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## Assessing Public Awareness around the De-Centralized Model of Care in Shefa Province in 2022

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### Abstract

**Background:** To improve the efficiency and equity of health care delivery in Vanuatu, the Vanuatu Ministry of Health has adopted a decentralized model of care in line with Vanuatu's Decentralization Act of 1994. Key to this model is the establishment of a referral pathway, outlined in the Role Delineation Policy of the Ministry of Health, which aims to guide a patient's journey through the healthcare system to refer them to the most appropriate health facility depending on their specific health needs. It is unclear whether this referral pathway is understood by the public. The aim of this study is to gauge the public's level of understanding of the decentralized model of care to better raise awareness and educate the public.

**Methods:** Shefa Community Health Services conducted a KAP (Knowledge Attitude, Practices) survey during three public gathering events in Port Vila between July and October 2022. A total of 280 people participated in this survey. Questions asked during the survey captured people's attitudes towards Health Services, assessed their healthcare seeking practices and assessed their knowledge around decentralization and the referral pathway.

**Results:** When asked what they would do if they fell sick, 80% of respondents said they would seek health services. However, only half of survey respondents knew of the health facility hierarchy. Two third of people surveyed were unaware of the decentralized model of care and of those that did know about it, less than half were aware of the need to obtain a referral letter prior to admission to hospital.

**Discussion:** Survey results suggest there is still work to be done to better educate the public around the decentralized model of care and the referral pathway. Public awareness strategies such as community awareness campaigns and social media campaigns should be considered to address this gap.