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## Papua New Guinea

# Towards an Enabling Environment for Rural Service Delivery

This brief document outlines how CARE International in Papua New Guinea (CARE PNG) through its Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP) has been working to build an enabling environment for service delivery in support of improving remote, rural communities. This approach centres around the following strategies: building government capacity, raising community awareness, promoting women’s meaningful participation in development planning, brokering linkages and interactions, and model-making.

### 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 Ward Development Planning (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?

Effective provision of basic services is integral for poverty reduction, however service delivery is weak in the rural areas where the most marginalised communities live. Despite the emphasis on bottom-up planning and development, and considerable funding now flowing to the sub-national levels, challenges to effective, responsive rural service delivery remain. Challenges are particularly severe for women as the gender inequalities institutionalised in many of PNG’s households and communities mean many women are less able to access services. Mechanisms for accountability are largely absent or under-implemented, and transparency in budget allocation is lacking, as is wider participation in decision-making. This is especially true for women where the numerous barriers to women’s participation in decision-making means that decisions on rural service delivery are often made without consideration of their needs. Further, capacity of administrative arms of government is low, as is understanding of roles and responsibilities. The Organic Law decrees that the Districts and LLGs are the key focal points for most basic service provision, with a wide range of responsibilities, including provision of water supply, electricity, and social services, as well as maintaining peace, order and law. Though District and LLG officials are central to rural service delivery, very little has been done to support them. In particular, LLG councilors are still unaware or unsure of the powers they hold and how they may exercise them.

## What is the approach?

In late 2009, CARE PNG began to pilot the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP), which seeks to make lasting and measurable impacts on the lives of remote, rural communities, through working in partnership with government, communities, and local organisations. By facilitating WDP capacity building, raising community awareness, promoting women's meaningful participation in planning, brokering linkages and interactions between government, communities, and local organisations, and modelling ways to support and deliver a range of services and community development activities as identified in Ward plans, the ICDP is strengthening communities and building a more enabling environment for rural service delivery. These strategies are outlined below.

- **Building government capacity for Ward and LLG Development Planning** – CARE PNG has been building the capacity of WDCs, LLG and District Officers, and local NGO partners to be able to facilitate WDP processes. The training takes participants through the WDP cycle, as well as clarifies the roles and responsibilities of WDCs, LLGs and Districts as outlined within the Organic Law so that officers may be able to exercise their roles more effectively. Capacity of LLG and District staff is also built through study tours and participation in monitoring trips to communities. As well, one-on-one mentoring is provided for LLG managers as they draft their LLG plans and budgets.
- **Raising community awareness** – As it is crucial for people to know about their rights to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives, broad awareness is conducted on government policies and processes, including WDP and the Organic Law. This entails creating spaces for discussion around planning, participation, and the establishment or strengthening of local WDCs. Such opportunities also help kick-start civil engagement between communities and the government officers that participate in these awareness-raising visits.
- **Promoting women's meaningful participation** – As women are particularly affected by weak service delivery that often does not meet their needs, their participation in setting the development agenda is essential. CARE PNG has customised the national WDP training manual, with approval of the Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs, in order to make it more relevant for low-literacy audiences, as well as more inclusive of gender and diversity concerns. Also, community awareness reinforces the Organic Law stipulation that every WDC must have at least two female representatives for it to be constitutional.
- **Brokering and facilitating linkages and interactions** – Through the WDP work and other ICDP activities, CARE PNG connects communities and WDCs with LLG and District officers. As well, CARE PNG annually brings together multiple levels of government (LLG, District, and Provincial) to discuss target districts where ICDP is being undertaken and jointly plan the next year of work. Such linkages help to improve communication and coordination in support of better programming and implementation for rural communities.
- **Model-making** – In partnership with various provincial departments and local organisations, CARE PNG has been developing models that are driven by ward plan priorities and respond to rural service delivery challenges. These are intended to kick-start action for improved service delivery in remote areas. Pilot initiatives on education and literacy, maternal and infant health, food security and climate change, agriculture and income generation, law and order, and small-scale infrastructure are presently being assessed for impact and being replicated in other remote, rural areas.

## What is emerging?

- **Enhanced engagement at all levels** – Through the ICDP, interaction and dialogue between and among multiple levels of government have increased. The project has created opportunities for Members of Parliament and staff, as well as District Administrators and officers, to engage with Provincial technical departments to coordinate inputs and actions in their Districts. Further, through the WDP work, government and communities have been reconnected. WDP necessitates that District and LLG officers go 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 a space for communities to discuss and plan together, as well as talk with LLG and District staff about development needs and issues. This creates a more formal opportunity for dialogue, 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 through community-identified development** – Communities are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the WDP process and their rights to participate. 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, including what they can do for themselves. This offers local leaders greater direction and it gives communities the power to drive their own development.
- **Increasing awareness, dialogue and action to address gender issues** - 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, where CARE PNG has spent the most time working on building an enabling environment for service delivery, women now make up at least 36% of the WDC members. Women's participation in WDCs and in bottom-up planning is on the rise in all areas of ICDP focus.
- **Increased government ownership and accountability** – From LLGs and Districts counter-funding WDP trainings, to Provinces funding service provision as per ward plans, government at all level is starting to support, own, and lead efforts to become more responsive to local needs.
- **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. By pooling together resources, some barriers to rural service delivery can be overcome.