

Papua New Guinea

World Vision

Health and human wellbeing



Australian Government

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Papua New Guinea

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Video chapters online

1. Papua New Guinea: a country profile	(3' 20'')
2. HIV and AIDS in PNG	(3' 51'')
3. Nutrition: child and maternal health in PNG	(5' 02'')
4. Tuberculosis in PNG	(3' 47'')
5. Water-based diseases in PNG	(3' 03'')

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Papua New Guinea: human wellbeing

Unit scenario

“Geographies of human wellbeing focuses on investigating global, national and local differences in human wellbeing between places. This unit examines the different concepts and measures of human wellbeing, and the causes of global differences in these measures between countries ... They explore programs designed to reduce the gap between differences in wellbeing.”

This unit is a case study using an enquiry-based approach to explore human wellbeing, health and disease in Papua New Guinea. It invites students to work in small groups with the following scenario:

- “You are workers with an Australian aid and development non-government organisation (NGO) and have been invited to work with the PNG Government to help improve health outcomes for the people of PNG. Before starting your research, spend time brainstorming all you know about Papua New Guinea and make a list of questions to guide your research. Make sure these questions address social, economic and environmental issues.”

Skills: observing, questioning and planning

- “Watch the PNG country profile video without audio. What further questions does this raise about life in PNG and the health issues facing the people of PNG? Watch the PNG country profile with audio and read the PNG country profile. State your hypothesis regarding patterns, impacts and efforts to address health issues in PNG.”
- “Watch the other video chapters on **HIV and AIDS, Nutrition, Tuberculosis** and **Water-based diseases** – and read the documentation on these topics. Undertake further research and collect data. Watch the AusAID in PNG video below.”

https://www.youtube.com/v/p6JvlzTMK5E?version=3&f=videos&app=youtube_gdata&rel=0

Skills: collecting, recording, evaluating and representing

- “Analyse the data to make generalisations and propose explanations for patterns and predict outcomes. You may need to confirm, reject and/or modify your hypothesis. What is being done and what could be done by groups, NGOs and governments to limit the impact of these diseases on development?”

Skills: interpreting, analysing and concluding

- “Make a series of recommendations to improve the health and human wellbeing of people in PNG – and communicate your recommendations to the PNG and Australian governments. Propose individual and collective action in response to this challenge, taking account of environmental, economic and social considerations; and explain the predicted outcomes and consequences of your proposal.”

Skills: communicating, reflecting and responding

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HIV and AIDS in PNG

The history of HIV and AIDS, unlike many illnesses, is relatively short. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) were first recognised as a global epidemic in 1981. Throughout the 1980s spread of the disease exploded and it received increasing global attention. The global HIV and AIDS epidemic has become one of the greatest threats to human health and development.

How is it transmitted?

The most common ways the disease is spread are:

- unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected person;
- transfusions of contaminated blood;
- the sharing of contaminated needles or syringes; and
- mother to child transmission (during pregnancy and breastfeeding).

In PNG, unprotected sexual intercourse between men and women is the main mode of transmission.

What are the symptoms?

Once someone is infected with HIV, they have a high probability of contracting AIDS, unless they undergo full treatment with antiretroviral drugs (ART). AIDS causes death by weakening a person's immune system. As a result, a range of secondary infections set in and the person dies of one or more of these secondary diseases. A common example of a secondary infection is tuberculosis (TB). Poor people in PNG frequently have a weakened immune systems due to a combination of malnutrition, unsafe drinking water and inadequate sanitation. This makes them vulnerable to TB.

What is the prevalence?

In 2011, it was estimated that 34 million people were living with HIV and AIDS worldwide – including 3.34 million children. Each year around 2.7 million more people become infected with HIV and 1.8 million die of AIDS. Although HIV and AIDS are found in all parts of the world, some areas are more afflicted than others.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the most severely affected region. There, nearly one in every 20 adults is infected (UNAIDS, 2011), accounting for 69 percent of all people with HIV and AIDS worldwide. Although HIV prevalence rates are nearly 25 times higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in Asia, almost five million people are living with HIV and AIDS in south, south-eastern and eastern Asia combined.

