

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

Brief: Kiribati In-country visit – 24th to 26th February 2026

Background

The second Kiribati in-country visit took place from 24-26 February 2026 in South Tarawa. This visit was 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 CCNMH 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, in line with recommendations from the State of the World's Nursing Report 2025, and WHO Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery.

Approach for in-country visit

The first SHWP workshop held in Kiribati in August 2025 was led by PLP Fellows (2024, 2025) who established a taskforce to engage national actors and stakeholders to identify system-level strengths and address challenges. The workshop specifically focused on the current framework for professional regulation of nurses and midwives in Kiribati, and agreed on priorities and a plan of action; it collected baseline data for GEDSI and raised awareness of GEDSI principles.

The purpose of this second visit and workshop(s) was to meet and continue work with counterparts on professional regulation of nurses and midwives, review and provide advice regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy, and meet with the Kiribati School of Nursing and Midwifery (KSONM) to provide advice and support for their nursing programs.



Workshop participants from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Kiribati School of Nursing and Midwifery with Prof. Di Brown and Ms Amanda Neill from the WHO CCNMH UTS.

Activity 1: Keys stakeholder meetings and discussions

Two WHO CCNMH UTS advisers, Education Specialist Prof. Di Brown and Program Manager MERL Ms Amanda Neill, met with senior nursing and midwifery leaders and other key stakeholders including:

- senior staff from the Kiribati Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), Director of Nursing Services (DNS) Ms Helen Murdoch and Deputy Director of Nursing Services (DDNS) Mrs Baaua Teibiraa to confirm visit activities and workshop content;
- Deputy Director of the Kiribati School of Nursing and Midwifery (KSONM) Mrs Tareti Ruaia Ioane to discuss current issues and plan further discussions and potential workshop;
- First Secretary Mr Ryan Kinder and Senior Program Manager for Health and GEDSI Ms Kakiateiti Erikateu from the Australian High Commission. Discussions focused on recent in-country nursing and midwifery developments, donor visits and new programs of work. Prof. Di Brown and Ms Helen Murdoch also provided updates and outlined plans for the upcoming week of workshop and meetings.



Prof. Di Brown (WHO CCNMH UTS) with participants from the MHMS and KSONM for the first workshop of the visit.

Activity 2: CPD model review and development

A workshop was held at the MHMS Boardroom on Wednesday 25th February for 12 participants (all female) that included staff from MHMS (DNS, DDNS, and Principal Nursing Officers (PNOs) from across Kiribati, and from the KSONM (Deputy

Director), and the Head of School (HoS) Mrs Tatuki O Kabuati.

Purpose of the workshop

- Review and provide advice about CPD policy and process overseen by the Kiribati Nursing Council;
- Meet with the DNS and senior nurses to provide a model for CPD to assist in the design of a national CPD program that can be delivered by nurses in Kiribati to help improve the quality of care.



Workshop participants with the mannequin arm to be used for IV cannulation training.

Following introductions, pairs of participants reviewed sections of the draft Self-Directed Learning Package for Peripheral Intravenous Cannulation (PIVC) as an example of a training package document. Pairs identified content that was useful and relevant whilst highlighting any specific changes required to the whole group. This helped participants to conduct a detailed review of the training document, specific requirements involved and understand other groups' thoughts on the areas covered.

Outcomes

Key points, amendments and recommendations were reviewed and agreed upon by the whole group, and collected for incorporation into an updated draft of the learning package to ensure its suitability and relevance for future use in Kiribati. This session also provided a practical example of training documentation review and updating.



The DDNS and one of the PNOs from the MHMS during the CPD session.



Consumables and other resources donated by the Faculty of Health at UTS to the MHMS for future IV Cannulation training

Additional resources were provided – slide presentation, a policy example for PIVC Insertion and Removal that can be contextualised, example questions and practice guidelines including competencies. Two full-size mannequin training arms with associated consumables (tourniquets, wipes, rolls of steristrip etc.) were donated to the MHMS and KSONM for future training use.

Activity 3: Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework/Policy for nurses and midwives, and discussion regarding policy development

As previously requested, Prof. Di facilitated a session on CPD Policy drafting and development for Kiribati. Participants reviewed and discussed a draft example CPD Framework for nurses, midwives and nurse practitioners. Issues including frequency of registration, currently under the

Kiribati Medical Services Act nurses are registered for life, which presents problems for ensuring currency and maintaining quality, and CPD requirements for registration were debated. It was noted that the Nursing Council should specify the number of points or hours of CPD required each year for someone to be registered.

Outcomes

The group reviewed potential amendments to enhance the document, renamed CPD Policy, as Prof. Di outlined the main points for discussion.

Actions

The issue regarding CPD points versus hours, and requirements to maintain registration in the future requires resolution.

