

Empty words on health

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A STORY unfolded in Madang when a young mother in remote Alamami, Bogia District, tried to walk for days to reach a health centre to give birth.

She did not make it in time. The woman, from Mungumat village, went into labour while trying to reach Daigul Health Centre. The trip takes two to three days on foot. Because there is no road, she, like her people, must cross rivers and climb mountains.

Another story emerged this week about a mother losing her life while delivering twins in the bush.

There are no roads.

In Port Moresby, the Chinese medical ship, Silk Road Art, attracted over 5000 patients. Many slept outside near the waterfront to gain access. It's a question of accessibility and affordability in a city like Port Moresby where there are modern health facilities offering all sorts of services.

The cost of services, lack of transport infrastructure and lack of basic health services in our rural communities are the main challenges confronting our people. What we find hard to understand is that the health and infrastructure sectors are priority government programs, with each taking K3 billion of the national budget every year.

On top of that, transport infrastructure and health both have a share in the District and Provincial Service Programs. These programs attract K10 million per electorate and K5 million per District every year and managed by the MPs.

It is clear there is nothing tangible on the ground to show for that money, because our people are still struggling and dying from lack of proper medical care.

How many more mothers and children must we lose before our leaders pay attention? For 50 years since independence, we have talked about service delivery and budgeted hundreds of millions to fund these services, but why are we still struggling with basic needs like water, electricity, and, most importantly, reliable roads?

Roads are a lifeline to services like health, education, trade, and emergency care. When roads are impassable, lives are lost. This is our reality in rural Papua New Guinea.

We need real action, not empty words. Let us prioritise roads and basic services so no family has to suffer such pain again.