

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

Brief : Republic of Kiribati Nursing Regulation Workshop – 5 and 6 August 2025

Background

The Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (Nursing and Midwifery) (SHWP) Program is funded under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) five-year Partnerships for a Healthy Region (PHR) initiative (2024-2029). The WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery & Health Development at University of Technology Sydney (WHO CCNM UTS) is managing and implementing the program, in partnership with South Pacific Chief Nursing & Midwifery Officers Alliance (SPCNMOA) across 13 Pacific Island countries (PICs). 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.

The Republic of Kiribati Country Workshop for the Partnerships for a Health Region (PHR) Strengthening Health Workforce in the Pacific (SHWP) Program took place between 5 to 6 August 2025. Twenty four (24) senior nurses and midwives (all female) participated from the Kiribati Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS). Key partners including representatives from the Australian government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) - Kakiateiti Erikate, Senior Program Manager – Health & GEDSI and Kaititaake Itintaake – PHR Coordinator and Ms Agnes Nikuata from the WHO Country Office in Kiribati also joined on the first day to welcome and address workshop participants.

Purpose and Approach

In 2025, WHO CCNM UTS and Fellows from the Pacific Leadership Program (PLP) (2025) will facilitate workshops in all 13 PICs involved in SHWP. These workshops are led by the PLP Fellows



Prof. Di Brown (WHO CCNM UTS), Ms Benny Teuea and Ms Helen Murdoch (Kiribati MHMS), with Ms Amanda Neill and Prof. Marg Gatling (WHO CCNM UTS)

with support from the senior leader(s) for nursing and midwifery in each country 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 country traffic lights action plan and strategy (SOWN 2020 & 2025).
3. To assess 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.



Ms Kakiateiti Erikate (DFAT) welcoming participants to the SHWP workshop.

Activity 1: Strategic Orientation and Leadership Engagement

The WHO CCNM UTS Team (senior nursing regulation and education advisers Prof. Di Brown and Associate Prof. Margaret Gatling, with monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) specialist Ms Amanda Neill) arrived on 4 August and met initially with the Director of Nursing Services (DNS) Ms Helen Murdoch at the MHMS Offices to discuss the meeting objectives and orient the structure of activities. Meetings were also held by the WHO CCNM UTS team, and key stakeholders including the Health Secretary Ms Benny Teuea from Kiribati MHMS, and the Kiribati Fellows from the 2025 PLP, Ms Baaua Teibiraa and Ms Terry Eromanga. These two PLP 2025 Fellows and the DNS revised the proposed workshop structure and planned respective sessions and presentations for the workshop with support from the WHO CCNM UTS Team.



Ms Helen Murdoch reviewing the Traffic Light Action Plan with Prof. Di and participants.

The workshop included an introduction to the SHWP Program and the involvement of Kiribati as one of the 13 PICs by Prof. Di, and a presentation by the DNS on the SHWP's background and context, National Nursing Strategy and Traffic Light Action Plan. These Traffic Lights were reviewed and amended to reflect current position and priority actions.

The two 2025 PLP Fellows presented to the larger group, outlining their experience of the PLP program and impact of learning more about leadership, and the work they have led with support from the DNS, to establish the Country Taskforce, which links with revision of the Kiribati Medical Services Act (1996).



Large group discussion on the Kiribati Medical Services Act (1996) facilitated by Prof. Marg.

Activity 2: System Review and Regulation

Issues associated with system reviews and regulation were introduced by Prof. Marg, who presented the framework for Health Professional Regulation - the five areas of regulation (registration, standards and codes, accreditation, complaints, and governance). This provided structure for the remainder of the workshop.

A session on Understanding Your Legislation also facilitated by Prof. Marg focused on review of the contents of the Kiribati Medical Services Act (1996) that included detailed discussed by section. Gaps or points of contention were identified for further review and debate.

The World Café session continued the critical review of the Act (1996) as participants analysed

sections in four separate groups, focusing on Education - Accreditation, Nursing Council, Registration and Discipline - Public Safety. Each group ran through gaps, challenges and recommendations for action, and recorded this information. Groups were able to have in depth conversations about elements of the regulation and the Medical Services Act introduced earlier in the day. They explored all areas of the legislation and reflected on thoughts and suggestions from the wider group on other areas covered.

Key points and recommendations from each group were fed back by the facilitators for open comments. Participants had fruitful debates about the priority areas for each section, which fed into the workshop recommendations.



Ms Tareti Ruaia Ioane and Ms Tatiku Kabuati (Kiribati School of Nursing) with Prof. Marg and Prof. Di (WHO CCNM UTS).

