

The Price of Wok Sol

A Review of Tingim Laip Volunteer Activity



Tingim Laip's Response

November, 2011

This document presents Tingim Laip's responses to the recommendations presented in the review of Tingim Laip Volunteer Activity report, 'The Price of Wok Sol' prepared by Paul van Reyk. Feedback was obtained from in-country Tingim Laip staff as well as APMG technical support team.

The volunteer report provides a good summary of many of the issues facing Tingim Laip's primary workforce – its volunteers at site level. Tingim Laip acknowledges the essential role that its volunteers play in bringing about the HIV prevention and care outcomes that the project tries to bring about. Each of the report's recommendations are considered in turn below.

Recommendation 1

Site Committees in Tingim Laip be reformed as Community HIV Action Teams (CHATs). This change in name is intended to acknowledge and emphasise key strengths of the field work of Tingim Laip currently and to give clarity to the mode of operation for the future:

- **Community – to emphasise both the location of field work within defined communities (geographical, most at-risk population, industry etc.) and the future direction of Tingim Laip work toward higher level community-wide behavioural change.**
- **HIV – to maintain HIV prevention and care as the health context through which to address both issues directly arising out of HIV and also on social, cultural and behavioural co-factors.**
- **Action – to continue the focus on activity informed by site assessment and strategically planned interventions.**
- **Team – to emphasise the uniqueness of the structure through which Tingim Laip engages in its range of interventions.**

The size of a particular CHAT will depend on the levels of intervention it is to engage and the volunteer pool available in but should be a minimum of 8 members and no larger than 12 members, this range being generally found to be necessary for effective team work.

CHATs should have governance positions to manage their work and relationships with Tingim Laip head office and field staff. The three governance positions recommended are:

- **Coordinator.**
- **Secretary.**
- **Treasurer.**

Tingim Laip response:

Not supported at this time.

The report presents a rationale for rebranding the Site Committees as CHATs, but Tingim Laip believes that this may not be the right time for such a change. One of Tingim Laip's core values is that it is a 'bottom up' community-driven project. It is not clear that this proposed change is in response to a stated need for change from the site level. Given the project is already working through some significant changes at the moment - new management under Cardno/AMPG and the introduction of the STEPs structure to assist sites work on each of Tingim Laip's core pillars. Perhaps after these changes are firmly embedded we can return to the naming of the site committees, in consultation with sites. The recommendations that Site Committees should generally have a membership of

between 8 and 12, and that there be three governance positions identified in each committee are supported and Site Committees will be asked for their views on these proposals.

Recommendation 2

Tingim Laip should develop its volunteer policies and procedures within the framework of supporting them as the in-field work force of Tingim Laip.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip will implement this recommendation immediately (Quarter 4, 2011).

Recommendation 3

The STEPs Model for HIV Prevention and Care, when expanded to include the range of interventions that will be effective at each level to achieve Tingim Laip's five pillars should be linked to:

- **An annual Site Assessment to establish any changes that need to be made to target groups and levels of intervention for these.**
- **An annual Capacity Needs Assessment of each CHAT to assess:**
 - **The effectiveness of the activities of the CHAT at the levels at which it is functioning.**
 - **The learning and development and resource needs required of the CHAT to continue to effectively engage in activities at this level.**
 - **The opportunity for a CHAT to scale up to the next level and the learning and development and resource needs to support this move.**

This assessment process should be the first step in moving the present Site Committees to the CHAT structure. Decisions can then be made about how to resource their current work to effectively utilise their current skills, knowledge, responsibility and accountability capacities.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Short-term Adviser Rebecca Robinson is currently performing tasks consistent with this recommendation. She is developing a tool to assist sites and the regional team to assess their activity at each STEP of the model. This will be piloted in Quarter 1, 2012. An annual Capacity Needs Assessment of each Site Committee will be developed based on site and regional assessments.

