

## **SI Adelaide in August.**

Our speakers were midwives from PNG currently studying at Flinders University. Pat Ellis one of our members, makes contact with Flinders Uni on an annual basis and has brought dedicated midwives from PNG, to speak at our club.



Maria (from Bougainville) and Cherolyn from Lae.

Maria spoke first and told us that maternal death is a big problem – main causes were sepsis (infection from non-sterile conditions) and bleeding (made worse by poor baseline health).

Malaria and malnutrition are also significant problems in pregnancy. Despite multiple interventions and investments maternal mortality rates remain fairly constant.

- Currently, a primary goal in addressing this, is increased training of health workers. Cultural and linguistic diversity remains a barrier to education of health workers – there are over 800 languages in PNG! Geographic isolation and cultural diversity also adds to difficulty.
- Cherolyn is a midwife in the regions of Lae. She has been working in this region for last 6 years and the population of this region is 143000. The labour ward has only 6 beds and 15 midwives and is the only birthing facility in this area. There are 1000 births in one month at this labour ward. There are 26 antenatal beds. Babies are frequently delivered on the floor of the labour ward. There is only one obstetrician and 3 registrars so the midwives are mainly working without doctors. The hospital is currently undergoing renovations due to destruction by termites.
- Cherolyn reported on a shift where she and an assistant nurse delivered 21 babies in an 8 hour shift.
- Women come from far away to birth at the hospital. They will wait for a long time for transport (sometimes up to days) and may already be very ill or deceased.
- 64% of women have unassisted births at home.
- Multiple issues for women in terms of reproduction health - Issues of gender inequality and violence in addition to lack of access to information about family planning.
- Abortion is not legal in PNG so it is done illegally. There are many complications in terms of sepsis etc.

The situation these dedicated health professionals described, underscored for us the value of our Birthing in the Pacific training program. Our club is considering supportive action we can take.