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BD ASSOCIATES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA



BD and Australian Doctors International (ADI) have collaborated in a new partnership in New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG) to help support and strengthen local healthcare services. This was BD's first regional volunteer service trip, and four volunteers from BD Greater Asia joined together with hospital staff in the provincial capital of Kavieng. Their task was to train healthcare providers from the four island laboratories in World Health Organization Laboratory Standards.

The BD team was welcomed to Kavieng Hospital by a harmonizing choir of nurses singing of the beauty of Kavieng, the people of New Ireland and a greeting to their guests.

Kimadan Health Center laboratory, located in the center of the island, was closed several years ago due to lack of funding, but with the support of BD and ADI, it has reopened.



Lemakot Catholic Health Clinic serves 16,813 people within a 4-hour walk, though Lemakot nurses take patrol clinics to the people. They deliver more than 400 babies a year and track childhood vaccinations. Lemakot treats TB and HIV patients and trauma, as well as general medicine. Nurses, midwives, community health workers and health officers serve the local population, and the six physicians caring for 196,000 patients are located in Kavieng.

Life expectancy is shorter and infant mortality is higher than most neighboring Pacific countries. Maternal mortality is a serious problem in PNG—only 40% of births are supervised by healthcare workers. The leading health problems are communicable diseases, with malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoeal diseases, and acute respiratory disease as major causes of morbidity and mortality.

PNG has experienced strong growth in mining and the resource sector, but the majority of the population still lives in traditional societies and practice subsistence-based agriculture. Financial gain from the resource boom has not been fully utilized to improve national health standards. The condition of many health center buildings is poor, and in some cases, derelict.



BD service trip volunteers (l to r): Christine Clair Cruz, David Carr, Estee Madaschi and Lewis Cox.

Trainee Vana Tom stood up, looked at the class and offered this challenge, “It all comes down to whether we do it or not. We cannot do everything, but we must do what we can.”

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS STORY?