



## Media Release

### 5 May 2021 Health Awareness and Covid-19 Vaccination Roll Out in Central Province

#### **Vaccines are Everybody's Business**

In Papua New Guinea, businesses are joining forces with communities to celebrate vaccines and their role in protecting health and preventing death.

EDAI Town, Businesses for Health PNG (B4H), neighbourhood communities of Boera, Papa, LeaLea & Porebada together with the Central Provincial Health Authority (CPHA) have come together to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.

“Every year, immunisation saves the lives of millions of people around the world” says Sir Moi Avei, Boera community leader and Advisor of EDAI Town. “We want our local communities, EDAI Town residents and workforce to be a showcase of excellence. Social responsibility means enabling health promotion and showing respect for the best that medical science can offer to our communities during a global pandemic. Our Prime Minister has just launched the national Covid-19 vaccination rollout and we are here to support our Central Provincial Health Authority in the Covid-19 vaccination roll-out in our province”.

Chief Executive Officer of Central Provincial Health Authority (CPHA) Dr James Amini explained “People are more familiar with childhood vaccinations. We decided to show case the *“niupela pasin”* of adult vaccination and this health awareness program provides a perfect backdrop to officially launch our Central Province Covid-19 vaccination rollout today. We are honoured that the EDAI Town community has welcomed us here to host a demonstration of the adult COVID-19 vaccination within a community setting.

COVID-19 vaccines will help to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. We have already lost too many good citizens to this new disease. We know that more than one hundred people have died of COVID-19 in PNG, and thousands more people with serious COVID-19 disease are placing huge demands on our

already stretched health resources. The Astra Zeneca COVID-19 Vaccination prevents serious disease and death.

Our event at EDAI Town is to promote vaccine program as part of healthy communities. We see the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out as a good health promotion opportunity at a very difficult time for PNG.

‘Vaccines bring us closer’, is the World Health Organisation theme for vaccination campaigns in 2021. This is a great theme for the COVID-19 immunisation program, because the global pandemic has separated so many people from families or their workplaces.

Dr James further added that CPHA is committed to play our part in executing a successful Covid-19 vaccination program for the Central Province. Today marks the first step in our implementation plan. We will work closely with each community to ensure that factual information is shared for members of our communities to make an informed decision on the importance of collective vaccination so that education of our young can continue and economic activities can be restored to bring our country to a new normal and overcome the uncertainties caused by this new disease.

Many leaders of our communities are here today and this provides us a good opportunity to work with them to establish the best way to carry out our COVID-19 vaccination program to effectively reach our widespread communities in the Central Province. A combination of fixed location vaccination and mobile pop up vaccination centres may be the way to extend our vaccination network. We are hopeful that we can set an example by continuing to vaccinate the neighbouring communities at this pilot centre to increase the confidence of other communities”.

Chairlady of Central Provincial Health Authority Sisa Kini expressed her appreciation of the private sector rallying to the cause in helping CPHA promote Covid-19 vaccination within the framework of importance of good health. Time is of the essence in overcoming this pandemic and the pop up demonstration vaccination centre at EDAI Town operated by CPHA with the assistance of the efficiency of the private sector will provide us a good assessment of the numbers that we can vaccinate each day for us to confidently deliver our commitment on timely execution of the vaccination program envisaged by our national government”. The Chairlady also expressed her appreciation of the collaboration with NCD PHA and hoped that the team would also be able to work with Gulf PHA to jointly meet the objective of successful vaccination rollout by the PHAs in their local communities.

In response to widespread concerns about vaccine hesitancy Dr Ann Clarke from Businesses for Health PNG (B4H) had proposed that EDAI Town host a COVID-Safe Vaccination Fair, inviting nearby communities to participate to jointly promote the COVID-19 vaccination program. The B4H Team has designed informative and fun activities that serve to promote health awareness in a fun cheerful way that can be replicated in any community setting.

Dr Clarke explains, “vaccines are one of the world’s most successful health interventions. In my lifetime I have seen the end of smallpox. When I was born, smallpox killed 3 out of every 10 people with the disease and survivors were left with horrible scars, some were left blind. I am so old; I have a circular smallpox vaccination scar on my arm!

The children of PNG are lucky. Thanks to the success of the smallpox vaccination, smallpox was eradicated from the planet, and no cases of naturally occurring smallpox have happened since 1977!

There are still millions of children in PNG today who are not getting the vaccines they need. Many are also missing out on vital vaccines during adolescence, adulthood and into old age. Vaccines serve to protect children against diseases like measles, polio, typhoid, tetanus, rubella and whooping cough. These diseases still threaten our lives in PNG and limit our development.

The polio outbreak in PNG in 2018 caused serious illness for children and cost hundreds of millions of kina to overcome with an emergency response. Money used to fight polio because people did not get vaccinated is money diverted from budgets crucial for schools or libraries. With the help of businesses and community participation, PNG can progress without the burden of diseases like polio.

This health awareness event has been organised by people working together from different countries. Vaccinations will allow people back to work and increase economic performance for PNG. The AstraZeneca vaccine rollout by PNG will bring people back together, and improve the health and wellbeing of everyone, everywhere.

The EDAI Town community, Businesses for Health (B4H), Central and NCD PHAs and a range of partners and volunteers from Port Moresby are united in this health awareness program to:

- Increase trust and confidence in vaccines
- Increase trust and confidence in the COVAX facility Astra Zeneca Vaccine roll-out to front line workers and people most vulnerable to serious disease or death from COVID-19

- increase vaccine acceptance of all kinds
- remove barriers to vaccination programs at PHA level.

EDAI Town is working on increasing awareness for the community to learn about new vaccines to protect against COVID-19 and the role of vaccines to release much needed hospital beds for people suffering from other diseases like TB or other medical emergencies.

The event is also an opportunity to remind parents to ensure routine vaccinations are not missed because of fear or ignorance of the health services. Vaccination programs and well-baby clinics are still operating in the time of COVID-19. Dr James explains “many children have not been vaccinated during the global pandemic, leaving them at risk of serious diseases like measles and polio. Misinformation spread on social media is circulating falsehood on vaccination. Reducing access to childhood vaccination is threatening the health of many babies and young people.”

EDAI Town management has worked with many willing partners to mobilise collaboration for businesses in the private sector to support PHAs to speed up the government’s vaccination rollout. It is hoped the factual information dissemination by medical experts at this health awareness event at EDAI Town will build solidarity and trust in vaccination. Vaccination is a public good. It saves lives and protects our health. We are confident this showcase event in Central Province will encourage every province to create activities that celebrate the opportunities vaccine bring to PNG.

The EDAI Town Health Awareness Day conducted in a COVID-safe environment in compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of handwashing and sanitising, face mask wearing and safe physical distancing in accordance with our country’s Niupelas Pasin is an investment with our communities to explore ways to promote vaccine uptake. We engage our communities in activities to promote science, medicine and health services including awareness on the importance of vaccination programs.

Confidence and participation in vaccination programs grows with supporting partnerships, good service access, excellent staff and accurate information. Of course, this has to be delivered with the sort of good cheer and kindness we see every day at the well-baby clinics. The Vaccination Day at Edai Town offers all of this and more. Successful vaccination programs ensure a healthier future for everyone.

This EDAI Town health awareness event on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May opens the opportunity for community inclusiveness to tackle the unprecedented health

challenges faced by us. Together we will overcome this pandemic as no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Ends

Dr Ann M Clarke  
#coveryourcough

World TB Day March 24<sup>th</sup> 2021

Businesses for Health: Prevent Tuberculosis, COVID-19 & HIV

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