



Hon. Minister of Health Keynote Address

15th Annual Health Forum 2023

Susuga i le Fa'afeagaiga, Rev. Siasia Salesulu
Leaders of the Health Sector
Heads of the Diplomatic Corps
Government Ministries & Statutory Bodies
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings and Welcome to the 15th National Annual Health Forum.

The Annual Health Forum is an annual event where we come together to review, share and discuss the achievements and challenges of the health sector for the past year.

The Theme for this year's Annual Health Forum is **'Strengthening Health Research System & Capacity Development'**. The theme emphasizes the importance of strengthening our health research system and enhance the capacity of our health sector to conduct, manage, disseminate and apply health research findings to further improve the six building blocks of our health system which are:

- Health governance and leadership
- Health workforce
- Health financing
- Health information management
- Management of our medical products and technology and most importantly
- Health services provision.

The question is how can we strengthen our health research system and develop the capacity of the sector?

There may be many answers but the Ministry of Health in response has developed the National Health Research Guideline to guide the work of the Health Research Committee in ensuring health researchers are fully complied with our national requirements for health research implementation. In addition, capacity building opportunities for staff on health research are offered by our development partners such as World Health Organization, NZ MFAT and Australian DFAT to build the research caliber of our workforce to implement research to help the Ministry of Health and the health sector with identification of new and better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases and conditions; provides insights into the cause into the causes of illnesses and develop evidence-based interventions; and inform health and government leaders decision making on health issues.

Today's sessions will give us an insight on some health researches that had been conducted by our partners such as health academic institutions both international and local as well as our health staff.

This morning, we also witness some of health that had been developed by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with our sector partners and stakeholders and with the technical and financial support from our development partners which were informed by health researches that had already been implemented and reported. These include:

- (1) MOH Interim Corporate Plan for Financial Years 2023/24 – FY2024/25
- (2) Samoa's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2023-2028
- (3) Samoa Overseas Medical Treatment Revised Policy 2023
- (4) National Medicines Policy and Plan of Action FY2023/24-FY2027/28
- (5) Samoa Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy 2023
- (6) Routine Immunization Guidelines 2023
- (7) Tobacco Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategy 2023-2023
- (8) Smoking Cessation Manual 2023 and

(9) National Strategic Plan for the Control of Mosquitoes and Mosquito Borne Diseases 2023-2033

I heartily acknowledge the technical and financial support by our development partners who assisted the Ministry of Health and health sector with the development of these important documents.

The key to the success of all our efforts and programs to strengthen our health research system and capacity development is possible by ensuring a multi-sectoral response through the work of our sector partners, Government and Non-Government Organizations and our religions denominations. The most important concept is community engagement as per the theme of this year's National Week, **"Let the Community Lead"**. This is the very group which will help build our health systems including health research system to ensure we have the evidence-based information and accurate data to inform our decision making at the sectoral and national levels and formulate evidence-based interventions and health documents to further enhance health services delivery in Samoa.

Today, we will be engaging in fruitful discussions through the different sessions of the Annual Health Forum Program. The sessions will be touching on a range of topics from regional and national perspectives on the importance of health research systems in strengthening our health system to research papers presented by international and local researchers and health academic institutions.

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one for making this occasion a priority today. This Forum is an important event where we can take stock, note the achievements, address the challenges, reassess and move forward. We look forward to the sharing of knowledge and at the same time offer support to each other as we strive to overcome the many health challenges we continue to face.

I wish you all the best with your deliberation today.

Soifua ma ia manuia.