

# Cervical Cancer Screening in the Solomon Islands

## Summary of Evaluation

May 2021



### Increasing Access to Cervical Cancer Screening in the Solomon Islands - Evaluation published January 2018

#### Introduction:

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer

If it is detected early and managed effectively. Despite this, cervical cancer is the fourth most frequently diagnosed cancer and the fourth leading cause of cancer death among women, with an estimated 570,000 cases and 311,000 deaths in 2018, worldwide.

Cervical cancer screening saves women's lives; however screening is not routinely available in Pacific nations, including the Solomon Islands. In March 2015, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) invited Family Planning NSW to plan and implement a cervical screening pilot project using visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) and same-day treatment with cryotherapy.

#### Our response:

Between 2015-18, Family Planning NSW worked with the Solomon Islands MHMS to develop and implement a five year cervical cancer screening and treatment pilot program. This program was centred on two functions; increasing access to cervical screening in the Solomon Islands, and developing the capacity of clinicians to ensure effectiveness and sustainability.

*"I have lots of friends in the village who need to know about this check"*

*- Screening client (age 28)*

#### Our approach:

The cervical cancer pilot program used Family Planning NSW's unified approach for evidence based capacity development to provide clinician training courses and formal assessments, to implement a clinical database, and perform client, clinician and stakeholder interviews. Family Planning NSW also provided nurses with material to deliver local community awareness raising sessions with women and couples to communicate key messages about cervical cancer and increase screening engagement.

#### Our/The results:

Throughout this program screening was made available at



## SITES ACROSS TWO PROVINCES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Initial clinician training was provided by Family Planning NSW in April 2016, and screening commenced at four clinic sites in Honiara. Due to the high demand for screening, in 2017 the project expanded to an additional four sites in Honiara, an additional two sites in a second province, Isabel Province, with added clinician training.

By 2018, screening services were being conducted in Guadalcanal Plains, seven Honiara City Council clinic sites, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA) and two sites on Isabel. Treatment with cryotherapy was available at 4 of the 11 sites.

**IN TOTAL**  
**28**   
**CLINICIANS**  
**WERE TRAINED**  
**AND OVER 4,000**   
**WOMEN WERE SCREENED**

Results found that 40% of women who attended the clinics heard about these services through community awareness raising sessions, and due to client satisfaction 50% heard about the opportunity through word of mouth.

*"I am glad I came for the check up and to know that I am [cancer] free"*  
- Screening client (age 48)

#### Effectiveness and impact of project:

Most interviewees felt that the project had been successful in reaching women, and that it had increased community awareness about cervical cancer and screening. Several mentioned the importance of the Project Nurse in raising awareness, as well as the critical role of word of mouth.

Many clinicians noted that VIA screening addressed lack of human resource and timely waits associated with pap-smears. VIA also allowed the review of immediate results, and increased follow up and treatment rates among clients.

Many participants acknowledged the important role men played in ensuring effectiveness of the program, including husbands and village chiefs, in raising awareness and supporting women to attend for screening.

*"Women are dying of cervical cancer"*

- (P01 stakeholder)

*"...there is not enough doctors, not enough nurses trained to do Pap smears in the country and getting results from the provinces is almost always impossible"*

- P02; stakeholder



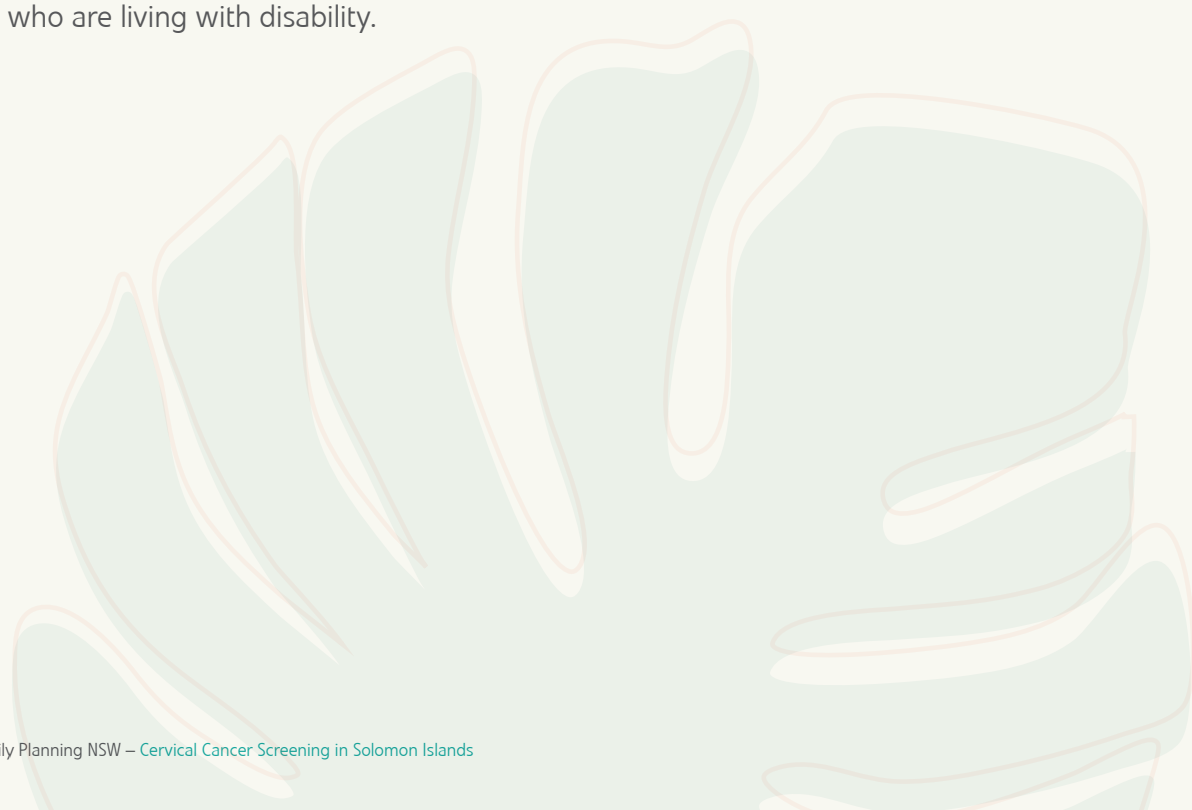
### Challenges to project implementation:

Participants identified several key challenges to project implementation and ongoing management of the screening program, including limited human resources, access issues including transport and costs for women, cultural barriers, insufficient equipment and resources, issues relating to treatment and follow up, and challenges of data collection and monitoring.

### Conclusion:

The Solomon Islands cervical cancer pilot program was successful in developing the capacity of clinicians, increasing community awareness about cervical cancer and improving access to screening through creating multiple screening and treatment sites. VIA and cryotherapy were deemed appropriate methods of screening and treatment for a low-resource country such as the Solomon Islands, and even strengthened treatment and follow-up pathways. Despite its success there is a need for strengthened leadership, and increased funding and resources to enable the program to expand to other provinces and treat more marginalised women who live in rural areas or who are living with disability.

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*"I was so happy with my visit because although I still look healthy, I doesn't (sic) know what's happening in my body. The nurse from the cancer clinic is so helpful"*

*- Screening client (age 43).*

*"Reducing the deaths (from cervical cancer), is one of our country's priority"*

*- P017; nurse/midwife*