

Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

Nursing Workforce in the Pacific Island Countries and Areas: Attrition and Retention

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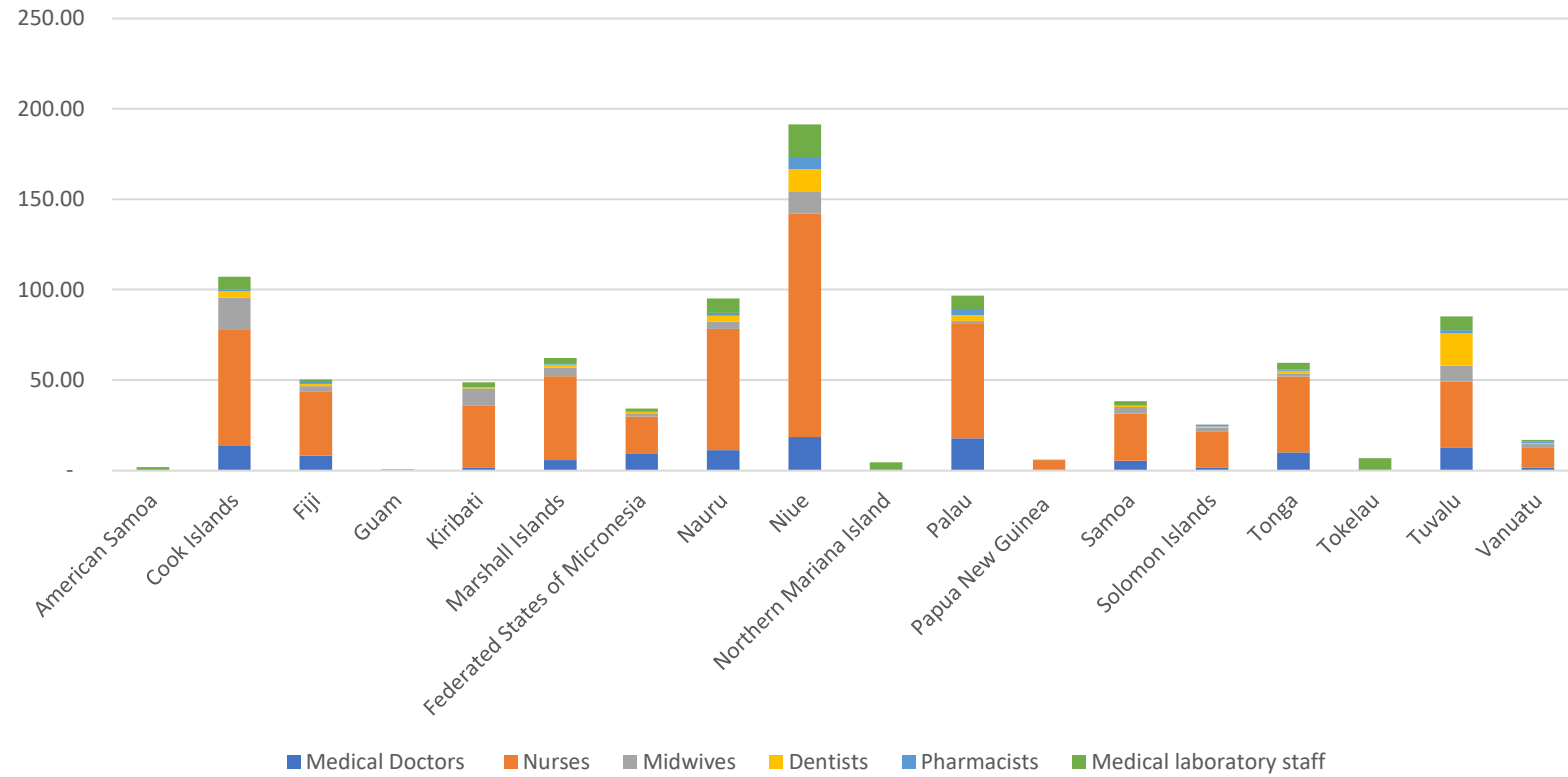
World Health Organization | Division of Pacific
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Outline

