

**Partnerships for a Healthy Region (PHR)  
Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (Nursing and Midwifery) (SHWP)**

**Brief 3: Vanuatu Nursing Regulation Workshop – 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025**

## Background

The Vanuatu Country Workshop took place between July 22-23, 2025 in Port Vila, Vanuatu with 60 participants (43 female, 17 male) joining from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Vanuatu Nursing Council (VNC), Vanuatu College of Nursing Education (VCNE), Vila Central Hospital (VCH), other key partners, senior nurses and midwives and 5 outer island province representatives (*Tafea, Shefa, Penama, Malampa, Sanma*). This workshop forms part of the Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (SHWP) Program under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) five-year Partnerships for a Health Region (PHR) initiative (2024-2028). The WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Development at University of Technology Sydney (WHO CCNM UTS) manages the SHWP program, in partnership with South Pacific Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCNMOA). The SHWP Program aims to strengthen Pacific health systems to improve the quality of and access to health care and population health across the Pacific.

## Purpose and Approach

In 2025, WHO CCNM UTS and Fellows from the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) (2025) will facilitate workshops in all 13 countries involved in SHWP. These workshops are led by the PLP Fellows following their 2025 Study Block, to engage national actors and stakeholders in identifying system-level strengths and challenges across education, regulation, service delivery, governance, to establish a common understanding and co-develop and prioritise actions for strengthening nursing and midwifery registration, regulation, and workforce planning through multi-stakeholder collaboration and regional alignment.

## Workshop Objectives

1. To explore and understand the framework for professional regulation
2. To examine and discuss Vanuatu's country traffic lights action plan and strategy
3. To assess Vanuatu's regulatory status against the regulatory framework in order to determine the work priorities
4. To agree on priorities and a plan of action.
5. Collect baseline data for GEDSI and raising awareness of GEDSI principles



*Vanuatu workshop participants with Minister for Health Hon. John Still Tari Qetu, Director Policy, Planning and Corporate Services Dr. Posikai Samuel Tapo, Principle Nursing Officer Ms Harriet Sam, and WHO CCNM UTS*

### **Activity 1: Strategic Leadership Engagement**

WHO CCNM UTS Team met with 2025 PLP Mentor, Principle Nursing Officer (PNO) Ms Harriet Sam, PLP Fellows Ms Adel Tamata, Ms Becky Kalwatman, and staff from VNC and VCNE to discuss the meeting objectives and orient the structure of activities. Meetings were also held with WHO CCNM UTS, and key stakeholders including senior Ministry of Health officials - Director of Curative and Hospital Services, Director Policy, Planning and Corporate Services, Director Public Health, Director General MoH, Principal Nursing Officer (PNO) and representatives from the Vanuatu Australia Health Program (VAHP). Past PLP Fellows were acknowledged and formally congratulated.



**Meeting Opening:** Director Policy, Planning and Corporate Services Dr Posikai Samuel Tapo, Director Curative & Hospital Services Dr Sereana Natuman, Director of Public Health Dr Jenny Stephen, Program Lead Quality, Inclusion & Community Ms Nelly Willy, Principle Nursing Officer Ms Harriet Sam, VNC Members and Australian High Commission to Vanuatu First Secretary Mr Dominic Ransan Cooper and DFAT Project Manager Ms Mary Hay

Workshop formalities were opened by Director of Curative and Hospital Services, followed by a welcome address from DFAT's First Secretary in the Australian High Commission Vanuatu and the Director General Health. PNO began the meeting by presenting SHWP's background and context, MoH Nursing Strategy and Traffic Light Action Plan. Traffic Lights were amended throughout the workshop to reflect Vanuatu's current position and priority actions.



*PNO Ms Harriet Sam's opening presentation*

An evening event was held for special guests and participants, where The Minister for Health, Hon. John Still Tari Qwetu and Director Policy, Planning and Corporate Services gave a moving address. The Minister highlighted Vanuatu's commitment to

developing the nursing workforce and population health, and showed immense support for the participating nurses and leaders in the room.

### **Activity 2: System Review and Regulation**

Deliberations on system reviews and regulation were introduced by Prof. Mary Chiarella (WHO CCNM UTS), presenting the framework for Health Professional Regulation - the five areas of regulation (*registration, standards and codes, accreditation, complaints, and governance*), which structured the day's activities. The Framework was used to analyse Vanuatu's Nurses Act (2000) and talk through elements within the five areas that are currently legislated within the Act.



*Participants and Prof. Mary Chiarella during World Café activity*

Three World-Café rounds took place, facilitated by VCNE, VNC and WHO CCNM UTS. Participants were grouped into 10 tables where facilitators ran through gaps, challenges and topic areas, gathering common themes on butchers' paper. Groups were able to have in depth conversations about three out of five elements of the regulation framework introduced in the morning. Each tables paper was then fixed on the wall, participants were able to explore the two areas they missed, and reflect on other groups thoughts on the areas they covered.

Key points and recommendations from each group were fed back by the VNC and VCNE facilitators for open comments by the larger group. Participants had fruitful debates about the priority areas for each section, which fed into the workshop recommendations presented on Day 2 (pg.3).

