



# UN Cares in Action

## The Case of Fiji 2013

### Wellness Approach

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### **Wellness Approach**

After analysing the results of more than 300 health screenings among UN staff members, the UN Cares team defined high blood pressure, high blood glucose, and obesity-related illness as a common health concern within the community. As a result, UN agencies promoted physical activities and nutritious eating to decrease current and future health problems. Activities included afternoon and lunchtime walking, team sports play, inter-agency family fun days, and overall monitoring of nutritious foods served within UN offices. Fiji's dedication to health and wellness activities would mark a new area of focus within the UN Cares programme.

### **Background and Context**

In Fiji there are fewer than 500 people living with HIV, a prevalence of 0.1 per cent. With UN Cares inception in Fiji in 2008, the team completed activities that encouraged HIV comprehension, acceptance and positive intervention. Prevalence remains low while UN staff involvement in HIV intervention was steady.

Fiji's UN Cares team more recently took on a new theme of overall health and wellness. The team's concern about the rising rate of non-communicable diseases increased its interest in health and healthy living. In Fiji, UN organizations contribute to the UN Cares workplace programme collectively and individually.

### **UN Cares Structure and Advocacy**

Fiji's UN Cares Wellness initiative began in 2012. Their goal was to address the rising rate of non-communicable diseases in the region and they did so by facilitating health screenings for all staff and their family members. After analysing the results of more than 300 health screenings across multiple UN agencies, the UN Cares team worked with UN agency leaders to strengthen work-life balance committees, and agency-level physical activity and nutritional initiatives.

Fiji's UN agencies saw the need to provide knowledge and resources to address lifestyle changes; they would coordinate with UN Cares to do just that. With the amount of time UN staff members devote to work, UN Cares defined the importance of promoting nutritional foods and physical activity opportunities throughout the workday.

### **Source of Funding**

Funds are supported by two methods either mobilized through WHO, or internal fundraising within each UN agency.

### **UN Cares-Approaches adopted**

In 2012, UN Cares in Fiji began an initiative that addressed non-communicable diseases. With assistance from WHO, UN Cares Fiji organized health screenings for interested UN personnel and their family members. A total of 324 staff members signed up for the medical screenings. In addition, the Ministry of Health conducted a series of follow-up health screenings for each

UN agency to test body mass index, blood cholesterol, blood sugar, weight, and height. Screening results were given to UN personnel, while an overall result analysis was conducted. The analysis defined health concerns. As a result, Fiji's UN Cares team took immediate steps to encourage health and wellness behaviours. One of the first steps was to strengthen the work-life balance committee.

The work-life balance (WLB) committee, currently titled the work-life balance team, is a group of equal players who volunteer time to facilitate and assist staff to balance work life. The responsibilities of the work-life balance team are as follows:

- Attend monthly team meetings (maximum 1 hour);
- Share work-life balance information with staff;
- Introduce physical activities into the everyday lives of UN Staff;
- Share plan and ideas on resource mobilization for the WLB activities for staff consensus;
- Document all activities through summary reports and photographs;
- Share agreed photos with the UNDP Communications Team for upload on social media.

Fiji UN Cares supports wellness by contributing funds to maintain physical activity and encourage other forms of organized team and individual level activity. The activities that define the wellness programme are walking lunches, organized joint UN Family Fun days, nutritional food days, ZUMBA and other instructed exercise classes, and organized team sport play.

- Walking Lunches — Collectively, UN Agencies have incorporated walking into their workday.
- UN Family Fun Days — The last family fun day happened in 2012. UN agencies formed teams and played organized games, ate a nutritious lunch, and set up wellness information booths for UN personnel and their families to learn more about their health.
- ZUMBA — In 2012, ZUMBA classes were held in a space funded by UNDP, and were a success.
- Organized Sports Events — One of the most popular organized team sports played was volleyball. Some of the other sports played included hockey, basketball, touch rugby and netball.

While the UN Cares teams have sponsored physical activity and encouraged individual exercise and nutrition, some UN agencies have completed a number of their own specific activities to attend to UN personnel health and wellness.

First, within WHO, exercises include: ZUMBA, running, walking, tennis, and weekly volleyball matches. Every Thursday, the WHO office closes at 4:30 p.m., and the activities begin. Staff members choose their individual activities of interest and devote time to doing just that. Every Wednesday, WHO has set

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matches against either the Fiji National Provident Fund or the Fiji Electricity Authority, two of Fiji's well-known corporate organizations.

Second, within UN Women, past and present activities include: walks along the seawall, the Protex challenge, and the cash for calories event. Every Tuesday and Thursday, the staff takes time out of their workday to walk along the seawall, either on their own or in a group setting. Each individual walks and enjoys the scenic view of the sea. During the Protex challenge, 10 staff members lost a combined total of 18 kilograms. Lastly, another group of staff members participated in the cash for calories event. The results of how many calories were lost as well as the cash gained is unknown. In regard to nutrition, healthier foods are provided at weekly and monthly meetings at UN Women. All staff members are also offered a metro gym membership to use as frequently as they see fit. In the future, UN Women looks to add yoga classes to their wellness agenda.

Third, the office of UNICEF offers Monday afternoon walks, obligates Tuesdays as brown bag lunch days, and designates Wednesdays as presentation days on workplace nutrition and health as well as Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Beyond those daily activities, the UNICEF staff association hosts monthly wellness functions.

Fourth, within the UNDP offices, staff members have access to a gym where there are treadmills and other exercise equipment. In 2012 weekly ZUMBA classes were popular and well attended. In 2013, similar to its success within WHO, volleyball has drawn quite a crowd at the UNDP office. Wednesday is a designated as fruit day, as well as the day when staff can discuss healthful successes in regard to nutrition and physical activity awareness. Thursdays are used for afternoon walks; the majority of staff members use their lunch hour to even walk home for lunch. Fridays, work ends at 2:30 p.m.; staff members are invited to join in the weekly squash matches or find other physical activities that interest them. Lastly, all food catered within the office for special events have an 80 per cent healthy food requirement.

### **Strengths**

- Each UN agency defines their own activities to contribute to their staff's health and wellness,
- The continuation of health screening to monitor health and onset of NCDs.

### **Barriers**

- Funding to pay exercise class instructors;
- Necessary space for classes and activities to take place;
- Maintaining UN agencies' interest in participating in joint agency events.

### **Advice to other UN Cares teams**

Allow your programme's activities to be the example; Fiji UN Cares completed a number of activities to increase HIV and AIDS knowledge and reduce

stigmatizing behaviour in the workplace and continues to do so. When they found that health was a concern for their staff, UN Cares changed its programme's platform to include addressing NCDs, wellness, and healthy lifestyles. Taking the necessary steps to make wellness a priority highlights Fiji's UN Cares team's leadership and consideration for UN staff.

### **Future Project/Plans**

Future projects for Fiji's UN Cares team include:

- The encouragement of keeping a food diary. As UN agencies continue to support weekly physical activity of some kind, the UN Cares team underlines the importance of maintaining one's nutrition, and managing of one's eating habits.
- Continuation of group and team level activities.

### **Sources**

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