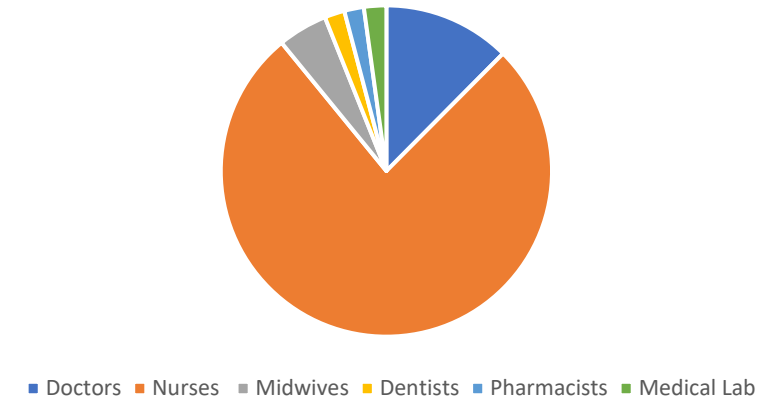
- Background
- Progress and achievements
- Challenges
- Future Directions:
 - Recommendations for governments
 - Recommendations for development partners

Background

Density of health workers per 10,000 population



Proportion of nursing workforce in the PICs



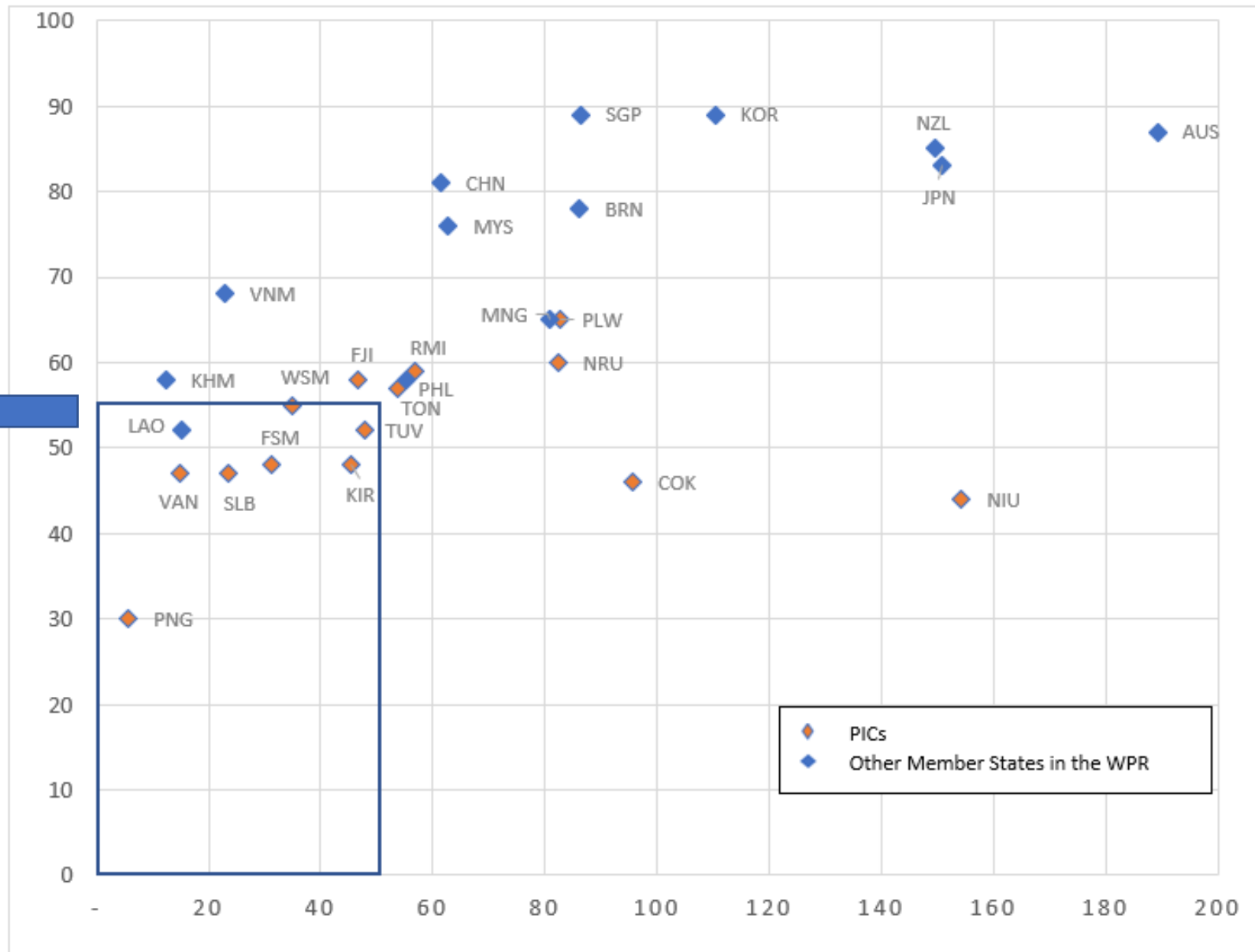
Source: NHWA, SPC and WHO

WHO HWF support and safeguards list (2023)

- UHC service coverage index < 55
- HWF density < 49

These countries are considered to face the most pressing HWF challenges and require concerted investment and support.

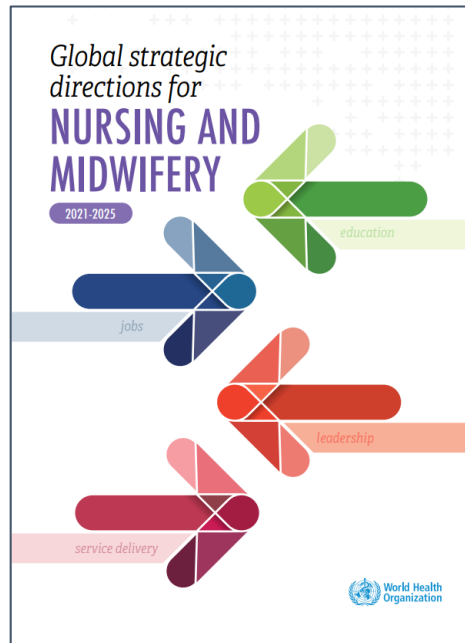
UHC Service Coverage Index (%)



Density of doctors, nurses, and midwives (per 10,000 population)

Source: [GHO](#); [NHWA & SPC/ PHMM](#)

WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing & Midwifery 2021-2025



EDUCATION →

Strategic direction: Midwife and nurse graduates match or surpass health system demand and have the requisite knowledge, competencies and attitudes to meet national health priorities.

JOBS →

Strategic direction: Increase the availability of health workers by sustainably creating nursing and midwifery jobs, effectively recruiting and retaining midwives and nurses, and ethically managing international mobility and migration.

LEADERSHIP →

Strategic direction: Increase the proportion and authority of midwives and nurses in senior health and academic positions and continually develop the next generation of nursing and midwifery leaders.

