

CASE STUDY – The growing COVID 19 crisis in Papua New Guinea



MercyWorks

SISTERS OF MERCY
OF AUSTRALIA & PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In March and April this year, we heard many stories about the growing COVID 19 crisis and a second wave happening across PNG through the media, by attending briefings through ACFID (the Australian Council for International Development) and directly from our staff in PNG. People in Australia were contacting me and saying we should send extra money to PNG to respond. Everyone, including our staff in Australia naturally wanted to help. During this time, we were keeping in close contact with our PNG staff in Goroka, Mt Hagen, Kiunga, Wewak and our new area of work in Simbu. However, I did not want to place extra pressure on our already fragile staff. I spoke with our In-Country Coordinator Sr Maryanne Kolkia RSM regularly, as did our Program Manager from Australia. I always stressed that our projects could wait, and the safety and health of our staff was paramount.

Then on 27 April I received a sad email from Maryanne who was currently working from Simbu. She said –

I now realise the need for Mercy Works Simbu to create and establish rural/urban marketing in addressing food shortage in response to COVID 19 pandemic. The purpose is to feed oneself and the neighbour.

Therefore, I see the need of extra thirty thousand kina (K30,000.00 = approx. \$AUD12,200) to support this process ...



So, our response to this was to decide to send out a **COVID 19 Emergency Relief Appeal letter** from Mercy Works to everyone on our database to ask for donations. This happened after I had two days of conversations with - staff involved both in Australia and PNG, our Board Chair, the Chair of the Program Committee and the Chair of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee. I wrote to all the Board Directors overnight seeking their approval for this Appeal letter to go ahead. This was given unanimously. I checked the criteria against the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) ‘Emergency Appeal Website Checklist’.



The donations far exceeded our expectations and Mercy Works has been able to distribute this Appeal money as ‘emergency relief’, especially for food and water in 5 poorer areas where we have a presence in PNG.

Discussion and sharing -

- ❖ What is your initial response to this case study?
- ❖ What might be some challenges to implementing the concept of ‘subsidiarity’ and ‘synodality’?
- ❖ What steps are needed?
- ❖ What are some key learnings?



Sally Bradley RSM
Executive Director – Mercy Works Ltd