CHD Awareness Week 7-14 February 2019

STATEMENT

Male’ City, 10 February 2019, Republic of Maldives: Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Awareness Week marked from February 7–14 is an annual international observance to promote awareness and education about CHDs.

CHD is the most common birth defect globally and in the Maldives. In many cases heart defects are easily correctable or may not even require further intervention. However, in serious cases or in babies born with critical congenital heart disease (CCHD), the heart defect can be life threatening and require immediate medical attention. If delayed, these babies may suffer irreversible damage to the brain and other vital organs that can negatively impact their potential in life.

We care about people born with CHDs every day of the year but this is a special opportunity to celebrate them. This is the fourth consecutive year that THM is marking this day. We remain committed to this observance, as an estimated 1 in 100 children born are born with a CHD in the Maldives.

Today 550 patients with CHD are registered with THM, of which 98% are children under the age of 10 years.

THM is resolved to use the strong platform provided for our work nationally and globally, to advocate for the alignment of state health priorities pertaining to CHDs in line with that of international best practices, specifically to strengthen systems and processes that generate appropriate statistics on CHDs.

Secondly, work in partnership with stakeholders to address policy and service gaps in responding to prevention, early detection and treatment of CHDs.
We are committed to help strengthen the implementation of ‘National Protocol for Screening of Critical Congenital Heart Disease in Newborns by Pulse Oximetry’ launched in 2018, which would help detect a considerable percentage of newborns with heart defects, particularly those with critical CHDs for whom early intervention is vital.

We are also committed to raise awareness among expecting mothers to address factors contributing to heart health so that each pregnancy has a healthy outcome.

We are grateful that medical advances have allowed many of the patients to soldier past childhood to near normal adulthood. We encourage every child born with CHDs to be registered with us so that we can strengthen continued care, as well as advocate for stronger mechanisms for CHDs nationally.

Hence, we call upon the state, partners and stakeholders and individuals to come together more strongly in concerted endeavors to help prevent the loss of lives to CHDs and ensure healthy, safe, productive and happy lives for all. We are CHD aware and are committed to making the population CHD aware.