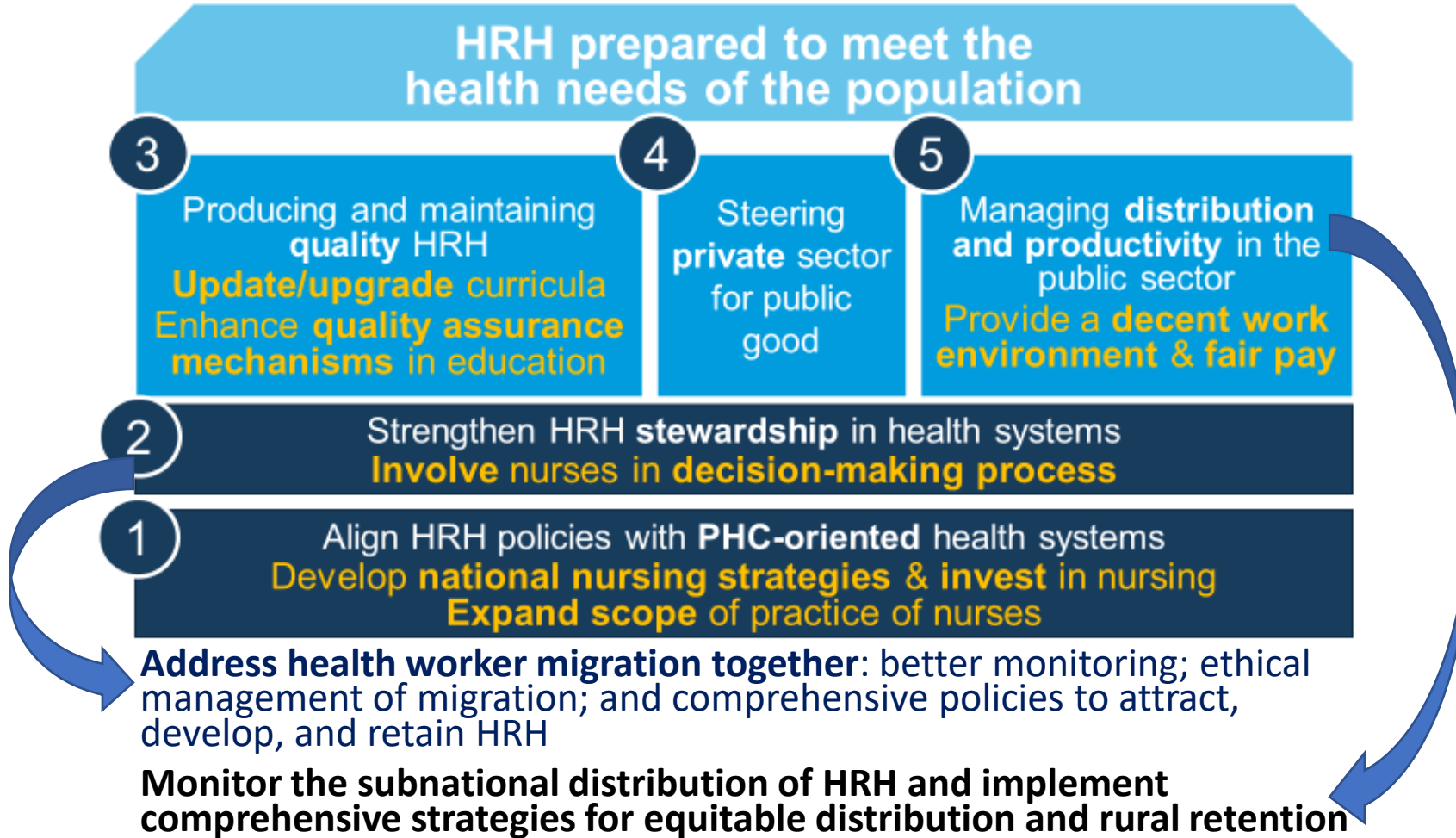
SERVICE DELIVERY →

Strategic direction: Midwives and nurses work to the full extent of their education and training in safe and supportive service delivery environments.

WHO. (2021). Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240033863>

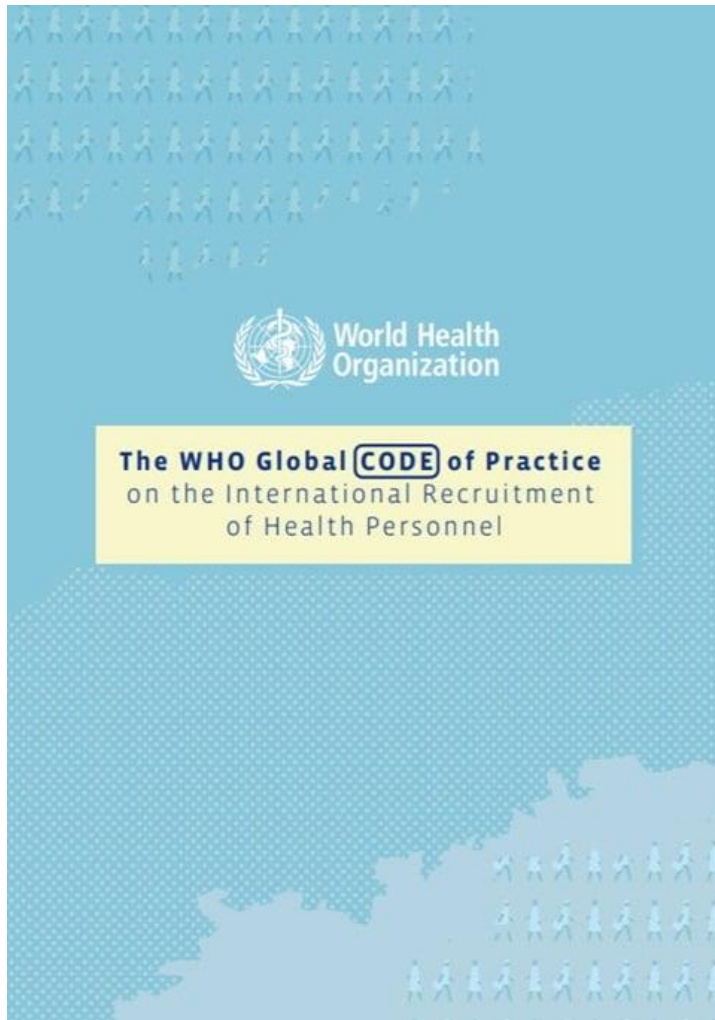
Regional Framework to Shape a Health Workforce for the Future of the Western Pacific (endorsed at 74th RCM, Oct 2023)

