



ashm

Developing a sustainable HIV,
viral hepatitis & sexual health workforce

COVID-19 Support for Health Workers in Papua New Guinea

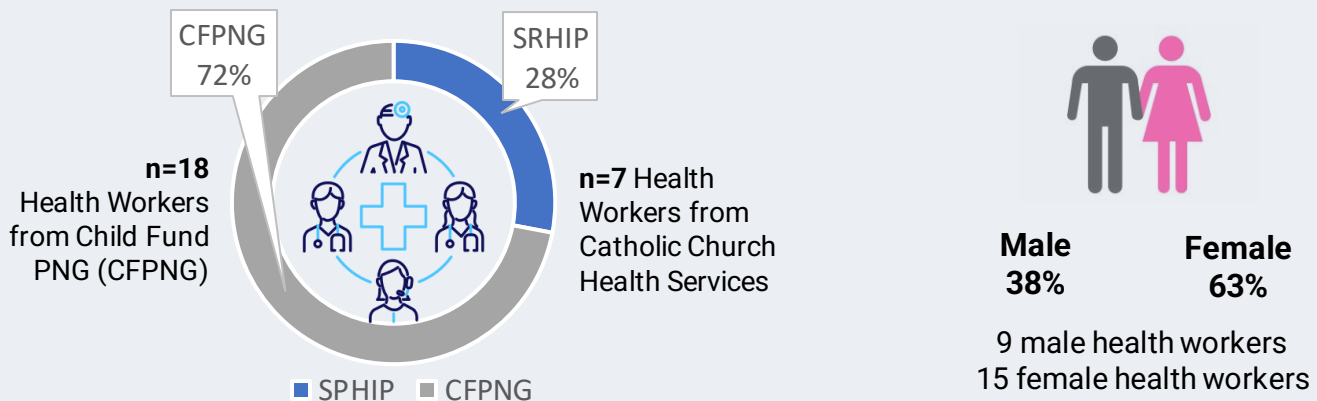
ASHM established COVID-19 Support mechanisms in May 2020 for Catholic Church Health Services (CCHS) through the SRH Integration Project¹ with the aim of providing a consistent and reliable source of pandemic information for health workers. Adopting an infodemic management approach and informed by 3 Needs Analyses, regular messaging was delivered through WhatsApp, email and text platforms. This streamlined communication promoted the national public health response and sought to mitigate impact of COVID-19 on HIV and health services. Furthermore, the conduct of WhatsApp Live Sessions and tailored Facility Support Sessions enabled real-time debunking of circulating misinformation and stimulated discussion on community education, minimising service disruptions, universal precautions (infection control and use of PPE), ways to address vaccine hesitancy and mental health for health workers.

Expansion through ChildFund in 2022 resulted in over 250 health workers having access to evidence-based SARS-CoV-2 messaging and a COVID-19 vaccine uptake for participants over double the national rate for health workers.

Organic development of a Community of Practice within SRHIP & ChildFund WhatsApp Groups has been fostered over time with increasing participation including sharing of COVID-19 testing and vaccination outreach photos and stories of addressing vaccine hesitant communities.

In September 2022, ASHM conducted a multi-method evaluation to identify outcomes and impact of the COVID-19 Support WhatsApp Groups. Findings will guide future development of the support provided. This involved an online survey distributed to WhatsApp participants and interviews with five health workers in PNG to help interpret these findings.

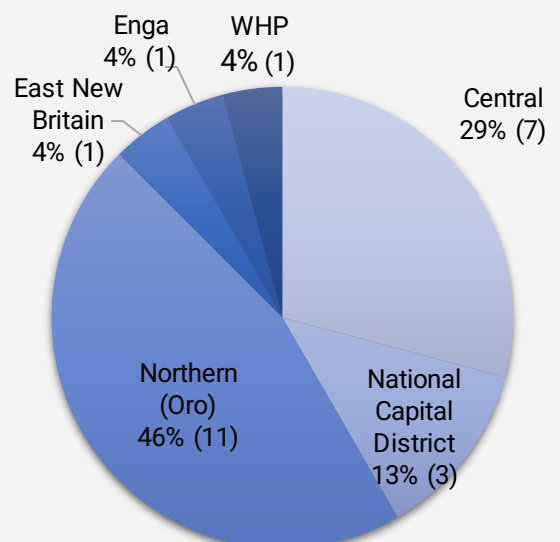
24 health workers in Papua New Guinea completed the Evaluation Survey

