

Pacific Heads of Health

Réunion des directeurs de la santé du Pacifique

Revitalizing the HIV, TB and Malaria Programs in the Pacific



Presented by: Dr Frank Underwood

Chair of PIRMCCM

On behalf of The Pacific Island Regional Multi
Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCCM) of
the Global Fund Grant for HIV, TB and Malaria



Current situation: HIV

•HIV

- Pacific countries are off track in meeting 2025 targets
- AIDS-related deaths are increasing annually.
- Limited resources, shifting donor priorities, weakened health systems, and emerging social and drug use practices compound the situation.
- In the 2022 UNAIDS Global AIDS Update - Fiji and PNG are noted as one of 38 countries globally with increasing HIV cases. Since 2010, there has been an increase of estimated new infections by 129% in Fiji alone

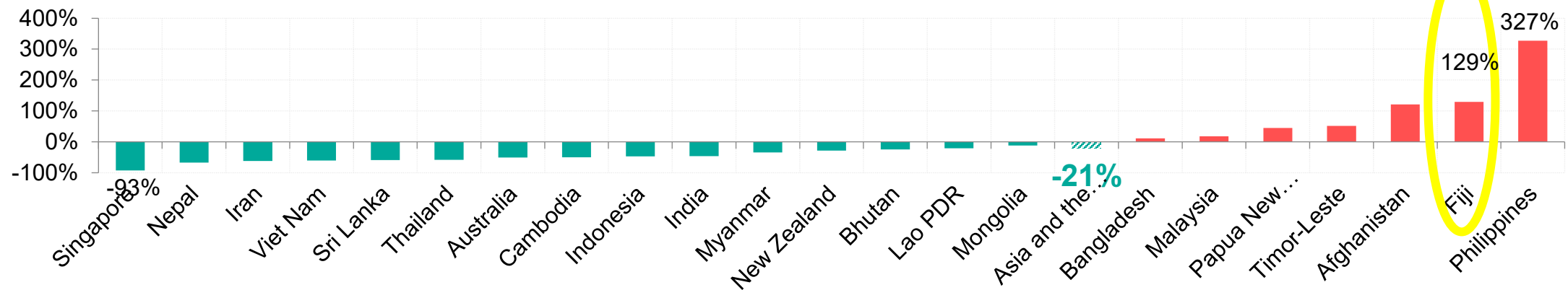
Current situation: HIV in the PICs

<i>Country</i>	<i>#PLHIV</i>	<i># On ART</i>	<i>ART Coverage</i>
<i>Fiji*</i>	1,400	647	46%
<i>Micronesia</i>	14	12	86%
<i>Samoa</i>	12	12	100%
<i>Kiribati</i>	9	9	100%
<i>Marshal Islands</i>	7	7	100%
<i>Vanuatu</i>	7	7	100%
<i>Palau</i>	6	6	100%
<i>Tonga</i>	6	6	100%
<i>Cook Islands</i>	2	2	100%
<i>Nauru</i>	2	2	100%
<i>Tiwalu</i>	1	1	100%
<i>Niue</i>	0	0	
Total	1,466	711	48%

- PICs have a Key Population driven concentrated HIV epidemic
- **HIV vulnerability is very high** due to limited access to quality Sexual and Reproductive Health services
- HIV burden is low. By the end of 2021, there were an estimated 1,466 PLHIV in all the 12 PICTs.
- **Fiji** contributes 95% of the estimated number of PLHIV and 91% of those on ART in the region. ART coverage for Fiji is 46%

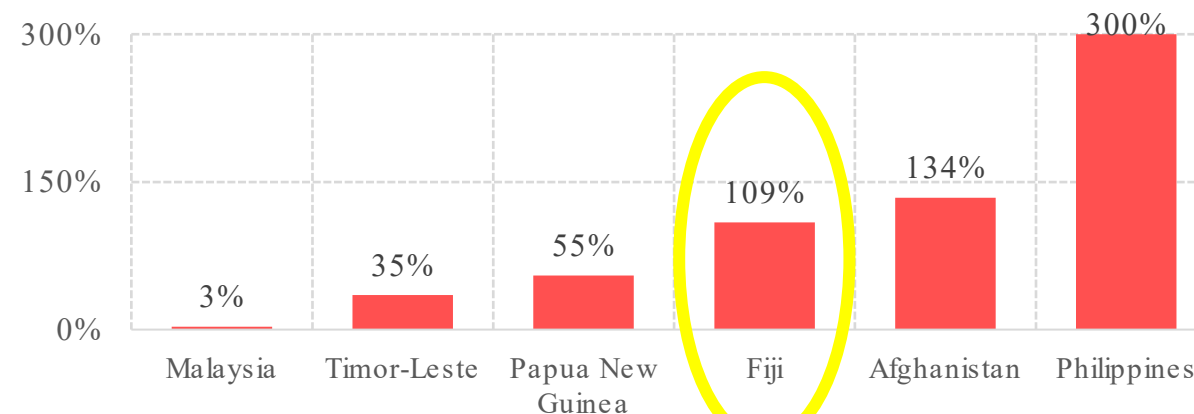
Rising new HIV infections in Fiji- A Pacific Health threat

