



By Andrew, The Millennial on the ground in Port Moresby

This Millennial lives in Taurama Nambis, a mostly residential area in Moresby South. At this time of year, it is dry, dusty, and full of people with a cough. This is not to confused with the other time of the year when it is wet and muddy and fully of people with a cough. Seriously! Everyone is coughing year 'round.

Being young, and living in the time of COVID is doing my head in. When I started working for B4H I was surprising by the lack of awareness of Tuberculosis and cough covering. But WHAM! COVID-19 strikes at the lungs of people in countries across the globe. Then, KAPOW! We have a massive truly international response on Coughing? And, finally people covered their coughs! People are so weird! Thousands of dead Papua New Guineans from TB and we were all coughing happily along.

That noted, my task this month is to report on how 'niupela pasin' aka COVID-19 control measures have been adopted by small businesses. Even, at my local shop, you can't enter without a mask, you have to sanitize your hands at the door and you have to 'social distance' in lines. It's great to see.

Now I am perplexed, why is it that Tuberculosis, which has been killing people in PNG since like... FOREVER, hadn't been treated as seriously as COVID-19? So I arranged a chat with the owner the small shop called "Tycoon" where we buy most of our goods. I will call the boss Mr M, because he'd like to remain anonymous.

Mr M kindly gave me a tour of his 'COVID-safe' protocols. Then I asked him about Tuberculosis infection control.

Nice Mr M paused... TB? He hummed. Yes, he had thought of it, but no, he hadn't thought of it as a threat to his livelihood. In my role as TB advocate I filled him in PNG's shocking TB stats. Mr. M at first looked at me like I was joking and then shook his head. He confessed to having no idea about PNG's TB crisis.

So I asked him, now you know a cough can be a sign of killer TB or COVID-19, what could you do differently?

Mr. M thought deeply, his eyes narrowed, and you could see the gears in his head turning. He looked at me and smiled and said. "if wearing masks is the 'new normal', I guess that helps against both TB and COVID, yes?" I nodded, satisfied I had done my job.

My friend in the fashion industry tried to see the opportunity of COVID-time and thought great! Thinking, "designer face masks for everyone!"

But revenue loss with lockdowns remain a challenge, even though her landlord, VC has helped with rent. She explained, "Bigger shows equal more sales. But we have created little shows rather than big 'cahoona' shows with big sponsors and created a little income with more casual engagements. It's not what I planned, but we have thought differently about growing business".

Sadly, my fashion friend never even mentioned TB or other health challenges to the growth of PNG's economy. In thinking about the impact of COVID-19 on big and small businesses, my thinking returns to the people down at the nambis... Masks are not being worn much, social distancing is only happening in nice Mr M's shop and the people are all still coughing.

Yours in frustration for September 2020 #coveryourcough...

Andrew

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