Strategic actions to build the future HRH and **Priority actions in nursing**



The updated WHO guidance recommends bundled strategies covering education, regulation, incentives, and personal and professional support.

The WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel was adopted by the 63rd World Health Assembly on 21 May 2010



Guiding principles of the WHO Code

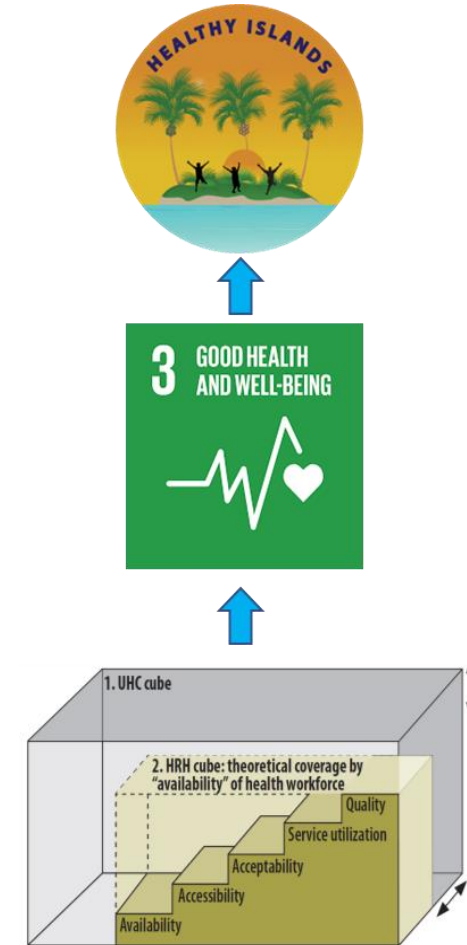
- Establish and promote voluntary principles and practice for the ethical international recruitment of health personnel
- Balance the right to the highest attainable standard of health of the population of source countries and the individual rights of health personnel to leave their country
- Call for a better “managed approach” to the international recruitment of health workers
- Advocate for the development of a sustainable health workforce

Progress and achievements (sub-regional)

- Sub-regional High-level commitments (PHMM, PHoH meetings, 3rd PHoNM):

