

## MBBS Students assess social determinants for health



Students and representatives from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services pose with villages

**T**hirty-two students from the Fiji National University's (FNU) College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (CMNHS) are spending three days in the Naitasiri province as part of an outreach program to assess the villagers' social determinants for health.

The students have been divided into teams and will spend their time in five villages namely Waikalou (Soloira District), Naluwai, Nasavu and Waidracia (Rara District) and Nabaitavo (Nabaitavo District).

Acting Head of School Public Health and Primary Care, Dr Nemani Seru, said Community Medicine Block was a compulsory component of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme.

"During their stay at these villages, students will be conducting a community health needs assessment activities, health screenings, water quality tests, and they will also provide awareness on health issues."

"Through this component of the programme, we expose the students to the causes of health issues. These are the social determinants for health which include, the environment people live in, the food they eat, the water they drink and their general lifestyle," Dr Seru said.

He added that CMNHS offered the students a right balance of classroom teaching, clinical hours and gaining public health experience through such activities.

"We are working closely with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in Naitasiri Subdivision, and the

Naitasiri Provincial Council. Students will also analyse the collected data and return to the villages to present their findings."

MBBS year five student, Divneshni Sharma, said they were excited to be part of this community profiling exercise.

"This exercise is beneficial to the communities because we will be able to identify if there are any high-risk health issues prevalent in the villages."

"Coming out and staying in the villages while conducting the screenings also makes me feel more confident and helps to build my interaction skills," Sharma commented.

Meanwhile, Turaga-ni-Koro Waikalou, Isoa Koinalawa, said they were grateful to the students and staff for coming to their village despite rainy weather conditions.

"This will benefit us because the students will highlight if there are any health issues and we will learn more on how to further improve our eating and living habits," Koinalawa said.



Turaga-ni-Koro Waikalou (left) speaks with the students