Percentage change in new HIV infections by country, Asia and the Pacific, 2010-2021



Countries with rising new HIV infections among young people (15-24 years) between 2010 and 2021

Percent increase between 2010 and 2021

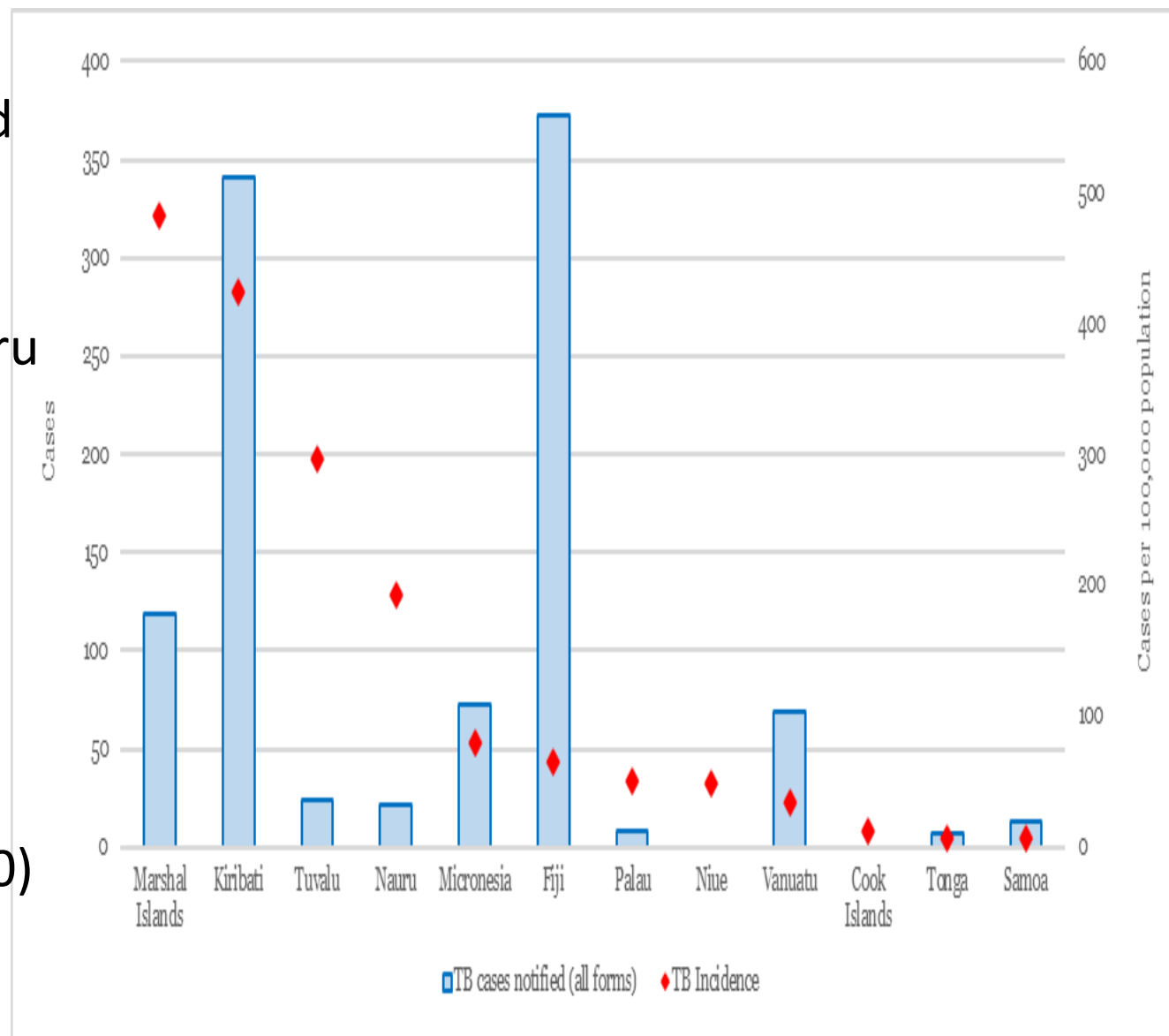


Source: Prepared by www.aidsdatahub.org based on UNAIDS 2022 HIV Estimates;