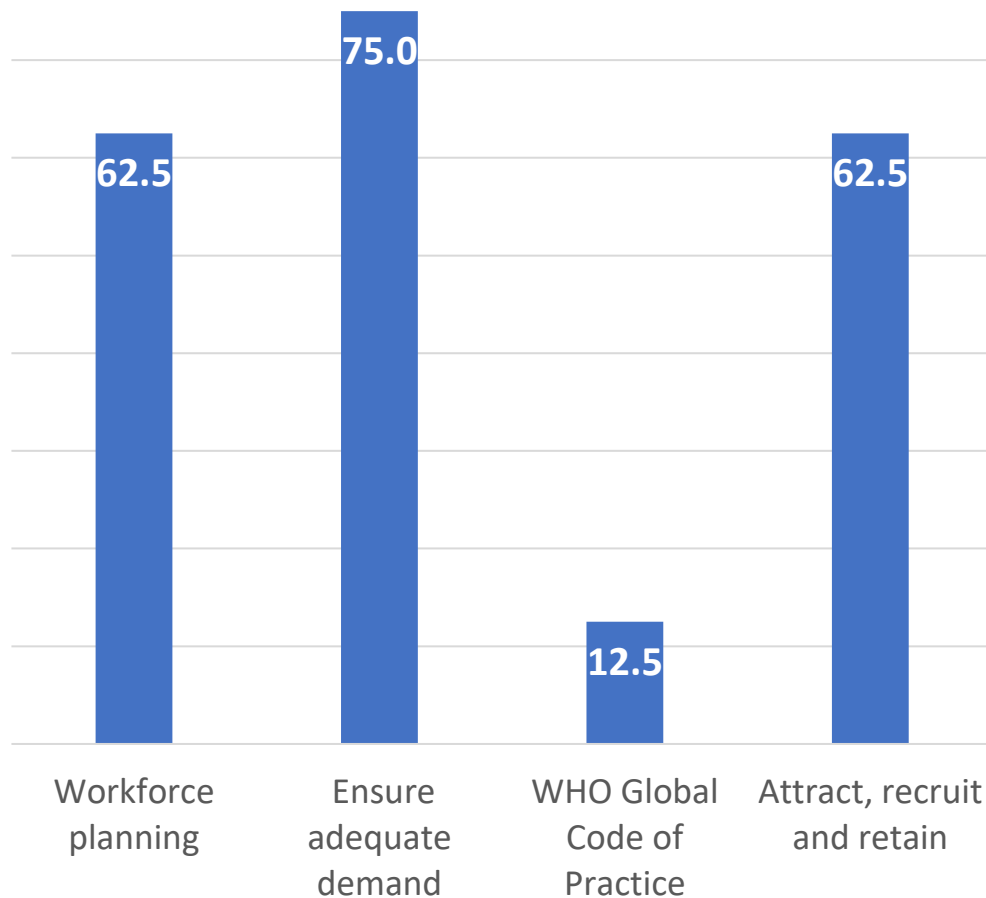
Vision: People and communities have equitable access to a competent, performing and motivated health workforce, providing essential as well as specialized healthcare services at all levels of health service delivery

- Ongoing work on the subregional Quality Improvement Programme for nursing in PICs with a focus on nursing and midwifery education and regulation



Progress and achievements: Mid-term progress monitoring of the SDNM (Jobs)

Activity or enacted policy priority among reporting 8 PICs



62.5% have started related dialogues
37.5% made a decision or commitment towards policies

Some examples:

- **Fiji:** Nursing assistant positions created, Retention allowance introduced, Salary steps to be reviewed
- **Vanuatu:** Decision made to create an incentive package to attract, recruit and retain midwives and nurses in identified areas
- **Cook Islands, Solomon Islands & Vanuatu:** National Nursing Strategic Plan
- **Papua New Guinea:** Rural Attraction and Retention Policy for the health workers, including nurses
- **Samoa:** Aligning the Nursing and Midwifery Organizational Structure and Career and Salary Structure with career pathway and qualifications

