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Papua New Guinea

Rolling Out Ward Development Planning

This brief document outlines how CARE International in Papua New Guinea (CARE PNG) through its Integrated Community Development Project has been facilitating the roll out of Ward Development Planning (WDP) in partnership with government and local NGOs. By doing so, CARE PNG aims to strengthen communities and build a more enabling environment for rural service delivery.

What is the policy?

The Organic Law on Provincial Governments and Local Level Governments (1995) devolves responsibility for rural service delivery down to the sub-national levels of the Provinces and Local Level Governments (LLGs). The Organic Law further mandates that planning for service delivery should be bottom-up. This means that development priorities must be identified at the Ward level, through the WDP process facilitated by the lowest levels of government, the Ward Development Committees (WDCs). WDCs then report these priorities up to the LLG level in the form of Ward plans, which inform the development of LLG plans and budget allocation, as well as District plans and budget allocation.

What are the implementation issues?

Although effective provision of basic services is integral for poverty reduction, service delivery has seriously declined in the rural areas where the most marginalised communities live. Reaching these groups in remote areas is logistically difficult and responses have to be simultaneously top-down and bottom-up, requiring proactive changes in government policy and action to provide an enabling environment. Despite a renewed emphasis on bottom-up planning and development (i.e. WDP), and considerable funding now flowing to the sub-national levels as per the Organic Law, challenges to effective, responsive rural service delivery remain. These challenges are particularly severe for women due to the gender inequalities institutionalised in many of PNG's households and communities. District plans continue to be developed in isolation and without stakeholder input. The communities that development is supposed to serve are not able to feed into its planning as there are no formal opportunities for communities to come together to map out development needs and how to address them, or engage with government on these matters. Further, capacity issues for administrative arms of government are significant, as is the lack of awareness and understanding of roles and responsibilities. Knowledge and skills to be able to facilitate WDP is low within Wards, and at the LLG and District levels.

What is the approach?

In 2009, CARE PNG launched the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP), which seeks to make lasting and measurable impacts on the lives of remote, rural communities, in close partnership with government, communities, and local organisations. By facilitating WDP capacity and awareness-raising, brokering linkages between government and communities, and modelling ways to support and deliver a range of services and community development activities as identified in Ward plans, the ICDP is working to strengthen communities and build a more enabling environment for rural service delivery.

CARE PNG has been trailing 3 different approaches to rolling out WDP:

1. **CARE PNG-led** – In this approach, CARE PNG is the main driver and implementer, establishing agreements with Provincial Administrations and District Administrations, leading community entry and awareness-raising on the Organic Law, and facilitating WDP capacity building at the Ward, LLG, and District levels. CARE PNG also provides mentoring to LLG officers to consolidate Ward plans and create LLG plans and budgets. As well, CARE PNG assists LLGs and Districts to leverage the support of service providers from various government departments, the private sector, and local organisations to deliver services and other interventions to communities as per their Ward plans.
2. **Local NGO-led** – In this approach, a local NGO is selected through an Expression of Interest process based on its community development experience to lead the WDP roll out in its own district. In this case, CARE PNG trains and mentors the local partner NGO to be able to facilitate WDP processes with communities, WDCs, LLGs, and the District. This approach offers an alternative to direct implementation and a way to achieve increased capacity-building and scale on governance.
3. **District-led** – In this approach, the District Administration drives the process of rolling out WDP into communities and throughout the LLGs. The District ensures Ward and LLG plans are consolidated and developed, and that these inform the District plans and budget allocations as per the Joint District Planning & Budgeting Prioritisation Committee. This approach is possible usually after a cycle of WDP capacity-building, as outlined in the approaches above.

What is emerging?

- **New roles for government** – At LLG and District levels, officers now know the process and the importance of greater stakeholder participation for planning effective and appropriate development interventions. Increased WDP capacity and greater clarity about roles and responsibilities is moving government away from desktop planners to facilitators of bottom-up planning.
- **Government re-engagement** – WDP necessitates close working relationships between government and communities, as District and LLG officers must come down to the Ward level in order to facilitate, implement and oversee WDP processes. This re-engagement is rebuilding trust as well as breaking down fears communities have had in government.
- **Spaces for dialogue** – The WDP process carves out an opportunity and a space for communities to discuss and plan together, as well as talk with LLG and District staff, rather than trying as individuals to get a meeting with the District Administrator or Member of Parliament.
- Growing social accountability - WDP promotes increased social accountability, whereby Wards can monitor the progress of implementation against their plans. This is leading to greater responsiveness at LLG and District levels to perform accordingly.
- **Growing community empowerment** – Communities are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the WDP process and their rights to participate in planning and decision-making processes. As well, they are beginning to see the benefits of such participation, whether in the form of a fish farming training, a new literacy classroom, or a footbridge. The WDP process offers communities the opportunity to come together to identify, debate, and prioritise issues, and agree on courses of action to improve their lives and communities. This offers local leaders greater direction and it gives communities the power to drive their own development.
- **Ward plan-driven funding streams** – WDP is increasingly becoming an avenue for various government funding streams and donors to counterpart and match-fund District and LLG funds tied to activities in Ward plans.
- **Improved political will** – Since the 2012 elections, there has been a surge in political support for bottom-up planning. In all target districts of the ICDP, District Administrators and Open Members have now insisted on Ward plans to inform LLG and District plans. Moreover, sizable funding for Ward plan-driven development projects has since been committed.
- **Increased government ownership** – Increasingly, government partners are stepping up. From counter-funding WDP trainings to funding the provision of services in response to Ward plans, government at all levels is starting to provide crucial support and leadership.
- **Increasing awareness, dialogue and action to address gender issues** – While still at preliminary stages, Government and local partners are slowly coming to see the importance of women's more equitable participation in decision-making for more effective service delivery. In Obura Wonenara District in Eastern Highlands Province, where CARE PNG has spent the most time working on building an enabling environment for service delivery as per the Organic Law, women now make up 36% of the WDC members. Further, women's participation in WDCs and bottom-up planning is on the rise in all areas of ICDP focus.