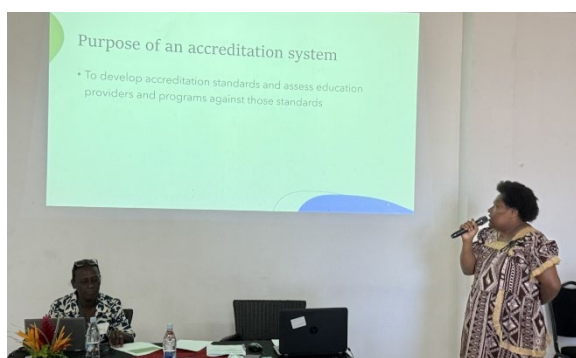


### **Activity 3: Group Discussion on National Priorities**



*Participants group work on Vanuatu Accreditation Standards*

Vanuatu's priority area for this workshop focused on developing accreditation standards for Vanuatu's Nursing Institutions Nursing Programs, aiming to support the VNC in strengthening the quality of nursing education. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Day VNC Registrar Ms Bertha Tarileo opened the day by presenting on the roles, plans and priority areas for VNC. PLP Fellows Ms Adel Tamata and Ms Becky Kalwatman followed this by introducing the work they led in collaboration with the Vanuatu Country Taskforce. The Fellows outlined the Taskforce's proposed seven evidence-based accreditation standards. The draft standards included governance, curriculum development and evaluation, resources, assessment, clinical placements, and Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI), based on international examples.



*PLP Fellows Adel Tamata and Becky Kalwatman presenting their project and work on Vanuatu's Accreditation Standards*

Participants were split into seven groups with VNC, VCNE and WHO CCNM UTS facilitators. Each group reviewed one of the proposed standards in detail, identified potential adaptations to ensure alignment with Vanuatu's context and needs.

Each group reported back on recommended changes to the standards and they were deliberated by the wider group.

### **Activity 4: Review and Key Outcomes**

All workshop outcomes were successfully met through workshop activities. Gaps were reviewed by the 5 regulation framework areas and following consultation and review of the workshop recommendations with PNO, VNC Registrar and all workshop participants, the following gaps and recommendations for action were agreed upon:

#### **Registration**

##### *Gaps*

- Lack of funding to support VNC
- Poor communication between VNC, MoH, VCNE leading to confusion
- Lack of clarity for nurses about why registration is important for public safety

##### *Recommendations*

- Urgent need for adequate funding structures
- Development of communication strategy and VNC roadshow to educate nurses

#### **Standards**

##### *Gaps*

- Lack of awareness and understanding of standards and how to use them
- No standards for different levels of nurses

##### *Recommendations*

- Review current standards and gaps within
- Training on how to use standards
- Develop an implementation guide for current/new standards

#### **Accreditation**

##### *Gaps*

- Lack of clarity of organisations roles regarding accreditation (VQA and VNC) and which should oversee accreditation

##### *Recommendations*

- Development of accreditation standards for quality of programs, bench marking, protection of the public and enrolment in other regional programs

- Amendment of accreditation process (VNC first (as per legislation) then VQA)

## **Complaints**

### *Gaps*

- Confusion regarding who deals with complaints (employer, PSC or VNC)
- Poor awareness of complaints process by nurses and the public

### *Recommendations*

- Establish a complaints process
- Seek funding for VNC to carry out complaints process
- Training on complaints process required for public nurses, midwives, MoH and VNC

## **Governance**

### *Gaps*

- Responsibilities for different areas of nursing governance come under varying directorates in MoH
- Confusion around role of regulation and employment by nurses and public
- Lack of funding for nursing governance

### *Recommendations*

- Produce a plain English guide to explain Nurses Act (2000) to nurses
- PNO to have a CNO Office with additional staff to oversee all areas of nursing, midwifery, nurse practitioners and link the different portfolios

## **High -level leadership for nursing and midwifery in Vanuatu**

### *Actions*

- PNO needs a CNO Office with staff to oversee all areas and link different portfolios
- Ministerial legislative role under Act suggests a meeting twice a year with health workforce stakeholders - regulation, PSC, MOH, Association, CNO/PNO, education
- PNO to be a member of VNC Board (to clearly add into Nursing Act)

- PNO to set up a peak nursing meeting – meet 3-4x a year with key nursing stakeholders
- Consider national funding for VNC registration and regulation process, to improve health outcomes and protection under Act
- VNC to organize a Communication Strategy (e.g roadshow)
- Consider a national curriculum for all nursing programs

## **Regional standards, guides, policies too:**

### *Recommendations:*

- Enable reciprocity move across region and work across region
- Standardized practice – regional curriculum framework. To enable qualifications to be recognized education link with other regional courses (CPD)
- Explain role of registration – protection of public
- Guide to explain role of regulation, PSC, MOH, Association, CNO/PNO, education
- Guidelines for registration of new graduates (local and external) and overseas nurses

## **Special thanks**

To DFAT for funding the meeting through PHR and to Vanuatu Minister of Health for the special address, participation and financial support granted to the PLP Workshop.

## **Next steps:**

- Continue support for next 4 years under PHR
- Work across region to prioritise which regulatory guides and standards are required
- Continue support for ongoing country work
- Provide Meeting Brief, Consensus Statement and guidance on Nursing Act (2000) on CPD, registration and other cadre on register
- Return to Vanuatu for a follow up national meeting