Activity 3: Continuing Professional Development and Group Discussion on National Priorities

Two topics were presented by the WHO CCNM UTS Team as part of continuing professional development (CPD) for the nursing participants. Prof. Marg presented on Accreditation of Nursing Standards of relevance to the Kiribati context. This covered the purpose of an accreditation system, role, functions and powers of the Kiribati Nursing Council, advantages of having nursing program accreditation standards and how they are developed, assessment processes and strategies, and gave a brief overview of draft standards and criteria from another Pacific country that may be of some relevance for Kiribati in the future.

Prof. Di spoke about the need for specialisation in nursing as part of the changing roles of health professionals across the region. She briefly covered topics including expanded roles and scope, effective skill mix and specialisation based on evidence, associated processes and drivers such as cost and quality, and skill shortages.

Activity 4: Review and Key Outcomes

All workshop outcomes were successfully met through workshop activities and initial feedback from participants evaluating the workshop was positive. Issues were reviewed by the five regulation framework areas and following consultation and review of the workshop recommendations with the DNS and all workshop participants, the following gaps and recommendations for action were agreed upon:

Registration

Gaps

- The structure of Nursing Council does not adequately represent current healthcare workforce needs and structures.
- Midwives and Nurse Practitioners not mentioned in Medical Services Act.
- Life-time registration does not allow up to date information about workforce skills mix and availability.
- The register is not up to date due to lack of administrative support and life-time registration.
- The Nursing Council has responsibility for accrediting training of nurse aides but no responsibility for setting and overseeing workforce.
- Processes for managing overseas trained nurses who may come into Kiribati with church organisations and want to work in Kiribati need clarification.

Recommendations

- There is an urgent need for review of Nursing Council membership and revised processes and policies.
- Life-time registration needs to be reviewed and a process for accurate and current registration needs to be developed.

- Management of overseas trained nurses needs reviewing & policy updating.
- Consider bringing education and management of nurse aides under the Kiribati Nursing Council.

Standards

Gaps

- This was only briefly discussed and will need to be followed up in future workshops.
- There are currently only Registered Nurse and Midwives in Kiribati. There is a need to develop nursing specialisation.
- There is a need for standards for different level of nurses e.g specialty areas mental health, Nurse Practitioner etc.

Benefits

- Standardised practice and quality for public safety.
- Provides a coherent pathway to assist in career development, respond to population health needs.
- Improves retention.

Recommendations

- Training - need for education on how to develop standards and use them.
- Guide to be developed on implementation of standards.

Accreditation

Gaps

- Nursing Council not involved in accrediting nursing/midwifery programs.
- Accreditation is currently managed by the local authority and also externally by SPC.
- No accreditation standards exist for program approval.
- There is a general agreement about the need for accreditation standards, but more discussion and education about them are needed.

Recommendations

- Accreditation standards to be developed for quality of programs, bench marking, protection of public, enrollment in other regional programs
- Nursing Council needs a role in accreditation of nursing/midwifery programs.

Complaints

Gaps

- This was not addressed at the workshop. There was agreement that this is needed in the future.

Recommendations

- Training is needed on complaints process for public, nurses, midwives, MOH and KNC committees

Governance

Gaps

- The current Medical Services Act is outdated and needs revision and updating or the nurses need a separate Nurses and Midwives Act.
- The Act contains provision for Enrolled Nurses who do not exist in Kiribati, but no recognition of Nurse Practitioners.
- The controlling body for nurse aides needs to be updated and revised as they are currently managed by both the Nursing Council and Medical Council which makes lines of accountability confused and potentially unsafe.
- Lack of funding as registration fees are only one-time payment.

Recommendation

- Develop a Cabinet Paper to request approval for a review of the current Health Services Act.

Continuing Professional Education (CPD)

Gaps

- Currently no requirements for nurses to update their knowledge and skills.
- There is no agreed process for nurses to expand their scope of practice.

Recommendations

- Develop a policy on CPD to be ratified by the Nursing Council.

Regional standards, guides, policies

Recommendations to:

- 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 required.

Special thanks

To DFAT for funding the meeting through the PHR, to the WHO Kiribati Country Office for their interest and support of the SHWP, and to the Kiribati Health Secretary for her time to meet with the WHO CCNM UTS team with the DNS, and support granted to the DNS Office.

Next steps:

- Provide a meeting Brief.
- Continue support for next four years under PHR.
- Work across region to assist countries and help develop / revise regulatory guides and standards as required.
- Continue support for ongoing country work.
- Return to Kiribati for a follow up national meeting.



