The Ministry of Health and the stakeholders for the Climate Change project had a validation meeting on Tuesday in preparation for the implementation of the project.

Health Ministry’s spokesman, Peni Namotu said the meeting’s main objectives are to ensure that stakeholders have a clear understanding of what the project seeks to achieve and to review and validate the Project Framework and Multi-Year Workplan.

Mr Namotu said that Fiji is one of seven countries worldwide to implement the first GEF-funded climate change and health pilot project.

He said this project is an opportunity for Fiji to pave the way in terms of adapting to health impacts of climate change in an island country setting.

"This project is also an opportunity to start-off national actions to minimize the health impacts of climate change," said Mr Namotu.

Mr Namotu stated that the immediate steps that will be undertaken by the Ministry are:

- Development of detailed workplan for 2011 and begin implementation;
- Collecting and analysing hydrometeorological data and climate sensitive diseases to identify trends, select project pilot sites and strengthen disease early warning systems and;
- Data sharing and analysis among stakeholders which will be facilitated through MoUs between stakeholders.

Participants at the meeting included stakeholders from International Federation of Red Crosses and Crescents Fiji Red Cross Society, Secretariat of the Pacific Communities, College of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences (PNLE), USP, PACESD, Fiji Meteorological Services, Wetlands International and Ministry of Health practitioners and managers.

Also at the meeting was Consultant Dr Simon Hales, Climate Change & Health Specialist from Otago University, NZ who facilitated the meeting.

Mr Namotu concluded that the project is a wonderful opportunity for improved public/environmental health in Fiji and to showcase Fiji to the world.

The food that you eat comes in contact with the germs and bacteria that live in the mouth. If you don’t brush, plaque will build up on the tooth surface. Plaque survives on starch and sugar that are found in most food. When plaque combines with sugar and starch, an acid is produced that attacks the outer surface of the teeth called enamel (outer surface of crown) and cementum (outer surface of root). According to the American Dental Association, the acid attacks the teeth for 20 minutes or more. To avoid tooth decay one should choose a healthy diet. Carbonated sodas, sweet drinks and sugary foods should be limited. Some healthy tips for good oral health are:

- Drink plenty of water
- Eat a variety of healthy foods from the five major food groups
- Cut down on snacking in between meals
- Limit snacks and drinks that are high in sugar
- Floss daily

While eating healthy foods and avoiding snacks and drinks that are high in sugar are good ways to prevent tooth decay, a good dental regime is essential in maintaining healthy teeth and gums. Plaque can be removed by brushing and flossing thoroughly and your dentist can detect any sign of early decay.

Keep in mind that you should eat a balanced diet, brush your teeth twice a day and floss daily.

Mr Namotu said that other developments that were part of decentralization was the instalment of lab and x-ray units in health centers around the Suva area.

Mr Namotu added that there are installments of air conditioning and Patient Information System in all pharmacies around the country. Meanwhile, as part of the Ministry’s plan, there will be a development of dental clinic at the Waikawa health center, obstetrics unit at the Makoif health center and psychiatric training center at the Samabula health center for Fiji National University students.

Mr Namotu concluded that the project is a wonderful opportunity for improved public/environmental health in Fiji and to showcase Fiji to the world.