Challenges

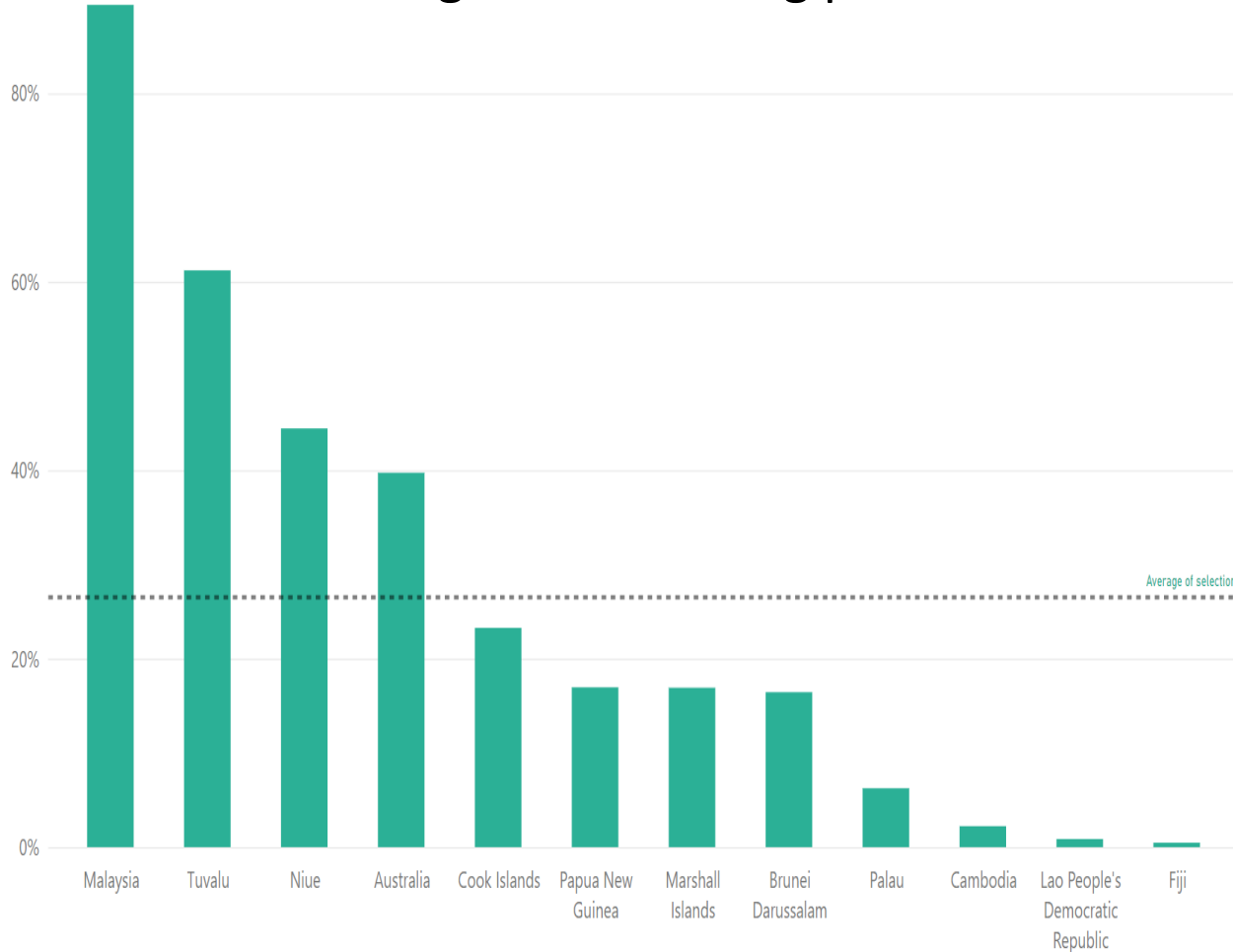
The persistent shortage of nursing workforce in the PICs during pre-pandemic has become worse post-pandemic with the recent increase in outmigration of nurses due to the global shortage and aggressive international recruitment.

- For example: Around 800 nurses from Fiji, 9 nurses from Nauru, ~15 nurses from Palau, 69 from Tonga and one from Tuvalu resigned during the recent one year.
- This puts a strain on the existing nurses and leads to increased workload and burnout.
- With the loss of senior and skilled nurses, the gaps are filled by the junior nurses – requiring extensive guidance, mentorship, and support in order to bridge the skills-gap, facilitate professional growth and job satisfaction, with an ultimate aim of decreasing attrition rates.