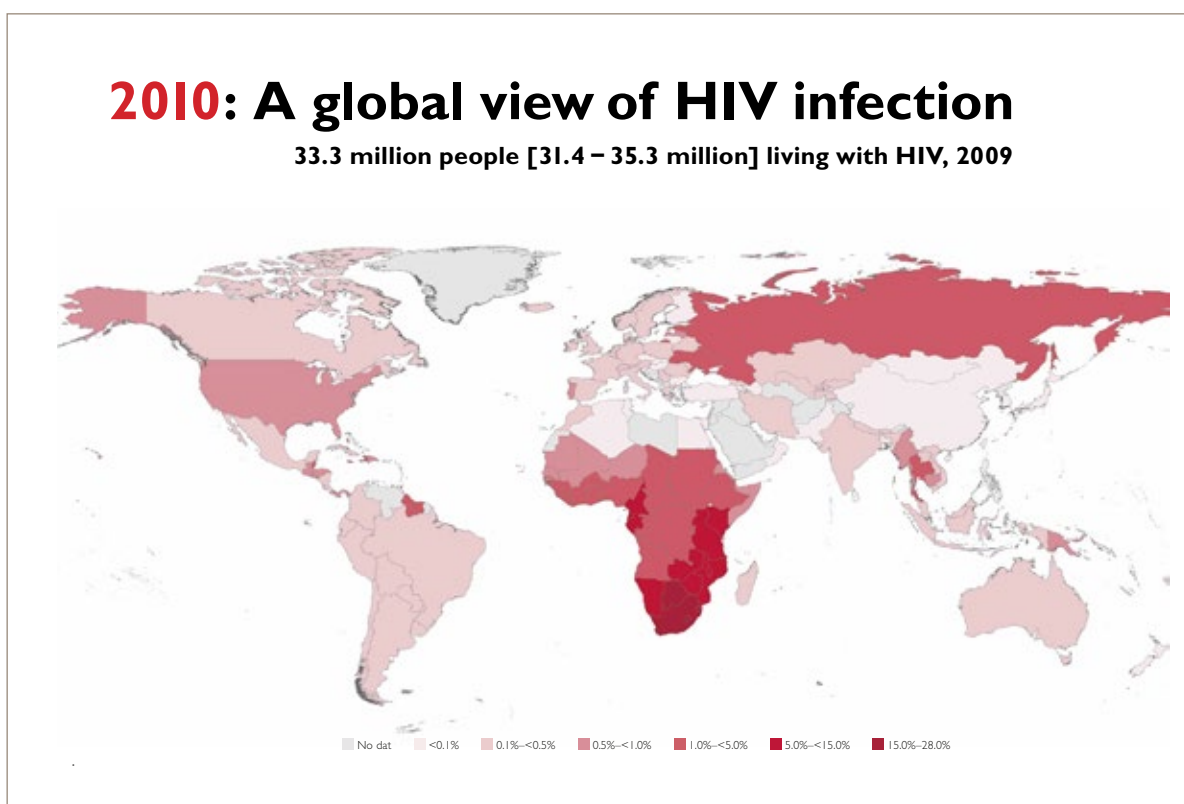
In 2004, PNG declared a HIV epidemic. It is estimated that by 2011, HIV and AIDS had spread throughout PNG, with 30,000-39,000 currently reported cases (UNAIDS 2011). One-third of reported cases are from rural areas and up to 18,000 women are infected. At the same time, between 2001 and 2011, the rate of new HIV infections in PNG fell by 53 percent¹. While HIV and AIDS remains a health problem in PNG, and the risk factors for contracting the virus still exist, the number of people affected has not reached the very high levels initially feared.