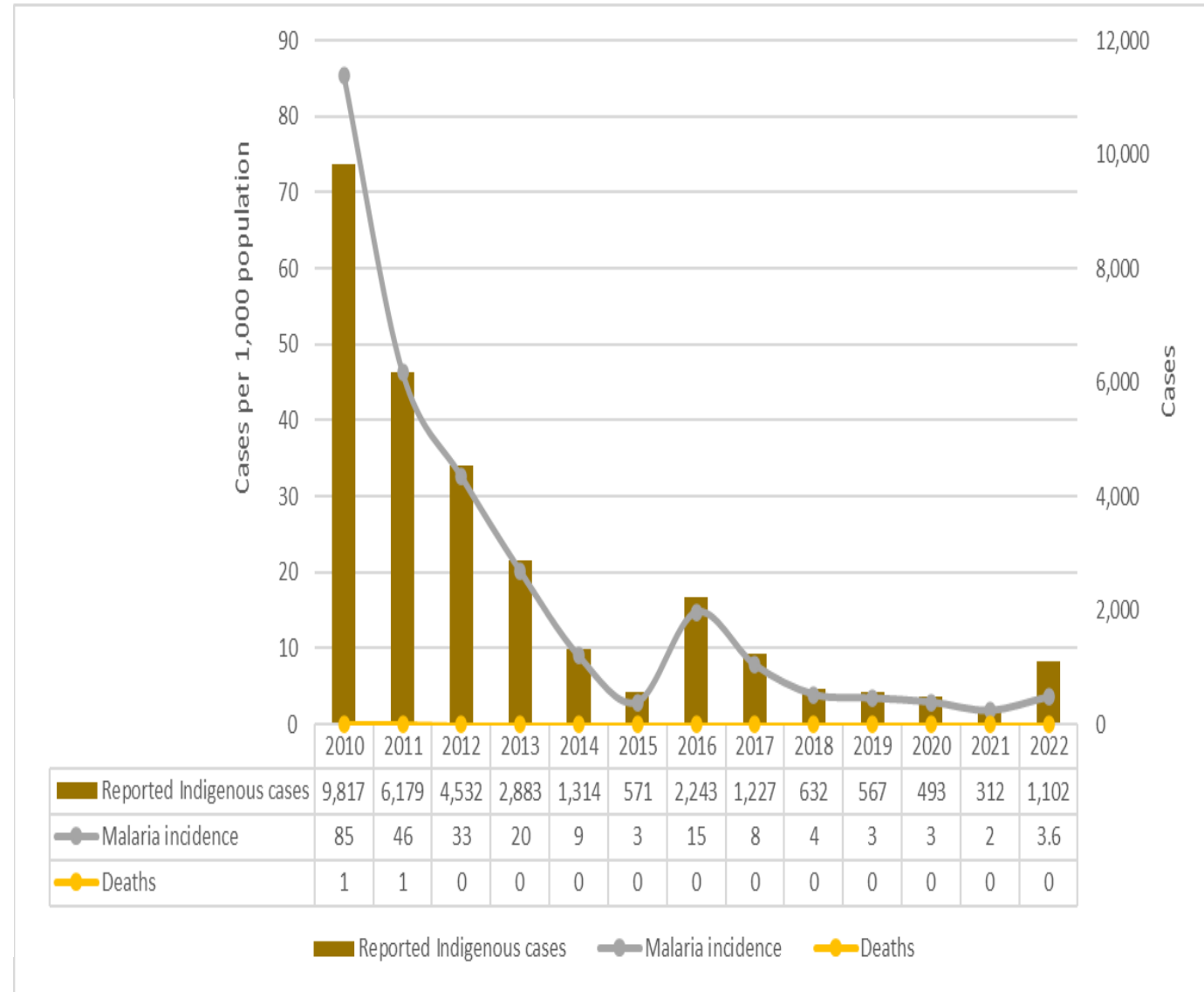
TB Burden in PICs

- Burden of TB is heterogenous in the PICTs with a combination of high, moderate, and low TB incidence settings.
- Four countries namely Marshall Islands (483), Kiribati (424), Tuvalu (296) and Nauru (193) have very high TB incidence of more than 100 cases per 100,000 population
- In 2021, WHO estimated that there was a total of 1,652 people who fell ill with TB among all the 12 PICTs.
- Five countries; namely Fiji (610), Kiribati (550), Marshall Islands (200), Vanuatu (110) and Micronesia (90) had 94% of the total estimated incidence in the region



