

Review and Development of National Curricula for the Diploma of General Nursing (DGN) and Certificate for Community Health Worker (CHW) Program

Brief 6: NDOH National Curricula Overview

Background

As Papua New Guinea (PNG) works to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), improving the quality of health care services is a key priority. An integrated approach comprising strong governance at the national level; **high-quality accreditation, educational institutes and programs; strong professional associations that support continuing professional development;** and **robust regulation and professional standards** are required to ensure safe health care. Ensuring the quality of new health graduates and of health educators is a critical component of any plan designed to improve healthcare quality. In PNG, improving the capacity and capability of nurses and community health workers (CHWs) is of great importance. Comprising 72% of the country's professional health workforce (WHO 2020), **nurses and CHWs are integral to PNG's key health priority** and health security response efforts, especially in rural and remote areas. The existing curricula for these health workers, however, are not fit-for-purpose. Developed in the late 1990s and finalised in 2002, they are not in line with PNG's new National Health Plan 2021-2030, nor with educational and clinical best practice.

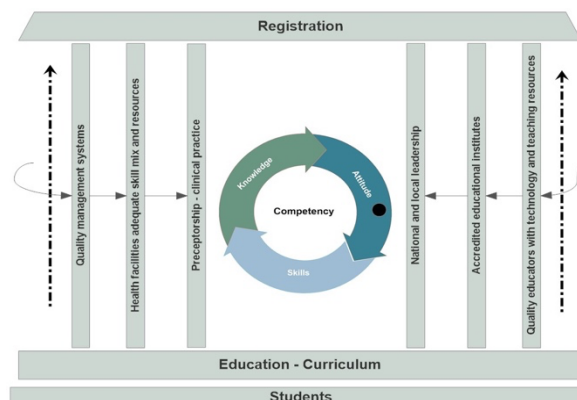
To best support PNG's health workforce in meeting the country's current and future health needs, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development at University of Technology Sydney (WHO CC UTS) is working in partnership with the National Department of Health (NDoH) to carry out the *Review and Development of National Curricula for the Diploma of General Nursing and Certificate for Community Health Workers (CHWs)* program. This program is funded by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trading (DFAT).

Objectives

The goal of the National Curricula Review and Development program is to strengthen nursing and CHW education in PNG. WHO CC UTS and the NDoH are working in partnership to:

1. Develop a governance framework between stakeholders
2. Develop a national CHW and Nursing curriculum framework, following a desktop review Gap Analysis of key health outcomes and NDOH Baseline Survey into the effectiveness of the current curricula

3. Carry out national curricula framework consultations, accreditation and approvals
- 4a. Develop and run fast track / capacity building program for Nursing and CHW educators and clinicians
- 4b. Develop and carry out a curriculum implementation and delivery plan
5. Review faculty capacity, support and curriculum delivery
6. Develop a national continuing professional development Framework
7. Carry out continuous monitoring, evaluation research and learning (MERL)



Draft competency framework, August 2021 workshop. Can graduate competency and registration be achieved if these pillars are weak?

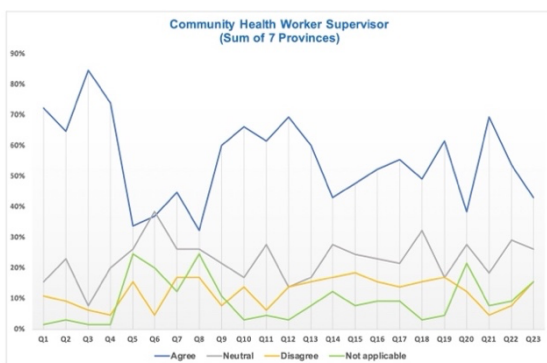
Program Activities

At the request of the NDoH, several informal workshops were held in August and November 2021 to establish early thinking into the Curricula Review program and to examine what frameworks must be in place to enable a competent graduate to be produced. A Steering Committee (SC) was established following these workshops to help oversee the curricula review process. It held its inaugural meeting on the 1st of December 2021, and comprises members from the NDoH, the PNG Nursing Council, and the heads of nursing and CHW teaching institutes. Two Technical Working Subcommittees, one for nurses and one for CHWs, were established in 2022. They are composed of principals and senior educators from nursing and CHW institutes across the country. Their aim is to work on the review and development process, and to ensure that any identified

gaps and recommendations emerging from surveys and analyses are integrated into the curricula.