It was agreed that Prof. Di would forward another example of a CPD policy to be reviewed and amended by participants for future use in Kiribati.

Activity 4: Meeting and workshop with staff from the KSONM to review Advanced Diploma of Nursing and Bachelor of Nursing options

A half day workshop was held at the KSONM on Thursday 26th February, for 14 participants (13 female, 1 male) that included 12 lecturers (11 female, 1 male), the HoS and Deputy Director.

Purpose of the workshop

- Review current Advanced Diploma of Nursing (A Dip Nursing), identify gaps in the curriculum, provide advice and support for subject development and implementation.
- Discuss the feasibility of developing a Bachelor of Nursing (BN) as basic pre-registration program for Kiribati.

BN discussion

Workshop participants identified barriers to introducing a pre-registration BN that included resourcing, lack of staff capacity in designing and implementing a BN, and the quality of the KSONM facilities. Discussions also focused on the need for a revised career pathway and increased



Workshop held at the Kiribati School of Nursing and Midwifery with educators, Deputy Director and Head of School

remuneration for BN graduates, being more highly skilled.

The group reviewed the new International Council of Nurses (ICN) definition of nursing, and jointly developed a vision of what kind of graduate would be needed to meet the future health needs of the population of Kiribati. There was a robust discussion about the need to engage key stakeholders such as the Kiribati Nursing Council and the Ministry of Health early to ensure that there is common vision moving forward.

A couple of possible models were briefly discussed including consideration of a program with multiple entry and exit points. These will be explored in greater detail with a course advisory group which includes key stakeholders.

There was general agreement that a BN for Kiribati nurses would be a positive outcome as it will improve the quality of health services, increase the standing of nurses, and allow for nursing specialisation at a postgraduate level. It may also increase retention of nurses while better positioning those who wish to work in other countries in the region, many of which either already have bachelor level programs or are planning to introduce them in the near future.

Actions arising

1. Seek external funding to support the development and implementation of a pre-registration BN program
2. Seek external funding and support to provide training to the KSONM staff to enable them to effectively plan and deliver a BN using contemporary and evidence-based teaching, learning and curriculum development strategies.

Discussion of the Advanced Diploma of Nursing

Several gaps were identified in the current A Dip Nursing curriculum and discussed in relation to the program currently being implemented. These included lack of content for building students' capacity to safely care for pregnant women across the trajectory of care as the number of mandated deliveries for students is not adequate to ensure they are confident and competent on graduation. The participants reviewed the curriculum and a second-year subject was identified where existing content could be integrated elsewhere so normal pregnancy and labour could be introduced, leaving the third-year subject to focus on complex maternity care.

A second major gap identified was the omission of emergency and disaster nursing, a crucial topic for students who work in countries such as Kiribati on the Ring of Fire and susceptible to earthquakes and cyclones. A review of the final semester subjects

revealed a space for this content and a strategy was developed for its inclusion.

Outcomes

During the discussion it became clear that many KSONM teaching staff have limited understanding of accreditation requirements and how hours, credit points and indeed curricula can be devised to better meet the needs of the Kiribati health system.

Actions arising

Staff need CPD in the areas of curriculum design, development and implementation. They are generally well-credentialed in their nursing areas of interest, but only one staff member has an educational qualification.

1. Consider implementation of a Fast Track program in Kiribati modelled on the programs currently being conducted in PNG and Vanuatu.
2. Provide a pathway for formal recognition of the teachers' education program via recognition of prior learning (RPL) into the Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma.
3. Explore options for external funding to enable this to occur.

Activity 5: Additional activities, review and key outcomes

Prof. Di and Amanda attended a reception hosted by the Health Minister Dr. Tinte Itinteang at the Kiribati Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources reception house. This event was held to thank

donors including ADB and the Australian High Commission for their support to Kiribati.

All workshop outcomes were successfully met through workshop activities although further discussion of the role and educational needs of Nurse Aides & associated Nursing Council responsibilities is needed.

Gaps were reviewed by the five regulation framework areas, following consultation and review of the workshop recommendations with all workshop participants.

Regional Standards, Guides, Policies to

- Enable reciprocity for worker mobility across region and work across region.
- Standardise practice – regional curriculum framework to enable qualifications to be recognised - education link with other regional courses (CPD).

Next Steps WHO CCNMH UTS:

- Provide a meeting Brief with recommendations.
- Follow up on actions arising outlined above.
- Continue support for next 3 years under PHR SHWP Program.
- Work across the region to prioritise which regulatory guides and standards are required.
- Continue Leadership Programs under the Partnerships for a Health Region (PHR) SHWP Program.
- Continue support for ongoing country work.



Prof. Di Brown (WHO CCNMH UTS) with MHMS colleagues (from left) DDNS Mrs Baaua Teibiraa and Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr Tanebu Tong, DNS Ms Helen Murdoch.