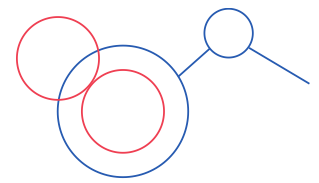


Participants by Location



Image from: https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=3862&lang=en



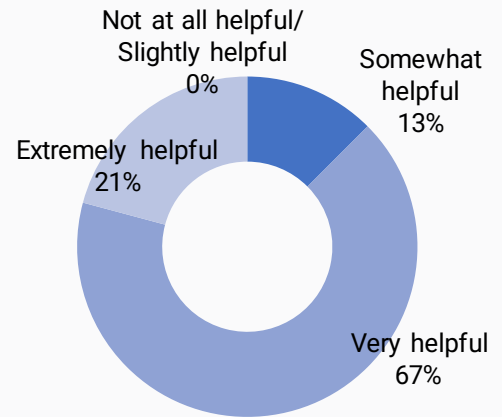


Quality of Support

How helpful has the COVID-19 Support WhatsApp group been during the pandemic?

67% of health workers (n=16) who participated in the survey rated the COVID-19 Support WhatsApp group "Very helpful", and 21% (n=5) rated it as "Extremely helpful".

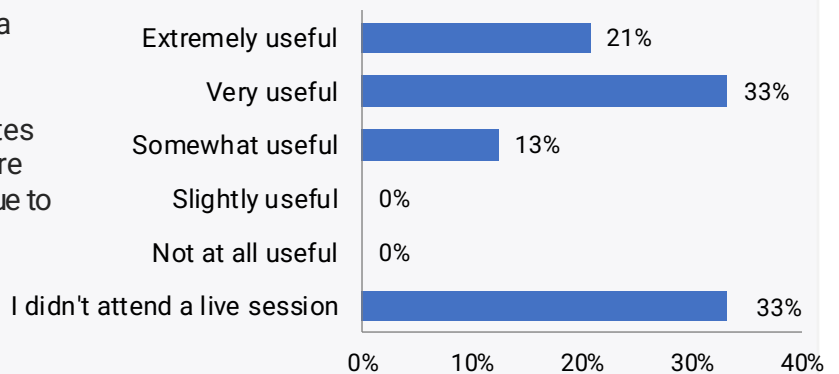
"The WhatsApp factual and right information that was given, has influenced a lot of health workers to get good accurate information, as well as allowed them to be vaccinated ... and the COVID-19 information has made a big difference in terms of infection control in our facilities" - PNG Program Representative



How useful were the COVID-19 Support Live Sessions?

67% of respondents (n=16) participated in a Live Support Session. Of these, 81% (n=13) rated the support as 'Extremely' or 'Very' useful. Information from interviews indicates many members of the WhatsApp group were unable to participate in the live sessions due to technology barriers.

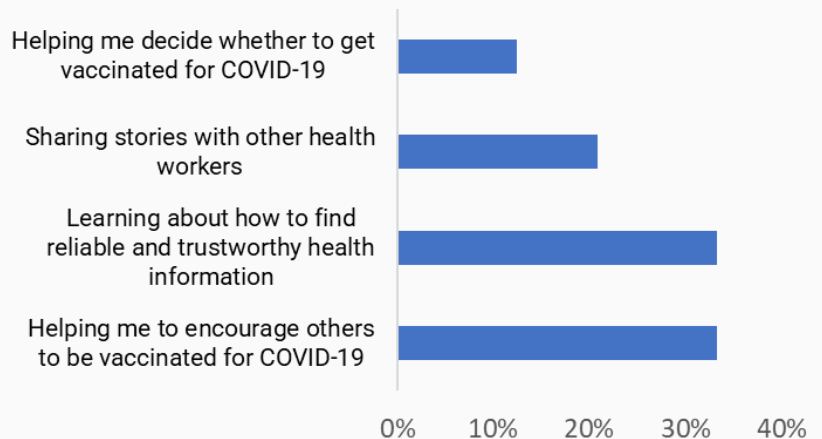
"They don't have enough data and network coverage. There is a certain network place, but they need to go there and get and receive messages, especially in rural areas" - Health Officer, ChildFund