A Gap Analysis was produced by WHO CC UTS and NDoH in 2021 to assess PNG's key health outcomes and provide preliminary feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curricula. Informed by PNG's new National Health Plan and grounded in national, regional, and international health research, the Gap Analysis describes key health priorities for the people of PNG, and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curricula in relation to these priorities. The analysis found that appropriate and relevant national curricula for both nursing and CHWs is vital to improve the competency, capacity, and skills of health professionals and, by extension, to improve the quality of healthcare provision in PNG. Its recommendations form the basis for the program's 7 objectives, outlined above.

From October 2021 until late March 2022, the NDoH overcame the immense difficulties posed by COVID-19 to complete a Baseline Survey on the effectiveness of the two existing curricula. The Analysis was on the perspectives of students, graduates, supervisors, and educators towards current curricula content, critical gaps in training, and their own capacities and capabilities. Qualitative and quantitative data on these perspectives were successfully collected in 8 provinces; and 489 responses were generated by the survey. A 10-day workshop with the NDoH Research Team and the NDoH IT and Research Departments was held in March 2022, with WHO CC UTS providing refresher training on recommended processes for data organisation and analysis.

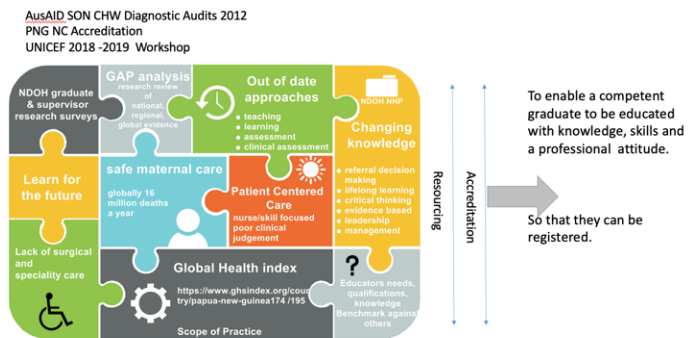


A sample of the data analysis for CHW Supervisors

Next Steps

The results of the NDOH Baseline survey will allow researchers to assess the effectiveness of the existing curricula, and to highlight critical gaps in skills and knowledge. The survey forms just one valuable component of a wider project supporting the effective review and redevelopment of the curricula. The survey, together with the Gap Analysis and additional program deliverables, forms a key piece of the complex task of

reviewing the current curricula and ensuring that the redeveloped curricula is fit-for-purpose. A draft 'puzzle' image was developed to illustrate this point: it illustrates the role of the survey in the wider context of curricula development and some of the foundational principles which underpin this process.



Draft 'puzzle' of curricula redevelopment, created by NDoH baseline analysis workshop participants

Results from the Baseline Survey and Gap Analysis will likewise feed into a revised Faculty Development and Educators Needs Assessment Survey to be conducted by the NDoH and WHO CC UTS research teams in 2022, in collaboration with all nursing and CHW institutes involved in the Curricula Review Program. This survey will assess the current context of practice, resource needs, and professional development priorities of nursing and CHW faculty. Together with the baseline survey and Gap analysis, it will provide foundational evidence and knowledge to build capacity programs for educators that ensure graduate nurses and CHWs have the requisite knowledge, competencies, and attitudes to meet PNG's national health priorities.

Finally, face-to-face meetings with the Curricula Review Subcommittees are planned for late May 2022. These meetings will work on the curricula review process. The National Curriculum Steering committee also recognised the following important recommendations;

Recommendations from SC Meeting February 9th, 2022:

1. That NDOH consider the lack of manpower within the regulatory bodies to sufficiently carry out their roles
2. That education, regulation, and health standards need to be more tightly aligned, that each need to be met, so that they do not negatively impact health and training facilities, and that adequate resourcing for nursing and CHW educators and clinical sites need to be examined.
3. That the bottleneck in the graduate → workforce pipeline needs to be thoroughly investigated and addressed.
4. That nursing and CHW national and provincial leadership is supported to enable this important work to succeed.