

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 Updates

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Nursing development in the Pacific has continued to gain momentum throughout 2023. The Pacific Community (SPC) has continued to respond to the needs from PICTs, investing in key priority areas including education, workforce, leadership and universal health coverage. This briefing paper provides an update to participants of the 4th Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery (PHONM) on regional nursing updates by SPC in 2023.

The theme of this year's meeting which emanated from the 2023 International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congress theme "Nurses together: A force for Global Health" promotes discussions on thematic areas raised at the 3rd POHNM meeting held in September 2022 which included workforce, education, leadership, clinical governance, universal health coverage (UHC) & Primary care (PC), health information, health emergencies and research, in order to improve nursing practice in the region to yield tangible population health outcomes.

1. BACKGROUND

The Clinical Service Programme (CSP) of the Public Health Division (PHD) at the Pacific Community (SPC) plays a significant role in supporting nursing services in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). The program hosts the Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery (PHONM) as secretariat, whilst also maintaining a helpdesk function to provide technical advice and support PICTs to cooperate regionally and improve regional governance for nursing services. Supporting the establishment and strengthening of nursing professional networks and providing support to leadership, training and capacity building initiatives for the nursing workforce are also core deliverables of PHD's program of work.

By providing technical advice and systematic support, encouraging the production and exchange of current and relevant information between nursing stakeholders, and supporting the strengthening, proper coordination and effective use and distribution of limited resources at local and regional levels, SPC aims to continue to support PICTs in leading change for health system improvements in nursing for improved effectiveness and efficiency of nursing service delivery.

2. PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 PICTs own and lead the change agenda for health services improvement in the region

In August 2022, PHONM and partners identified workforce issues, education and research, clinical governance, health emergencies and Pacific clinical and nursing networks as priority areas that needed to be addressed. The hosting of the 4th PHONM meeting by SPC is testament to an ongoing commitment to provide the necessary platform to ensure there is ample support for country priorities including leadership, workforce and human resources, education and capacity development (including continuous professional development and nursing specialisation) health information, responding to emergencies, and research, with an overall a view to achieving PHC and UHC.

Activities that were supported in 2023 include the following:

- In responding to health emergencies and requests from countries, SPC deployed 7 nurses for 5-7 weeks to Tuvalu to support local capacity in managing COVID-19 outbreak, and an

operating theatre nurse to Vanuatu as part of a wider clinical support team for response to Cyclones Judy and Kevin in March.

- SPC also continues to host a regional Helpdesk function to assist PICTs with their requests for support to nursing.

2.2 Improved capabilities & knowledge/skill gains leading to practise change & improved effectiveness and efficiency within Pacific Ministries of Health (MoH)

SPC has continued to support nursing in-service training, continuing medical education (CME) both formal and informal, in line with regional nursing recommendations and requests from countries.

Activities supported in 2023 include:

- CME in nursing endoscopy, ENT, ophthalmology, paediatrics, and formal training in basic nursing.
- An online Graduate Certificate in Perioperative Nursing (GCPN) for 20 nurses, co-funded with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS). This course is facilitated by the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) and runs for one year with SPC funding 10 nurses from 9 countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu).
- SPC continues to work with the USAID funded America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) project, focussing on COVID-19 Vaccine Response in Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Solomon Islands. This has provided support and training for healthcare workers in cold chain and vaccine storage, infection prevention and control (IPC), risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), and data collection and health information system (HIS) reporting.
- The ROC Taiwan funded project on 'Capacity building in specialized clinical and nursing services for healthcare workers (HCWs) in PICTs', facilitated through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) included support in nursing training and sexual and reproductive health.
- The activities facilitated by the IPC Adviser includes training in PICTs in hand hygiene, surgical site infections (SSIs), and health care associated infections (HAIs). Continued support has been provided in development of IPC national guidelines and workplans. Countries supported are Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, the Republic of the Marshall Islands

(RMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. This also includes virtual support to 10 countries in the utilisation of an online HAI database.

2.3 Legislations, policies, guidelines and standards enforced/implemented in PICTs

SPC has provided support to Vanuatu in updating their nursing strategic framework, review of the Nursing Act and revision of the organisational structure.

2.4 Data, stats & knowledge products used to inform evidence-based planning and policy decisions:

Research is supported through collaborated effort with other partners, coupled with the analysis of available data to support informed decision making by the DCS and PHONM. Since 2020, there is ongoing emphasis on the need for country-driven nursing research. Preliminary relationships have been established with the Global Research Nurses through the Global Health Network to improve research initiatives and skills amongst nurses in the region. Additionally in 2023, SPC has commenced collecting data regarding critical care nursing workforce capacity throughout the region to better understand the current capacity and context, and identify key gaps and opportunities for investment.

3. CHALLENGES

- Need to strengthen advocacy for nursing leadership. This includes peer mentoring and formal qualifications to adequately prepare upcoming and potential nurse leaders. Ultimately, formally recognising nursing leadership positions at the national level.
- Continue to progress the development of specialisation pathways in PICTs where applicable (e.g. critical care, intensive care, paediatrics and perioperative).
- Limited support for professional development initiative at country level.
- Limited local investment & recognition to nursing in PICTs.

4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

4.1 Recommendations for Governments:

- 4.1.1 To have the political will for increased investment to nursing including education, workforce, leadership, and research.
- To continue to support PICTs in priority clinical nursing and IPC needs, both regionally and at the national level.
 - To provide ongoing support for workforce strengthening, service delivery and improving quality of clinical, nursing and IPC services.
- 4.1.2 To support capacity building and formal education for registered nurses, including strengthening nursing specialisation pathways and ensuring support (such as study time, space, resourcing etc.).
- 4.1.3 Strengthen nursing accreditation at the national and regional level.

4.2 Recommendation for development partners

- 4.2.1 Continuous support for nursing education and workforce needs.
- 4.2.2 Continuous support for technical and funding assistance to nursing priority areas and needs at both national and regional levels.
- 4.2.3 Support to nursing leadership initiatives (training, attachments etc).