

Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

NURSES TOGETHER: A FORCE FOR GLOBAL HEALTH

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Regional Nursing Regulation and Accreditation

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Agenda Item N° 3.2

There is a large variation in the capacity and capability of delivering quality health services in the Pacific, where nurses and midwives form 74% of the regulated health workforce. There is wide variation in processes and standards for achieving and renewing registration; some countries have no legislation governing nursing, midwifery and associated roles, and others have outdated regulation. Lack of resources and technical expertise are slowing review and revision processes. Nurse migration is having a significant impact on the health workforce, but only limited data is available.

The Regional Quality Improvement Project (RQIP) was mandated at the 2022 PHMM to support regional development of consistent regulation, accreditation of education programs and practice standards in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). Data collection has commenced and should be completed by January 2024, with final reports and recommendations produced later in 2024.

Recommendations are provided for governments and development partners to support regional quality improvement, including measures to better understand and mediate the impacts of nurse migration.

1. BACKGROUND

Nurses and midwives form 74% of the regulated health workforce and play a critical role in providing care for vulnerable populations in PICTs, especially in rural and remote locations and small island nations [1]. Within the Pacific region there is large variation in capacity and capability for delivering quality health services, and most countries are experiencing significant workforce shortages [1]. Robust regulation and accreditation processes is required to ensure nurses and midwives are able to respond to population health needs and the requirements of universal healthcare coverage [2].

The Regional Quality Improvement Project (RQIP) was mandated at the 2022 [Pacific Health Ministers Meeting](#) [3] and is being delivered collaboratively by the [South Pacific Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers Alliance](#) (SPCNMOA) and [World Health Organization Collaborating Centre at the University of Technology Sydney](#) (WHOCC UTS). The RQIP seeks to support regional development of consistent regulation, accreditation of education programs and practice standards in PICs.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 RQIP project overview

The RQIP project received seed funding from the [Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council](#) (ANMAC) in 2023 and includes 14 PICTs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu). Stage 1 of the RQIP project is to:

- (1) conduct a comprehensive review of regulation and accreditation of all nursing and midwifery education programs in participating countries; and
- (2) conduct a comprehensive assessment of competency/practice standards for nursing and midwifery related roles in participating countries at all levels of practice.

From these processes a report will be developed outlining draft common standards for PICTs related to regulation and accreditation of nursing, midwifery and associated programs that provides:

- a) Minimum standards/guidelines for regulation and accreditation of nursing and midwifery courses;

- b) Minimum standards/guidelines for competency standards and scope of practice for nursing and midwifery related courses; and
- c) Mapping of minimum standards/guidelines to each country's qualification framework and/or the Pacific Qualifications Framework.

Following a process of consultation with key stakeholders the final project report will provide:

- Recommendations on the key principles required for development of a regional approach to regulation and accreditation.
- Guidelines on minimum standards for individual registrants (nursing, midwifery and associated programs) at common levels of practice.
- Recommendations on common curriculum guidelines for nursing, midwifery and associated programs.
- Recommendations to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications across participating countries using Pacific Qualifications Framework.

2.2 RQIP progress to date

The RQIP commenced data collection in July 2023. Stage 1 of the project is well underway with data collection commenced in 13 out of 14 participating countries. Data collection in Fiji is almost complete and we anticipate that all data will have been collected and collated by January 2024 in readiness for developing the draft, and then final reports in 2024.

3. CHALLENGES

3.1 Challenges identified by Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers (CNMO's)

Most CNMO's in participating countries have expressed frustration at being unable to prioritise timely review and revision of their Nursing, Midwifery and Health Professional Acts. Some countries do not have any legislation governing nursing, midwifery and associated roles and others have legislation that is many decades old. Many countries are in the process of reviewing and updating their legislation but

lack the human resources and technical expertise to complete this task in a timely manner. Technical assistance is being requested by Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officers to complete this task.

