

Pacific Heads of Nursing & Midwifery Meeting

Réunion des directeurs des soins infirmiers et obstétricaux du Pacifique

TUVALU: NURSING DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Presented by:
CNO Sokolito P Maloto
16/11/2023



TUVALU your PACIFIC NEIGHBOUR





INFORMATION ON TUVALU

- TUVALU IS A SMALL SOVEREIGN ISLAND NATION SITUATED IN THE PACIFIC BETWEEN HAWAII AND FIJI
- TUVALU CONSISTS OF NINE CORAL ATOLLS
- CONSIDERED ONE OF THE SMALLEST AND MOST REMOTE COUNTRIES ON EARTH
- POPULATION OF APPROXIMATELY 11,000
- FUNAFUTI IS THE LARGEST ATOLL WHERE 60% OF THE POPULATION RESIDE
- PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL IS THE ONLY HOSPITAL IN TUVALU AND LOCATED ON FUNAFUTI

Challenges for Tuvaluan's accessing transportation to and from Outer-Islands

- Eight outer islands (northern, central and southern) as depicted in previous slide
- Boat is under direction of maritime services not owned by MoH.
- Boat sometimes has mechanical problems and unable to transport to islands.
- Require MoH approval to task boat for medical retrieval.
- Patients discharged from PMH need to wait on Funafuti until boat can transport back to home island
- Clinical staff need to be approved and booked for transport to and from the outer islands.



NURSING WORKFORCE 2023

WHO states that the global ratio should be 5 nurses to 1,000 population



TUVALU Nursing Workforce:

- Tuvaluan Nurses: Approximately 40
- Consisting of CNO, Senior Registered Nurses, Registered Nurses, Assistant Nurses and Nurse Aides
- Current Contracted Qualified Nurses:
 - Fiji nurses – 4 Kiribati nurses - 5
- Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) currently has 8 qualified nursing personnel.
- Funafuti has two clinics situated at each end of island with 1 qualified nurse and a nurse aide
- Outer Islands usually have 2 qualified nurses at each post.



TUVALU NURSING TRAINING

- No School of Nursing
- Nursing training is conducted through neighbouring countries like Fiji or Samoa.
- To be successful in attending nursing training the department only has 1 in-service for midwifery and 6 preservice students scholarship places.
- In 2021, Tuvalu Department of Health entered a partnership with Fiji National University to undertake the First In Country Nursing training course. 15 applicants underwent the Certificate IV in Enrolled Nursing course, which was delivered through virtual and online modes of learning. All 15 students graduated as Enrolled Nurses.

ACHIEVING RESILIENCE and GROWING IN CONFIDENCE

- These fifteen resourceful students spent twelve months working fulltime, undertaking fulltime student commitments, challenging the use of technology in undertaking the course requirements, clinical practice and gaining clinical competencies along with researching and writing clinical case studies each showed a tenacity to achieve and set the benchmark for a future resilient and confident nursing workforce.
- Nicknamed: 'The Fabulous Fifteen'



NURSING DEPLOYMENT

Ministry of Health
approached
SPC
requesting
assistance
due to:

COVID 19 community transmission which did not affect Tuvalu population until much later than other countries.

Identified critical shortage of qualified nurses within Tuvalu at the time of COVID 19 and other health outbreaks.

Decrease in sufficient nurses for the provision of safe and high-quality care.

Required support and assistance of an exhausted Tuvaluan nursing team during the outbreaks of CoVID19, Typhoid and Influenza.

NURSING DEPLOYMENT PROCESS



Steps taken:

- The Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs approached SPC for additional nurses to assist Tuvalu nursing team.
- Request was due to the critical shortage of experienced nurses in Tuvalu during the CoVID19, Typhoid and Influenza outbreaks
- SPC to confirm nurses' availability (Fiji nurses)
- The Ministry and confirmed nurses to sign the “Undertaking of Indemnification Agreement”
- SPC and confirmed nurses to sign the contract outlining SPC obligations. Both SPC and the Ministry of Health Tuvalu to make payment of 50% each of the accommodation costs

SPC provided two (2) nursing deployment groups:

- In 2022/23, during CoVID19 outbreak –
26/11/2022 – 7/01/2023
- In 2023, during the Typhoid and Influenza outbreak-
18/5/2023 - 31/7/2023
- **Both nursing deployments were funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and executed through SPC**