Recommendation 4

As Tingim Laip moves to implementing the Step Model it should move to a system of annual planning and budgeting for CHATs in recognition of the need for continuity of activity and planning of longer term interventions. This will also bring CHAT planning and budgeting in line with the organisational planning cycle which at present is annual. Funding payments to CHATS can still occur quarterly based on achieving the Supported quarterly targets within an annual plan.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip agrees that Site Committee planning should move to a system of annual planning with funding provided and accounted for quarterly. Taking into consideration financial management and security issues, Site Committees will be supported to move to this system based on their demonstrated capacity, performance and self governing systems. Tingim Laip will also develop stronger planning and budgeting guidelines for Site Committees that require more detailed

breakdown of activities and costs, making it easier to assess budgets and expenditure. This change will be piloted in a number of sites in early 2012 and then rolled out more widely.

Recommendation 5

Future recruitment to CHATs should be based on:

- **The best composition of a CHAT team for a particular site based on the outcomes of the Social Mapping exercise proposed in the 2011 Annual Plan and subsequent site assessments.**
- **Clear criteria for individual antecedents that will ensure a match between the individuals desire to volunteer and the needs of Tingim Laip for effective functioning of the CHATs.**

Individual background and motivational criteria that Tingim Laip could use include:

- **Having a motivation to volunteer, that is, wanting to help others in their community for no pay.**
- **Being a member of an key affected population.**
- **Previous involvement in volunteer activity in the community or having initiated some community activity previously.**
- **Being a community gatekeeper.**
- **Having the support of/being nominated by community gatekeepers.**
- **Having the support of/being nominated by reputable community agencies.**
- **Long term commitment to their community.**
- **Positive attitudes to working with HIV most at-risk populations.**
- **Preferable completion of schooling to Grade 8, though this should be flexible where other antecedent criteria favour the selection of an individual.**
- **Possessing skills and knowledge appropriate to the work of the CHAT.**

Recommendation 6

Recruitment for new CHAT members should be publicly advertised through gatekeepers, community agencies and community media.

Applicants should be formally interviewed by:

- **Current members of the CHAT where there is one or long-serving members of another CHAT.**
- **The relevant Project Officer.**
- **An independent person selected from another NGO in the community.**

Tingim Laip response

Supported in part

Tingim Laip agrees that volunteer recruitment should be more formalised and that attention should be paid to the range of people and skills on the Site Committee during the recruitment process. Tingim Laip will address these recommendations in Quarter 1, 2012. This needs to be a site-driven process of reflection and recruitment and should be assisted, but not directed, by the Project Officers (POs). Tingim Laip believes in the principle of equal opportunity and does not want committees to be closed groups. Given Tingim Laip's focus on key affected populations, it is important committee membership should be representative of communities and should include people from key HIV-affected populations. It will be the responsibility of the POs to assist the Site Committees in the utilisation of Tingim Laip guidance documents, such as the Gender Strategy and the STEPs Model, to assess and analyse committee needs.

Recommendation 7

Tingim Laip should implement the findings of the 2011 Capacity Needs Assessment with respect to training of Site Committees.

In addition to the needs identified in that Assessment, if Tingim Laip moves to the proposed CHAT structure, training should be provided in Team Building and Maintenance.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Site Committees have been provided with access to training and to Cluster Meetings (meetings of people from a range of nearby sites) in the latter half of 2011. Training curricula in basic HIV information, STI interventions at community level, supporting VCT are also in preparation and will be rolled out by the Training Coordinator and team in 2012. As part of progression through STEPs model, each STEP will have a set of competencies and performance standards across a range of dimensions that include: Knowledge (HIV, STIs, alcohol, gender, etc.); Facilitation Skills (large group, peer education, small group discussions, peer-to-peer counselling, etc); Interventions (a range of different activities); Community Relationships (with service providers, key affected populations, community leaders); Monitoring & Evaluation and Communications (quantitative and qualitative reporting); and, Organizational Development (Committee structure and governance systems; financial accountability; planning and proposal writing). A Site Committee's position in the STEPs will then guide their learning and development plan across each of the dimensions. The Tingim Laip Training Coordinator will work with staff and other service providers to deliver appropriate training and skills building opportunities to sites.