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HIV and AIDS in PNG

Since its detection, billions of dollars have been invested into researching methods of prevention and searching for a cure. HIV treatment has improved enormously since the mid-1990s. ART drugs have been developed which help those who are HIV positive to extend and improve their quality of life before developing AIDS. They also help prevent transmission of the disease from a HIV-positive mother to her child. Although we know how to prevent and treat HIV and AIDS, an ongoing challenge is ensuring access to the necessary services, especially for poor people in remote areas of PNG.



Source: UN AIDS - www.unaids.org/documents/20101123_2010_hiv_prevalence_map_em.pdf

Additional reading

- UNAID World AIDS Day Report 2012
unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/epidemiology/2012/gr2012/jc2434_worldaidsday_results_en.pdf
- * **WATCH** the HIV and AIDS in PNG video (3' 51") at
worldvision.com.au/schoolresources

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Responding to HIV and AIDS in PNG

Between 2001 and 2011, the rate of new HIV infections in PNG fell by 53 percent². While HIV and AIDS remains a health problem, and the risk factors for contracting the virus still exist, the number of people affected by HIV has not reached the very high levels initially feared. This is due, in part, to an increasingly coordinated and cooperative approach to responding to HIV in PNG.

Responses have included³:

- increased HIV testing at health centres and clinics;
- greatly increased availability of ART drugs provided by the PNG Government;
- condom distribution across the country by the private sector Business Coalition;
- commitment to addressing stigma and discrimination by the Christian Leaders Alliance; and
- project funding and/or technical support from international organisations like the World Health Organization.

Positive Living Project

Co-funded by AusAID, the Australian Government's overseas aid agency, World Vision runs a drop-in centre in Port Moresby that offers free testing, information and counselling for people wanting to check their HIV status. Additional counselling, support and training programs are available for people who are HIV positive.

The goals of the Positive Living Project are to:

- reduce the prevalence of HIV;
- improve care for people living with HIV and AIDS; and
- minimise the social and economic impact of the illness on individuals, families and communities.



Jacob, a participant and volunteer in World Vision's Positive Living Project.

Jacob's story

Jacob lost his wife and one of his children to illness in 2007. He became increasingly ill himself, and after being tested at a health clinic discovered he was HIV positive. While some of his family were supportive, others weren't at first. "My children were told to stay away from me."

Due to a lack of education, and access to health information, many people in PNG have only limited knowledge of how diseases like HIV are transmitted, safe sex practices and appropriate treatment methods. Jacob wanted to learn more about his illness, and how to avoid infecting anyone else.

Jacob received counselling and participated in the Introduction to HIV and AIDS course. Jacob was able to tell his children, "You won't be affected by sharing things like a plate and spoon. If I cook for you guys you can't be infected unless I have an open cut in my hand." His family learnt that HIV isn't transmitted by actions like hugging, "so my children know they don't need to be scared of me".

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Responding to HIV and AIDS in PNG

Jacob's story *continued from previous page ...*

Jacob has also participated in economic development courses that train people living with HIV in skills including book keeping and business planning so they can set up small home businesses. By sewing, screen-printing, or running small shops they can earn enough income to look after themselves.

Inspired by the changes in his life, Jacob became a project volunteer. "I have some basic ideas of how to help myself. I must pass it on to another person who needs help from me."

Project volunteers run sessions in local communities to educate people how to reduce their risk of becoming infected with HIV, and to reduce discrimination against people who are living with HIV and AIDS. They encourage people to get tested and know their HIV status. Volunteers like Jacob also visit people who are ill with the virus, and provide them with food and support when they are sick.

Additional reading

- The good news for HIV in Papua New Guinea
ausaid.govspace.gov.au/2012/11/30/the-good-news-for-hiv-in-papua-new-guinea/
- We will get on top of AIDS epidemic: PNG PM
sbs.com.au/news/article/1716489/We-will-get-on-top-of-AIDS-epidemic-PNG-PM
- AIDS epidemic in PNG contained
theage.com.au/national/aids-epidemic-in-png-contained-20130629-2p48a.html



World Vision staff and volunteers participated in a Walk Against HIV and AIDS event in Port Moresby.



World Vision staff and volunteers learn how to use blood tests to determine HIV status.