Building research capacity need to be sustainable

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The theme of this issue is on development goals, which if they are going to do any good, need to be sustainable. Distinguished Professor Homer has summarised the intention and development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which applies to all the member countries of the United Nations. We have twelve years to reduce maternal deaths to less than 70 per 100,000 live births and neonatal mortality to less than 12 per 1,000 live births.[1] Most of the Pacific Island Countries and territories (PICT) in Polynesia have met those goals, whereas most of the countries in Micronesia and Melanesia will need significant investment in health systems to deliver on those aspects of the SDGs. For example, Papua New Guinea (PNG), the most country in the region, has the highest number of maternal deaths at 460 per 100,000 live births and there was evidence [2] that this rate is getting worse not better.[3] Regional fora and aid organisations will need to encourage reporting and monitoring systems and increase targeted investment in SDGs that are hugely out of whack.

In this issue, we have a qualitative study looking at men’s experiences on antenatal care and pregnancy involvement from PNG. They found "negative perceptions; poor maternal knowledge and socio-cultural norms, inadequate information dissemination and poor men-friendly services influenced men’s involvement".[2] We can’t get far with the reproductive health agenda when men are not engaged in the planning of services.

Most of the articles are from new researchers and we welcome these as it was the very purpose for starting the Pacific Journal of Reproductive Health. What needs to be sustainable though is the ability of countries to build capacities in health research systems that support frontline health workers performing research. Without research capability, PICTs will have limited ability to gather the needed data that will inform the monitoring of SDGs. Collaboration with overseas researchers and funders will go a long way in building research capacity.[4] The Pacific Society for Reproductive Health, like other regional organisations and academic institutions from Pacific-rim countries, have played a role in building research capacity in the region through research workshops and collaborations.

This Journal has played a vital role since its inception in 2015, in not only disseminating research evidence but in assisting novel and budding researchers develop writing skills. A huge amount of editorial time is used in correcting grammar and rewriting sections of manuscripts, a service offered for a fee elsewhere. The investment in time is significant and sustainable solutions have to be found. The usual challenges with finding willing reviewers persist. Nonetheless, the editorial board is committed to two issues a year as the task is hugely important for the region.

REFERENCES