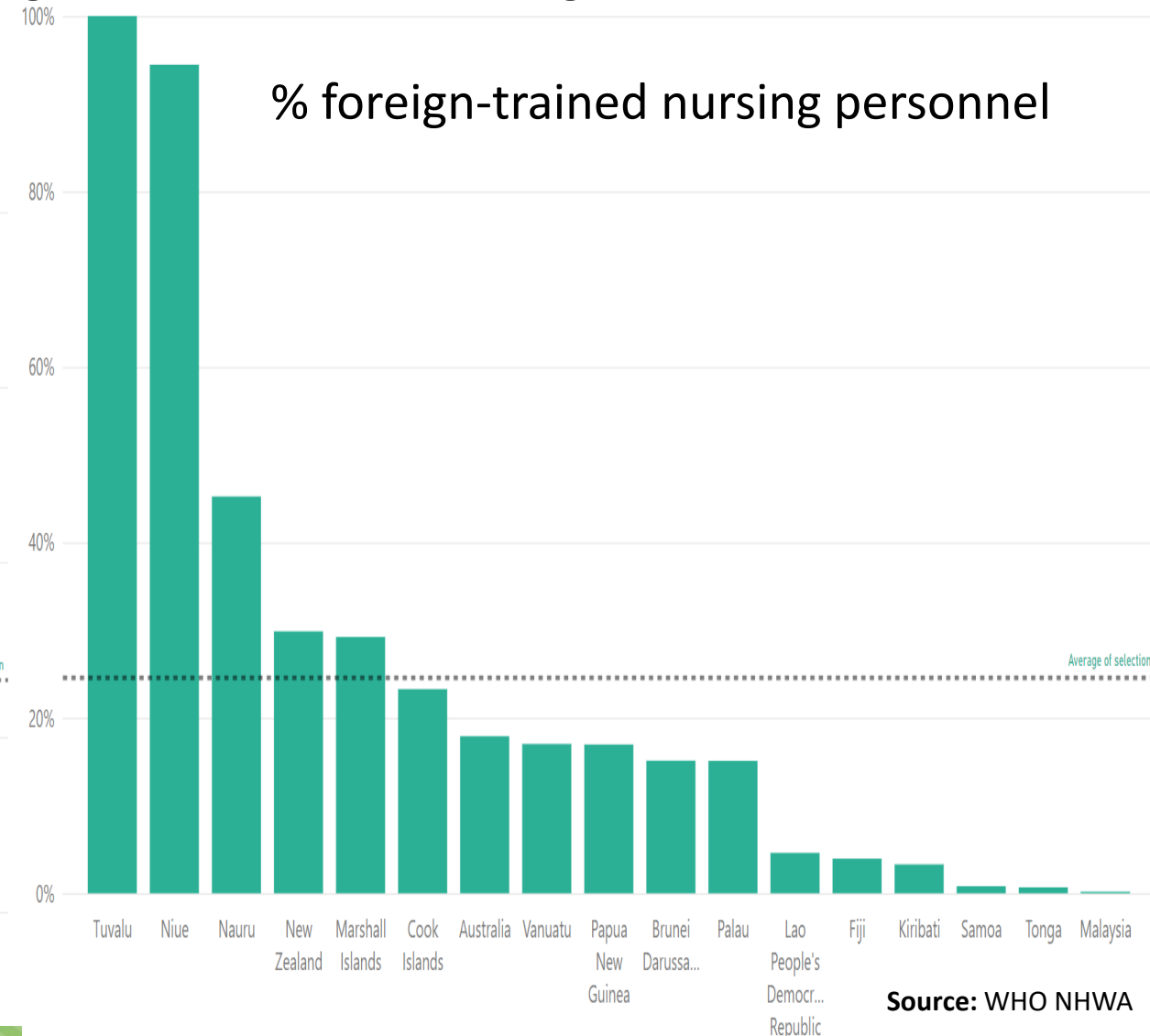
Challenges

- Some PICs rely heavily on recruiting nurses from overseas (foreign-born). These external recruits face cultural, social, and environmental challenges leading to dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of attrition.

% foreign-born nursing personnel



% foreign-trained nursing personnel



Source: WHO NHWA

Recommendations for governments

In concurrent with the commitments made by the Pacific Health Ministers during the 15th meeting held in September 2023 and the Pacific Heads of Health during the 14th meeting held in April 2023, the Pacific Heads of Nursing and Midwifery are recommended to:

- Develop comprehensive retention policies to attract, recruit and retain nurses by identifying and addressing the ‘push factors’ in the PICs and ‘pull factors’ by the recruiting/destination countries.
- Strengthen monitoring and understanding of the dynamics of nursing workforce mobility and its impact on health systems, as well as sharing the information with neighbouring PICs to help understand that health labour market dynamics.
- Promote the implementation of the WHO [Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#) to ethically manage migration through bilateral and multilateral agreements for the mutual benefit of both source and destination countries.

Recommendations for development partners

Support the PICs in implementing the government commitments by:

- Facilitating cross-country sharing of best practices in attracting, recruiting and retaining nurses in the country.
- Providing technical support for the implementation of comprehensive retention policies to attract, recruit and retain nurses by identifying and addressing the ‘push factors’ in the PICs and ‘pull factors’ by the recruiting/destination countries.
- Encouraging and promoting the implementation of the WHO [Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#) to ethically manage migration through bilateral and multilateral agreements for the mutual benefit of both source and destination countries.

Acknowledgements

For data and updates:

- Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers
- South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCNMOA)
- University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development) as the Secretariat for SPCNMOA
- HRH focal points in the PICs
- Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC)
- WHO Division of Pacific Technical Support and WHO Western Pacific Regional Office
- Development partners for the collaborative initiatives in strengthening HRH capacities including strengthening nursing workforce in the PICs.

Thank you, SPC for organizing this important regional meeting!

Thank you!