Recommendation 8

CHAT members should be given the opportunity for input into the development of organisational structures, policies and procedures particularly, but not only, on those that have a direct impact on the functions, management and administration of CHATs.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

To address this concern Tingim Laip has established regional volunteer meetings that provide an opportunity for volunteers from nearby Site Committees to participate in organisational and development discussions. In addition, in Quarter 1, 2012, Tingim Laip will establish a Field Worker Advisory Committee to further address the needs of Tingim Laip volunteers.

Recommendation 9

Tingim Laip should develop a range of organisational branding items the will assist CHATs to be identified in their communities and give a high profile to Tingim Laip. Items could include:

- ID cards.
- T-shirts.
- Caps.
- Backpacks.
- Banners and other signage.
- Umbrellas.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

A range of branded items have been produced and distributed in time for World AIDS Day 2011. Identity cards will be made available in early 2012.

Recommendation 10

Tingim Laip should ensure that CHATs have the necessary materials and equipment to conduct their administrative responsibilities and activities effectively. Options here include:

- **Regionally centralised purchase of stationary with quarterly distribution to CHATs based on an inventory of their supply needs for the coming quarter.**
- **Providing dedicated space and storage for CHATs in Regional of Project offices and procedures for appropriate access to these by approved CHAT members. Where CHATs have established resource centres, or establish them in future, these should be equipped with secure storage for CHAT administrative and project material and equipment.**
- **Purchasing activity relevant equipment (such as video screens and players, PA, sports equipment) and either storing it in Regional and Project offices for time limited use by CHATs when conducting specific activities or providing secure storage in resource centres or homes of approved CHAT members.**
- **Issuing CHAT members with mobile phones with caller restrictions to enable members to keep in regular communication.**
- **Making computer and internet access available to CHAT members at PO offices.**

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip agrees that it is essential that Site Committees receive the necessary materials and equipment to conduct their activities and is committed to determining a method for the most effective means of distribution. Tingim Laip agrees that all of the options provided above should be implemented and will begin this process immediately with planning continued in Quarter 1, 2012. Tingim Laip is currently investigating the feasibility of providing Site Committees with mobile phones that would be linked to a closed user group.

Recommendation 11

CHATs should be assessed for their capacity to develop small enterprises that can both achieve the five pillars and give CHATs a source of independent funds to be directed to compensating members for out of pocket expenses or for conducting CHAT activities not funded under their annual plans.

Tingim Laip Response:

Not supported at this time.

Tingim Laip does not think Site Committees should be proactively assessed for their capacity to develop small enterprises, as this might create an expectation among Site Committees that they should be involved in small enterprises. Tingim Laip would, however, be receptive to entrepreneurial proposals from Site Committees where these ventures contain an HIV component or will provide outcomes that are aligned with Tingim Laip's goals. In these instances, Tingim Laip would work with Site Committees to establish mechanisms to govern financial control; use of Tingim Laip assets and resources for income generation; use and distribution of profits and other financial management issues.

Tingim Laip is of the view that Site Committees should not have to conduct small enterprises in order to compensate volunteers for out of pocket expenses or for unplanned activities conducted by volunteers – these should all be included in quarterly plans and budgets. POs already have sufficient flexibility within the site budgets to support justifiable unplanned activities. Tingim Laip is currently investigating the organisational difficulties that have hindered the appropriate refund of out of pocket expenses for Site Committee members in the past and is determined to resolve these issues immediately.

