stage two of the project.

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