

# Pacific Heads of Health

## Réunion des directeurs de la santé du Pacifique

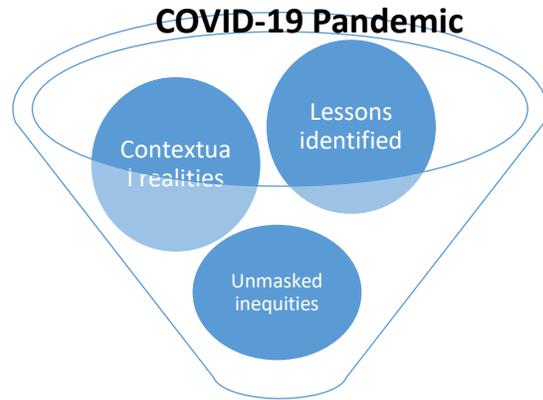
Leveraging the COVID-19 Pandemic to Build Sustainable Systems  
and Advance Universal Health Coverage

Presented by:

Public Health Division, Pacific Community (SPC) and  
WHO Division of Pacific Technical Support (DPS)



# 2031: The future we want to see



**Operational shifts:** Innovation, Backcasting, Systems approach (UHC as the foundation), Grounds up, Measurement & impact, Health beyond the health sector, Strategic communications

**Impact areas**

Legislation reforms to enable health systems to respond to future outbreaks efficiently	Strengthening sub-regional mechanisms for cooperation, knowledge exchange and resource sharing	Strengthening the health system with DPs and other key players beyond health sector to improve quality of care, patient experience and safety	Leveraging existing partnerships to engage local communities for participatory action	Strengthening health information systems including harnessing digital health reforms for health service delivery	Building on current momentum to enhance service capacity and capability in an equitable manner
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## Why action is needed now

- The pandemic unmasked the fragility of health systems and existing inequities, along with the centrality of health and its important role in almost everything else, including travel, trade, tourism, education and economies.
- It is an opportune time to harness the momentum of high-level political commitment and multi-stakeholder partnerships in strengthening health systems and service delivery.
- Need to capitalize on the resources mobilized by governments and partners within countries and at the regional level to achieve sustainable systems strengthening.
- Non/delayed-action in this area will stagnate efforts to improve the access to quality health services in the Pacific that address the most significant causes of disease.

### **Pacific Heads of Health are invited to:**

- **Review and revise public health legislation and governance structures** to enable an effective, whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to future health emergencies and pandemics, with greater emphasis on strengthening:
  - IHR core capacities (legislation and financing, IHR co-ordination, surveillance, laboratory, zoonoses, infection prevention and control, human resources, and risk communication)
  - Coherence and synergy between health related and wider legislation (e.g. related legal frameworks for health information systems, freedom of information laws, privacy laws, etc.)

## Recommendations for governments (continued)

- **To strengthen health systems in a sustainable manner:**

- Develop roadmaps for the re-opening of borders (dependent on threshold events e.g. extent of COVID-19 vaccination coverage, testing and contact tracing capacity, as well as adequate isolation and quarantine options).
- Maintain and strengthen public spending to ensure the continuation of essential health services, in addition to the COVID-19 response. Strengthen public financial management within the health sector for better budgetary planning, execution and reporting, and strengthen integration and coordination of donor funding support to health.
- Share lessons learned from the current pandemic across Pacific countries.
- Develop and strengthen IPC programmes at the national and health facility level to ensure quality care and safety. The minimum components of IPC programmes should include empowered IPC focal points/IPC committees, policy and strategic plan, guidelines, surveillance of HAIs and AMR, monitoring and evaluation, adequate human resources and enabling environment and equipment.
- Develop or strengthen national health strategic plans, packages of essential health services and/or role delineation policies (as appropriate) considering the changes brought about by the pandemic.
- Review and develop national human resources for health strategic plans and policies in line with national health strategic plans and package of essential health services/role delineation policies.

- **Work with key stakeholders, including communities and partners beyond the health sector**, to identify at least one COVID-19 response intervention per country that could be invested in and harnessed to facilitate sustainable health systems strengthening, such as:
  - Digital health strategies and interventions, such as national health information systems, electronic immunization registries and telehealth services;
  - Laboratory and supply systems;
  - Community engagement networks;
  - Critical care services, including health workforce capacity development;
  - Public health emergency preparedness, driven by the focus areas of the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED III);
  - Regulatory reliance mechanisms for the introduction of novel medical products; or,
  - Pharmacovigilance and reporting systems for adverse events following immunization (AEFIs).

- **Focus on improving quality of care and patient safety** across the health system and in primary health care specifically:
  - Strengthen the availability of safe and affordable surgery by developing and implementing National Surgical, Obstetric and Anaesthesia Plans
  - Use role delineation policies to improve referral systems and identify alternative options for service delivery to reach the unreached including outreach, telehealth, telemedicine care delivery options

### **Development partners are invited to:**

- Support the countries and areas of the Pacific in adopting and implementing sustained, future-oriented actions. Ensure that partner resources deployed for the COVID-19 response result in long-term systems strengthening.
- Ensure that support provided is on-plan, on-budget and on-system to improve transparency and accountability, to reduce systematic fragmentation and the potential for overlaps and gaps, and to support the transition to full country ownership.
- Collaborate with national governments to develop joint roadmaps for prioritized sub-regional projects across the Pacific.
- Facilitate cross-country sharing of best practices in harnessing COVID-19 response measures for sustainable and long-term impact.

- Support to strengthen or establish sub-regional mechanisms for cooperation, knowledge exchange and resource sharing, such as:
  - The sub-regional platform for regulation of medical products (implementation of the commitment made during the 13th PHMM)
  - The sub-regional Quality Improvement Programme for Nursing, with a focus on education and regulation (implementation of the commitment made during the 12th PHMM)
  - The Medicines Quality Control Laboratory in Papua New Guinea and potential opportunities for sub-regional collaboration
  - The potential establishment of specialized public health laboratory network

**Thank you!**