3.2 Variations across the region

Wide variation in regulation and accreditation between PICTs is evident in preliminary data collection. This variation includes both inherent differences in the level of pre-registration training for preparatory programs (Registered Nurse, Enrolled Nurse/Licensed Practical Nurses, and Midwives) and the accreditation standards used to ensure quality within those preparatory programs. There are also significant variations in the processes required to achieve registration in different countries including the use of National Board endorsed pre-registration examinations and competency assessments, the use of provisional licences for new registrants, and the processes for renewing registrations and the fees associated with this. In some jurisdictions there are no renewal procedures, and a person is registered for life.

3.3 Nurse and Midwife Migration

Despite the significant impact that nurse migration is having on the health workforce, highlighted by participants and SPCNMOA, only limited data is available on inbound and outbound mobility of the health workforce in PICTs and in the region. Seven PICTs are listed on the [WHO health workforce support and safeguards list, 2023](#) [4].

The [WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#) (the Code) encourages the bi-annual reporting of the numbers of health workers leaving and joining the health workforce. Some PICTs report this dataset through National Health Workforce Accounts annually, although it is not comprehensive. Available datasets are accessible via the [NHWA Web portal](#). While the majority of the PICTs have designated National Authorities, not many have submitted reports [5]. Consequently, there is only limited ability to track, in real-time, the impact nurse and midwife migration is having on PICTs.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Recommendations for governments/PHONM:

- 4.1.1 Commit to reviewing and strengthening professional regulatory systems in PICTs by revising **Nursing, Midwifery and Health Professional Acts** to ensure that regulations are contemporary and facilitate the efficient recruitment of qualified nurses and midwives into the health service to increase access to quality health services.
- 4.1.2 Commit to strengthening **registration processes** for registered roles including Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife, Nurse Practitioner and Enrolled Nurse/Licensed Practical Nurse in PICTs.
- 4.1.3 Commit to reviewing and strengthening regulatory systems that ensure robust **accreditation of professional nursing and midwifery preparatory programs** to promote graduates who are 'fit for practice' and have the requisite knowledge, skills, and attributes to support universal health coverage and other population health priorities.
- 4.1.4 Consider **harmonising professional regulations for registration and accreditation** across PICTs and creating **mutual recognition agreements** to reduce bureaucracy and support standards.
- 4.1.5 Consider development of a **'live' registry** of Nurses and Midwives across the Pacific region that is interoperable across health systems and national regulators. The development of a live registry would facilitate accurate data collection about nurse migration within our region.

4.2 Recommendations for development partners:

- 4.2.1 Provide funding to employ an appropriately qualified Technical Advisor to support review and drafting of national legislation related to Nursing, Midwifery and Health Professional Acts in PICTs. Most of the participating countries in the RQIP have requested this assistance.
- 4.2.2 Provide funding to support SPCNMOA members to convene for a 3-day meeting in 2024 to develop consensus agreement on the findings from the RQIP.

- 4.2.3 Support funding to develop a regional approach to regulation of registered Nursing and Midwifery roles in PICTs. Registration processes should encompass initial registration and periodic renewal and assessment.
- 4.2.4 Support funding to develop a regional approach to accreditation of professional nursing and midwifery preparatory programs in PICTs.
- 4.2.5 Support funding to explore the impact of nurse migration and the policy levers that could be implemented to improve nurse retention in PICTs.

5. REFERENCES

1. World Health Organization, 2020. State of the World's Nursing 2020: Investing in education, jobs and leadership. Geneva. ISBN 978-92-4-000327-9. [State of the world's nursing 2020: investing in education, jobs and leadership \(who.int\)](#)
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5. Pacific Health Ministers Meeting 2023, 'Rethinking Human Resources for Health', Meeting document prepared for the 15th Pacific Health Ministers Meeting, Tonga. Retrieved from: [Rethinking-human-resources-for-health-phmm-paper.pdf \(who.int\)](#), accessed 13/9/2023.