STRENGTHS and LIMITATIONS of DEPLOYMENTS

STRENGTHS

- Ease the Tuvalu nurse's workload
- Support existing services and programs
- Training for the local nurses
- Share knowledge and skills with our local teams
- Improve the nursing services especially midwifery services
- Availability of in-country funding to share costs with SPC
- Building strong relationship with regional nurses (one family)
- Promote intra-professional collaborative care
- Extra income for the nurses

LIMITATIONS

- Long process for deployment of nurses
- Limited resources in the Princess Margaret Hospital
- Limited number of houses, hotels and lodges for the nurse's accommodation
- Depends on the availability of in-country funding
- Rapid changes in the Practices and Roles for the nurses
- Fear for themselves and families compounded by distances
- Communication barriers (language)
- Change of the environment
- Leadership
- Healthcare systems



Deployment welcome and farewell events.

Tuvalu nurses expressed their appreciation by holding events in Tuvalu traditional fashion

Capacity Strengthening Training



Ongoing Workforce Challenges

- Limited numbers of pre-service and in service scholarship offered for nursing.
- Decreased economic and human resources to support mass recruitment of nurses.
- Reduced allocation of financial resources for nurses to attain necessary training requirements.
- The absence of an established accreditation system for nurses training.
- The training in specialized nursing care that does take place in Tuvalu is also seldom matched with employment needs.
- Limited number of local nursing specialists in all areas, especially midwifery.
- Long wait for training opportunities and promotion. The current Hierarchical Nursing structure does not allow for fast promotions as there are not so many higher-level posts within the current structure until holder of a certain post retires.

Ways to Strengthen Nursing Services

- Increase training needs submission for pre-service and in-service scholarships for nurses every year.
- Continuation of up grading in-country training to improve delivery of quality nursing care and ensure that care is taking place effectively.
- Long term contracts for regional nurses to work in Funafuti to address the gaps when short term contracts end, leading to potential nursing workforce crisis.
- Maintain the “Impact Assessment” for outsourcing nurses in gauging their work performances as this would strongly encourage the Ministry of Health to continue providing financial support for supplementary nurses.
- Local incentives to promote nursing at PMH – special allowances provided for nurses doing special nursing cares.
- The ability to ‘grow our own’ whereby school leavers are given an opportunity to develop our nursing workforce.

Conclusion

- Nursing workforce in Tuvalu is like all our Pacific neighbours who are experiencing severe shortages of qualified and skilled nurses.
- Every deployment is experienced differently by the individual and can bring new challenges to the deployed and the Tuvaluan nursing team.
- Strengthening the nursing workforce through the delivery of high-quality healthcare services will be dependent on a resilient and active workforce.
- The emphasis to delivering the National Health Strategic Plan initiatives and the National Development strategy outcomes 3: Social Development and 10: Health and Wellbeing will be in the promotion of developing locally qualified and specialized nursing team.
- This team will forge forward in the delivery of International standards of nursing care required to improve the healthcare demands across all areas of the Tuvalu healthcare system from the outer islands to the emergency/acute hospital services at PMH.

Acknowledgements

- Government of Tuvalu - Ministry of Health Social Welfare and Gender Affairs (MOHSWGA)
- Tuvalu nurses – for their resilience and commitment to improving health in Tuvalu.
- South Pacific Community – assisting and supporting nursing deployments.
- Fiji nurses from SPC (individuals)- leaving family and friends to assist in Tuvalu.
- Government of Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).
- Mrs Alaita Taulima Faletapu – recently retired CNO who oversaw all deployments and nursing initiatives.
- Nursing Mentor Adviser- Mrs Julie Kirk - for ongoing virtual training, mentoring and advice of Tuvalu nurses during CoVID19 outbreak.
- Fiji National University (SoN) – collaborating on the first in country training of Certificate IV in Enrolled Nursing.

Fesili and Fakafetai lasi



Enrolled students in the FNU Cert IV in Enrolled Nursing program



TUVALU NURSES ARE THE VOICES FOR VACCINES



Department of Health
Tuvalu Government



In country basic nursing training for ANs

Department of Health
Tuvalu Government



Julie & Alaita during PHONM 2

Department of Health
Tuvalu Government