

5th ANNUAL HEALTH FORUM



L-R: Director General of Health, Palanitina Tupuimatagi Toelupe; Ms Hinauri Petana, guest speaker; Minister of Health, Tuitama Dr. Leao T. Tuitama; Rev. Utufua Naseri.

The Ministry of Health facilitated a three day forum from December 12-14, at the Tooa Salamasina Hall, Sogi. This annual conference provides an opportunity for the health sector to look back over the year, reflect on achievements, issues, challenges and look forward to see what still needs to be accomplished by working together as a sector to further strengthen the health system.

The *theme* for this years Health Forum is to **'free Samoa from avoidable deaths and disabilities'**. This is further realised with the *aim* of *'increasing and improving health consciousness amongst health care providers and key stakeholders to assure a concerted*

people centered nation-wide approach for reduction of NCDs and ultimate achievement of MDGs'.

Reverend Utufua Naseri of the Congregational Christian Church in Apia led everyone in prayer of thanksgiving. It was then followed by the official opening address conveyed by the Minister of Health, Hon. Tuitama Dr. Lea'ō Talalelei Tuitama. He welcomed everyone and applauds the conclusion of another year ended with the many achievements as well as challenges along the way. Furthermore, the forum will address and explore the health status of the Samoan people given a very high rate of hospitalization and premature deaths due to lifestyle diseases such as; diabetes, cancers, typhoid, STIs and Rheumatic Fever. Premature deaths and disabilities due to injuries is also a priority area that will be discussed in this annual forum.



Health Forum in progress

The Minister of Health also stated during his address that the structure of the Forum has changed this year regarding the provision of annual health forum papers on priority health issues that have been prepared and distributed prior to the meeting by the Ministry of Health. The three day conference ended on a high note with interesting dialogue which stimulated participatory discussions amongst those who were present.