What has been the biggest benefit of the COVID-19 Support WhatsApp Group?

Equal numbers of respondents said that the biggest benefit of participating was 'learning about how to find reliable and trustworthy health information' (33%, n=8) and 'helping me to encourage others to be vaccinated' (33%, n=8).

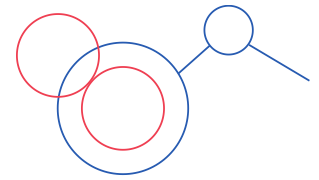
"We can trust the information provided by the WhatsApp group. Most of them were able to make their discussion about getting a vaccination to protect themselves" - Health Officer, ChildFund





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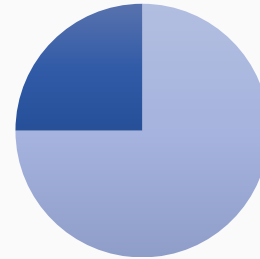


Future Directions

Are you interested in being involved in the WhatsApp group in future?

75% of health workers (n=18) indicated a willingness to continue involvement in the WhatsApp group in the future.

25%
Not sure



75%
Yes

When asked about other topics participants would like discussed in the WhatsApp group, responses included:

- HIV/AIDS including treatment and recent infection trends
- Latest developments in Viral hepatitis, M pox and sexually transmitted infections
- Antenatal care, family planning and maternal/child health
- Tuberculosis
- GBV and child protection
- Other Covid-19 issues: awareness in rural and remote areas; the effects of covid-19 on the global economic crisis, food security
- Other emerging health issues and emergencies

Challenges & Opportunities

Interviews also highlighted the many challenges facing PNG health workers that limit their capacity to respond to a crisis and emerging health issues, including lack of health services in rural areas and poor communication infrastructure.

An opportunity within the COVID-19 Support Groups, and their evolving Communities of Practice is to continue building digital health capacity among health workers in PNG, including confidence and familiarity with mobile health technologies.

ASHM has already started expanding messaging to boost vaccine confidence in routine childhood immunisations and to provide evidence-based information for emerging diseases such as Mpox.



LaeCCHS team increasing the demand for C19 Vaccination during the Morobe Youth Peace Festival Nov 2 - 3. We hope to vaccinate more people today 😊

8:02 am



Top tips for navigating the infodemic



1. Assess the source:
Who shared the information with you and where did they get it from? Even if it is a friend or family, you still need to vet their source.



2. Go beyond headlines:
Headlines may be intentionally sensational or provocative.



3. Identify the author:
Search the author's name online to see if they are real or credible.



4. Check the date:
Is it up to date and relevant to current events? Has a headline, image or statistic been used out of context?



5. Examine the supporting evidence:
Credible sources back up their claims with facts.



6. Check your biases:
Think about whether your own biases could affect your judgment on what is or is not trustworthy.



7. Turn to fact-checkers:
Check trusted fact-checking organizations, such as the International Fact-Checking Network and global news outlets focused on debunking misinformation.

Jamariwa Wangai

Nikki Teggelove

Photo



This is indeed a vital component to consider. Thank you for facilitating this venue of discussion; these are each very real & so often overlooked as we always focus on the actual vaccination & not on factors surrounding the instance of vaccination.

With the organizing & facilitating of mobile & rural clinics, we have been bridging some of these gaps by making the vaccine available at their door steps.

9:11 PM