Recommendation 12

Tingim Laip should develop a program for cross-site integration with strategies including:

- **Combined training.**
- **Combined interventions.**
- **Exchange visits between CHATs.**
- **Regular regional CHAT meetings.**
- **A regular newsletter reporting on the activities of CHATs with a focus on identifying good practice and strategies for overcoming barriers to good practice.**
- **An annual conference for representatives from CHATs to exchange information, develop good practice and input into organisation policies and procedures relating to CHATs and the achievement of the five pillars.**

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip agrees that cross-site integration is important and has responded with the organisation of regional volunteer meetings. Tingim Laip will place a greater emphasis on ensuring effective regional meetings and less on national meetings over the next year, although planning is already underway for a national symposium to be held late 2012.

Recommendation 13

Tingim Laip should train CHAT members in written and oral presentation skills and encourage and support them in presenting at workshops, conferences and in the media on their work with their communities.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip will facilitate skills training of volunteers as per STEPS requirements in Quarters 1 & 2, 2012.

Recommendation 14

Tingim Laip should investigate options for taking out accident and injury cover for volunteers when they are carrying out approved CHAT activity either intervention or administrative.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip's Development Practitioner, Finance and Administration is currently exploring worker's compensation or other suitable coverage for Tingim Laip volunteers. In addition, Tingim Laip is investigating the feasibility of a staff position to coordinate volunteer support; this investigation will be conducted in Quarter 1, 2012.

Recommendation 15

Tingim Laip should investigate the feasibility of contracting a security firm to provide on-call response for CHAT members when their safety and security are threatened. Mobile phones issued to CHAT members can have emergency dialling permissions to a contracted firm.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported in part

Tingim Laip is committed to the safety and security of its entire workforce, including volunteers. Given the wide geographical spread of its sites across PNG it will not always be possible to have in place an on-call security service that can respond in a reasonable time to people in need of

assistance. Tingim Laip will ensure that all Site Committees are assisted to consider the safety and security of volunteers when planning and implementing their interventions and that all volunteers are briefed on how to minimise the risk of harm to themselves and others. Where security services exist, Tingim Laip RC's and PO's will make arrangements for volunteers to have emergency access to these.

Recommendation 16

Members of CHATs and Tingim Laip should jointly sign a Volunteer Agreement clearly outlining the commitments each party makes in the working relationship. A Code of Good Practice should be part of this Agreement.

Tingim Laip Response:

Supported

Tingim Laip will institute a Volunteer Agreement in Quarter 1, 2012.

Recommendation 17

Tingim Laip should reduce the negative financial consequences for CHAT members.

Two options are:

- **Extending the out of pocket expenses reimbursement to include other areas identified in this review where volunteers pay for goods or services that arguably enable them to achieve the five pillars but for which they receive no recompense. This will mean ensuring that CHATs and Pos build sufficient allowances into the quarterly plans to reimburse members in a timely way.**
- **Setting a monthly allowance for its Site Committee members. This ought to be set at a level that:**
 - **Eases some of the financial pressures on volunteers.**
 - **Does not disadvantage volunteers by giving them an income that raises them above the minimum taxable earnings threshold.**
 - **Takes account of parity issues with full time paid staff in terms of hours worked and skills and knowledge.**
 - **Does not become a disincentive to volunteers resigning to allow turnover of membership on CHATS.**
 - **Does not become an opportunity for demand sharing pressure from the volunteer's wantoks; and does not put Tingim Laip into the position of becoming a negotiating chip for volunteers shopping around for the best financial gain from their volunteering.**
 - **Does not impact negatively on encouraging volunteers to engage with the proposed Performance Based Incentives Program.**

Tingim Laip response:

Not supported at this time

Tingim Laip acknowledges that the volunteers are our primary workforce for bringing about HIV prevention and care outcomes at community level. However, it is not clear that a fixed small honorarium paid to all volunteers is the most appropriate way to ensure that this workforce can carry out its volunteer work effectively, or feel recognised and rewarded by being involved in Tingim Laip.

