**Revitalizing Primary Health Care to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Mauritius**

In Mauritius, the strong primary health care system provides geographically accessible healthcare free at point of use to all citizens and this it is responding to both the population and individual needs with a range of services that cover all the elements of care namely health promotion, disease prevention, curative services, and rehabilitation. However, it was found that primary Health Care is not playing its gatekeeping role effectively, reason why an assessment on strengthening primary health care for better outcomes was initiated in Mauritius.

The country assessment starts with a thorough analysis of the situation of services delivery over the past 15 years. Challenges or present opportunities for improving services delivery were then carried out. A participatory and flexible approach was used for this assessment; a multidisciplinary team was set up to carry out the assessment. A Working Group (WG) of 6 members was constituted to review and to validate the report. The report identified keys opportunities that the country may continue to build on as well as challenges and possible solutions to address them through strengthening Primary Health Care to Achieve Universal Health Coverage in Mauritius.

The assessment shows that, in many cases, the gatekeeper role of primary health care providers is bypassed. Many patients attend the hospitals directly particularly outside opening hours of PHCs. Even during working hours patients often attend secondary or tertiary care institutions for non-complicated cases as prior referral is not a requirement. Patients have an over-reliance on hospitals and prefer to receive follow-up care at the hospitals with the specialists. Currently, there is no health information system in place in the PHCs to assist in their role as a hub. The absence of a unique patient identifier number results in duplication of care at PHCs and inability to track/ trace patients in the public health system was also noted. Continuity of treatment and rapport building with a particular health worker is difficult with the present service model. Moreover, choice of health care provider is not possible in the present health system.

The assessment recommended furthering consolidating the role of Primary Health Care as the centre of health care by reducing duplication of services at PHC and hospital levels, strengthen the role of PHC in improving coordination between primary, secondary and tertiary care levels, having a more systematic screening and management of chronic conditions in PHC as well as scale up primary health care services to respond to the ageing population and increasing rates of multi-morbidity. The road map for the implementation of the recommendations was also approved by the Ministry of health and stakeholders.