Malaria Epidemic Snapshot (Vanuatu)

- Significant progress made over the last decade
- One Island (Tafea) declared malaria-free 2017 and no malaria deaths since 2011
- Bold and Ambitious National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination 2021 - 2026 developed to achieve malaria-free status by 2026
- Malaria cases were decreasing until 2022 when reported cases tripled to 1143
- Annual Parasite Incidence (API) has increased from 1.3 in 2021 to 3.6 in 2022.



The future we want to see

- Increased Government Ownership and expanded Investments in HIV, TB, and Malaria Response in the Pacific
- Reduced new infections in HIV, TB and Malaria
- Increased knowledge on HIV, TB, Malaria prevention, testing and treatment
- Integrated response with strong community leadership and upscale of innovative interventions

Best practices- Innovations in HIV PrEP

- PrEP is an innovative approach to HIV prevention and treatment that involves the use of antiretroviral medication by people who are HIV negative to prevent them from acquiring HIV. Its rapid roll-out in New South Wales, Australia led to a 25% decline in new HIV diagnoses among key populations in just 1 year.



Best practice- Community Leadership

- Communities are at the **heart of the HIV, TB and Malaria response**
- **Empowering** communities ensures that lifesaving services reach the most vulnerable, including those marginalized by poverty, stigma, discrimination or criminalization
- Putting **people and communities at the centre** of national response plans helps build trust and ensures no one is left behind
- Missed opportunities in community mobilization and leadership can lead to low compliance for completion of treatment and missed opportunities for preparedness for outbreaks

Best practice- Community Leadership (Highlights)

- **Samoa's** Integrated Community Health Approach Programme (ICHAP) positively impacted HIV, STI and TB programming in the Pacific
- **Vanuatu** Family Health Association reported great improvement of 67% of female sex workers who were reached by the HIV prevention program,
- **Cook Islands** Ministry of Health in partnership with the Te Tiare Association provided support to MSM & TG members
- **Tonga** Leitis Association (TLA) work in Human rights to address Discrimination and expanded prevention services to Key populations

Why urgent action is needed now

- Fiji is the "**hub of the Pacific**" with migration between the Pacific, Australia, and New Zealand, posing a risk to health security in the region.
- **Trends in risky behaviour** in Fiji may extend to other Pacific Island countries, potentially leading to a health security crisis in the region.
- HIV drivers such as **low condom use, poor sex education, and high TB burden** coupled with **poor HIV data** and behavioural studies contribute to the **potential crisis**.
- The **loss of early investments** in the HIV, TB and Malaria programs, as cases are increasing in select countries.
- Solutions for HIV, TB, and malaria are available, but **commitment** and **ownership** are needed to drive change.

Proposed recommendations for governments

- Pacific Island countries uphold their political commitments towards ending of AIDS, TB and Malaria and mobilize resources through international support or domestic funds to strengthen their national response by:
 - **Protecting healthy security** through **country ownership** addressing problematic challenges focusing on health system strengthening through upscaling innovative health prevention tailor-made services for creating demand for HIV, TB & Malaria services and improving the detection of these infections, treatment adherence, and monitoring treatment in the Pacific.
 - Recognize the importance of **community leadership** and create an enabling environment in which civil society can fully contribute to the implementation of programs to expand essential services and cater towards to hard-to-reach populations.

Proposed recommendations for development partners

- Development Partners in the Pacific support national actions through providing technical assistance towards:
 - **Improving strategic information** to produce data that can positively impact and inform national HIV/TB and Malaria strategies to address the gaps that exist in current programs.
 - **Contribute** towards the **upskilling** of civil society for **community leadership** to implement community led programming and monitoring.
 - **Enhance** the potential of **health technologies** and **innovations** to advance the HIV, TB and Malaria responses.

Thank you!