

## 1. Integrating service delivery – population health screening in the Marshall Islands

The Marshall Islands is one of the countries in the Western Pacific Region with a very high incidence of both TB and leprosy. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) also are a significant health priority, with the Government having declared an NCD emergency in 2014.

To help accelerate the response to these health challenges, the Ministry of Health and key partners launched population health screening, starting on Ebeye island. The idea gained further momentum when the WHO Regional Di-

rector for the Western Pacific met with the President of the Marshall Islands in April 2016 for discussions emphasizing health service integration and convergence, as well as the need for a reliable and comprehensive electronic population registry.

Three WHO offices – the Regional Office, the Division of Pacific Technical Support and the Country Liaison Office for Northern Micronesia – came together to provide tailored and comprehensive support to this multi-partner endeavour.

In late 2016, during Phase 1 implementation of the programme, the entire population of Ebeye was invited to participate in electronic biometric registration and initial health assessments; 8900 people were registered in five weeks.

In February 2017, in Phase 2, integrated leprosy, NCD and TB screening began, targeting 6000 adults. Participants underwent comprehensive TB screening with state-of-the-art diagnostic tools – such as digital chest radiography and Xpert MTB/RIF, which helps identify genetic fragments of TB germ – that significantly contributed to early diagnosis of the disease. Participants also had an opportunity to be tested and counselled on NCDs and their related risk factors, such as hypertension, diabetes, smoking and alcohol use. Phase 3 of the programme will help manage leprosy, NCD and TB patients and make available community-based interventions for long-term risk control and behavioural change.

With strong support from all stakeholders, especially local authorities and community representatives, community acceptance was very high, and people genuinely appreciated the opportunity to be involved. The Ebeye health-screening programme is an example of efficient service integration and people-centred service delivery, with strong community engagement and partnership. ■



A WHO staff member demonstrates a fingerprint registration system for the integrated health-screening programme in the Marshall Islands. The system was developed by WHO as part of an innovative cross-cutting programme designed to meet local needs.