



Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands Nurses Association, Solomon Islands Nursing Council

20th South Pacific Nurses Forum Solomon Islands Country Report

Introduction

Solomon Islands Government (SIG) through the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS), Solomon Islands Nurses Association (SINA), and the Nursing Council of Solomon Islands have collaborated to ensure there is improvement in health service delivery as well as ensuring the wellbeing of nurses. Although experiencing challenges of human resource management, training and issues of nurses' welfare, the Nursing division has achieved its objectives of increasing production and recruitment of nurses to contribute to the provision of health care to the people.

This report briefly describes changes, issues and initiatives the nursing profession has involved in including its involvement in COVID-19.

1. Changes, Challenges and Opportunities within Nursing since 2018

- a. In 2018, SINA elected its new national executive council for the next four years
- b. One of the immediate task for the new executive was to sign a Memorandum of Agreement to pave the way for the government to review and pay nurses allowances. Added to the allowances was posting allowances where it recognizes nurses who are deployed to the most rural remote health centers;
- c. The new executive reviewed parts of the constitution to allow for improving work processes;
- d. SINA supported its members financially in 2019 through its distress funding support and in early 2020 supported with COVID-19 repatriation funds as part of its social security strategy;
- e. SINA has involved in ongoing dialogue with the government on issues such as transport, housing, security, uniforms and the nurses scheme of service where it emphasizes improving nurses conditions of service;
- f. Delay in recruitment of the registrar for the Nursing Council after the retirement of the incumbent is a challenge as this is an important position for he review of the nursing council act and implementation of the nursing regulation;

2. Significant Issues that impact on nurses

- a. Roll out of the Nursing competency standards to improve performance and pave a way forward for relicensing
- b. Work on the new National Nursing Strategic Directions to identify strategic areas that the Nursing division will pursue in its contribution to health service delivery.
- c. Recognizing nurses' performance through the implementation of Performance Management Policy (PMP) by government through the Ministry of Public Service.
- d. Strong collaboration between MHMS, SINA and Solomon Islands Nursing Council and to improve nursing services and wellbeing of nurses
- e. Collaborating with Nursing Education institutions and providers to determine curriculum and qualification strategies.

3. Recruitment and retention strategies for nurses

- a. Recruitment of nurses to be based on the Role Delineation Policy which stipulates number of nurses to classified levels of health centers and hospitals;
- b. Strengthening the nursing internship program – Nurses Supervised Practice program (SPP) to register nurses before applying for employment and recruitment
- c. Retention – Nurses scheme of service, which aims at improving the nurses’ conditions of employment including organisational reform – recommending the organisational structure, recognizing nurses through performance assessment, reviewing salaries and allowances, deployment and training.

4. Initiatives to uphold the professional, social and economic position of nurses

- a. Development of the National Nursing Strategic Directions, 2021 to 2025 with the following key result areas:
 - ✓ Nursing leadership and management;
 - ✓ Nursing education and research;
 - ✓ Nursing regulation and competencies and;
 - ✓ Nursing practice
- b. Development of Nursing human resource management and development plan
- c. Reviewing the Nursing Council Act to determine amendments or repealing the existing act and amendments
- d. Implementation of the Nursing Regulation and roll out of the nursing competency Standards
- e. Reviewing the accreditation guidelines to prepare for the work on National accreditation and assessment policy by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD).
- f. Review and Negotiating the Nurses Scheme of Service aiming at improving Nurses Condition of service

5. COVID – 19

Current cases – 13

Nurses form frontline teams working in the following areas:

- Infection Prevention and Control
- Triage and Isolation wards
- Supervising and monitoring of quarantine sites and persons
- Contact training and swabbing
- Provision of Nursing Care

In the support services, nurses are also involved in the following:

- Emergency and Operations Centers at the national and provincial levels
- Planning domain – supporting HR Surge capacity
- Logistics support
- Solomon Islands Medical Assistance Team (SOLMAT)

The government has supported its workers including nurses in their involvement in COVID-19 operations through the payment of allowances for frontliners as well as support officers.

With the construction of a makeshift hospital, the demand for more nurses is obvious. The Nursing division recently confer full registration to 78 newly registered nurses who are all been recruited by the government to meet this demand.

Conclusion

Nurses are important in health service delivery. Supporting the profession is vitally important to ensure there is contribution to improved health service delivery. The wellbeing of nurses is significant in such a time as this when the pandemic is experienced in the country. The ongoing collaboration between the government, SINA and the Nursing Council of Solomon Islands including the training institutions has been cordial and the need for further strengthening is obvious as this has great impact on health services to the people of Solomon Islands.