

Fiji celebrates 40 years of Primary Health Care towards Universal Health Coverage:

'Health for all. Everyone. Everywhere'

For release 7 April 2018

7 April 2018 | SUVA, FIJI: On April 7 the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Fiji Ministry of Health & Medical Services (Ministry) have come together to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of WHO and the 40th Anniversary of Primary Health Care (PHC) in Fiji. These special events mark a time for both organizations to recommit to their mutual goal of advocating for Universal Health Coverage – Health for all – Everyone. Everywhere.

April 7, 2018 marks a special date for the WHO as 70 years ago the global community came together to establish the WHO - the United Nations agency founded on the principle that health is a right for all. In celebration of this anniversary WHO calls upon the global community to recommit to the basic principle that **access to essential health care is a human right for all**. Achieving universal health coverage means that everyone can access the health services they need, where and when they need them, without financial hardship.

Fiji has long since committed to achieving this goal, as today Fiji celebrates the 40th Anniversary of its adoption of the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care. Strengthening primary health care is the means to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

This commitment is deeply enshrined under Section 38 of the Fijian Constitution (2013), for which the state must take reasonable measures within available resource to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of every Fijian to health, and to the conditions and facilities necessary to good health, to health services, including reproductive health.

Dr Corinne Capuano, WHO Director of Pacific Technical Support and Representative for the South Pacific, commends Fiji: *'I welcome very much that Fiji puts special emphasis on Primary Health Care during this years' celebration, because we believe that reinvigorating Primary Health Care is for Fiji and the Pacific Island Countries the way forward to achieving Universal Health Coverage'*.

Universal health coverage is beneficial and already happening. But we can do more and better.

At least half the world's people don't receive the essential health services they need. About 100 million people are being pushed into extreme poverty (<\$1.90 a day) because of payments for health services. As a result, children have to abandon school and dreams of a career so tuition money can pay a family member's medical bills. Others leave jobs – or cannot get jobs – because they have to take care of a sick family member. Over 800 million people (almost 12 percent of the world's population) spend at least 10 percent of their household budgets on health expenses for themselves, a sick child or other family member.

On World Health Day, the World Health Organization is calling on world leaders to live up to their commitments and to action on them.

Countries are approaching universal health coverage in different ways. In Fiji, the Ministry is committed to ensuring that the most efficient route to universal health coverage is to get it right at

the lowest and most accessible level that serves the majority of Fijians. *'Good Primary Health Care that integrates the delivery of essential public health and clinical services at both the facility and community levels should be the triggering point for change'* says the Minister for Health & Medical Services, Hon. Rosy Akbar.

In some Pacific Islands, if the situation doesn't improve, one in three 30-year-olds will die before their 70th birthday from non-communicable diseases such as heart attack, stroke, diabetes or cancer. To maximize their chances of living long, productive lives, we need to provide access to services that are effective in preventing and managing these diseases.

We need care that promotes health and prevents sickness. We also need better care for people who already have health conditions. Comprehensive care must be available closer to people's homes, coordinated by health-care teams to provide both convenience and the opportunity to build enduring and trusting relationships with the people and the communities they serve.

'WHO is committed to support Fiji and other Pacific Islands in their goal in ensuring that all Pacific Islanders have access to the essential health care, regardless of whether they are based in one of the Pacific's urban centers or on a remote outer island' says Dr Corinne Capuano, WHO Director of Pacific Technical Support and Representative for the South Pacific.

This is why everyone should be part of this dialogue – because it concerns everybody's life.

In celebration of this special event, and to inspire others to join the conversation, the Ministry is launching a series of debates and events to strengthen awareness and discuss ideas on how to achieve primary health care.

Over the coming months, the following events will be held and all interested citizens are encouraged to join:

- Series of Public Debates that will be organized jointly by the Ministry and local tertiary institutions and partner agencies.
- Lecture Series organized by the Ministry and Academia
- Divisional Health Office Celebrations—Year long celebrations with Key Health Event Dates
- Public Awareness and Advertisements
- Series of Wellness Events—Free Health Screening, health concerts to recognize former PHC providers and success stories aligned to the key elements of PHC
- Forming stronger collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders under the Wellness settings in Fiji such as the Private Sector, Business Community, NGOs/CSOs, Government Agencies, Communities, Villages, Development Partners, and Academic Institutions.

If you believe in the basic human right to health, WHO and the Ministry encourage you to join in the campaign to make Universal Health Coverage a reality.

For additional information about WHO World Health Day and Universal Health Coverage, visit:

- <http://www.health.gov.fj/?cat=12>
- http://www.wpro.who.int/entity/universal_health_coverage/en/ ; and
- www.wpro.who.int/UHC

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