We feel that it is important to separate the proposal to provide financial support to volunteers from our obligations to meet volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses and to ensure that they have the skills and tools to carry out their work effectively. Some of the frustration expressed by volunteers during this consultation has been as a result of delays in repaying out-of-pocket expenses like travel and communication costs. This needs to be resolved immediately and separated from the consideration of further incentives. We would also like to more fully explore the provision of a range of non-cash incentives (practical vocational training, attendance at provincial and national workshops and meetings, clear career pathways within the program).

There are several reasons that prevent us from supporting this recommendation in its current form:

- In order to make a significant impact on HIV risk and impact, Tingim Laip needs to significantly expand its geographical reach and its reach into key populations. This will require a significant increase in the number of volunteers mobilised and supported across PNG. We are also charged with the task of presenting to the PNG Government and community a sustainable model for the community response to HIV, and committing to a set honorarium for each volunteer at this may not lead to the development of a model that is sustainable.
- The Social Mapping exercise (nearing completion) will provide essential guidance on how and where to expand.
- Whilst we are in the process of working with Site Committees on their size, make-up and governance, this work is not complete and we do not have a set of Supported guidelines in place. This means that there is considerable variation in the characteristics of site committees across the project. This might present a problem in allocating an honorarium to each Site Committee members as the size of committees is not capped at present and membership is not formalised in every site.
- Getting relatively small amounts of cash regularly to each site committee and accounting for honorariums presents significant risks in terms of fraud and would be administratively very cumbersome.
- Not all Site Committee members put in the same amount of effort each week – some are involved daily in outreach to key populations, some only serve in an advisory capacity. It may be more feasible, fair and practical to provide financial support to a smaller number of people who carry out daily work for the Site Committee rather than a small honorarium spread evenly across the Site Committee.
- The STEPs model challenges Site Committees to work in a slightly different way – moving from general awareness-raising to targeted interventions among key populations. In the short-term, some Site Committees will require considerable assistance on a weekly basis to make this move. It may be that providing these sites with a paid site committee facilitator who is closer and more available than the Project officer, might be the best approach to raising activity levels and changing the nature of the work being done. We do not want to shift the focus away from volunteer effort, but it may be advantageous to have more regular paid support at site level facilitating and supporting the work of the volunteers.

Tingim Laip is not closed to the notion of an honorarium paid to volunteers and will facilitate further discussion amongst volunteers and stakeholders on this issue in 2012. In the meantime we will:

- Immediately address issues of reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses by developing, implementing and monitoring our performance against a set of Quality Standards for service provided to sites by the project.
- Set up a Working Group, chaired by the DP – Capacity Development, that will propose a set of non-cash incentives for volunteers including vocational training

Recommendation 18

Tingim Laip should develop and promote a Performance Based Incentive Program for CHAT members. The incentive program should consider the opportunities in Tingim Laip for offering incentives in four areas:

- **Status**
- **Learning and development**
- **Organisational opportunities and resources**
- **Financial and in kind**

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

As set out above, Tingim Laip will develop a Performance Based Incentive Program in Quarter 1, 2012. This will address the full range of ways in which Tingim Laip can support volunteers. Workforce training and learning and development incentives will be considered as part of the organisation's general approach to these issues. Workforce training is a human resources and quality issue and will be provided (refer to response 13). Learning and development incentives will be provided in the form of vocational training in areas such as financial management, computer skills, and IT.

Recommendation 19

The Volunteer Agreement and Code of Good Practice should be used as the basis for identifying behaviour by volunteers that could be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal. The procedure outlined in the Tingim Laip Operational Manual (whatever the final version) should be used to take any necessary action.

Tingim Laip response:

Supported

Tingim Laip's Human Resources Manual, developed by the Finance and Administration Manager, will be used to guide the formation of this agreement.

Recommendation 20

At this time there is no compelling reason for Tingim Laip to consider putting CHAT members on time-limited contracts.

Tingim Laip response:

Not supported at this time.

Tingim Laip sees some value in asking volunteers to actively commit for a set period of twelve months and renew that commitment annually.