

Tonga Report – 2020.

The Kingdom of Tonga (Tonga) consists of 169 Islands, 36 of which are inhabited, and a total population of around 103,000. The country lies in the South Pacific and stretches over a distance of approximately 800 kms from north to south, covering a total land area of 748 square kms.

Around three quarters of the population are based on the main island of Tongatapu, while other major islands and island groupings include Eua, Ha'apai, Vava'u and the Niua Islands. Tonga's location makes it one of the most geographically remote nations in the world from major centers of economic activity.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic. Similarly, the Government of Tonga on March 20, 2020 declared at state of emergency because of the risks of COVID – 19. Tonga remains one of the less than 10 countries mostly in Asia – Pacific Region without a confirmed COVID-19 case, but the risks are high that COVID-19 could spread widely and rapidly, should the disease reach the country.

The global COVID-19 outbreak, if it reaches the Kingdom of Tonga, would place considerable constraints on an already challenged health system and cause possible loss of life. Health Services in Tonga are largely publicly funded and delivered by the Ministry of Health (MOH) through a network consisting of one National Referral Hospital, three outer- islands hospitals, and 24 lower level facilities. The Vaiola National Referral Hospital is a 200- bed facility based in the capital city Nuku'alofa, which is on the kingdom's main island, Tongatapu. About 73% of the population of Tonga lives on Tongatapu and roughly a third (35%) of the population live in the greater Nuku'alofa area. Significant disruptions in global and regional supply chains, higher prices, and economic losses in Tonga's market countries will also be felt internally as Tonga relies heavily on imported goods and services. Border closures have huge impact on PPE's supply chain as travel far.

Tonga currently has limited ability to prevent, detect and control a COVID19 outbreak. To prepare the country for a possible outbreak of COVID-19 the donor parties are very much needed. Additionally, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) has been developed to assist, COVID-19 pandemic is a unique emergency which brings new initiative and huge challenge for the Health Care Delivery.

While we have the Pandemic of Covid 19, Tonga within the world signed up to the ambitious goal of ensuring that everyone in the world should have access to health care –health coverage – and that *nobody should be left behind* – UHC.

This report makes the very simple point that universal health coverage cannot possibly be achieved without strengthening nursing and midwifery globally. This is partly about increasing the number of nurses, but also crucially about making sure their contribution is properly understood and enabling them to work to their full potential.

As we argue that strengthening nursing / midwifery will have the *triple impact* of improving health, promoting gender equality and supporting economic growth.

Much of what is said here will be familiar to nursing leaders, but they alone cannot bring about the changes that are needed. Politicians, non-nursing health leaders and others must work with them to create radical changes in how nurses are perceived and in what they are permitted and enabled to do.

It is a mile stone for the Nurses & Midwifery of Tonga as our Chief Nursing Officer – Dr 'Amelia Tu'ipulotu was appointed to be our Minister of Health for 2 years 2019-2021 which lift up the Nursing and midwifery moral in Tonga. It is a huge challenge as we in full support in advance to highlight the Nurses/Midwifery matters in this term.

The outcome of the Nursing School has 41 nurses graduates as well 19 midwives graduate with Advance Diploma in Midwifery June 2020. This is a huge help for the manpower of the MOH as well some of the midwives are deployed to Island for UHC- National ambitious goal.

Nursing and Midwifery in Tonga are in one body of Association – Tonga Nurses Association. The midwifery profession in Tonga are all nurses as we do not have direct entry to midwifery, they all enter nursing school then midwifery as post basic. We stand in recommended that having more midwives is one of the

At the South Pacific Nurses Forum in Cook Islands in 2018 there was a meeting with Mary Kirk – Vice President of ICM and some midwives from around the Pacific. The Issue of membership of ICM was raised and how the Pacific could have more representation and a strong voice at ICM. As PNG is the only Pacific Island has been a member (2 years) and they have endeavors the benefit of being a member in ICM. It was recognized that was would need to be a unique and specific form of membership for most nations of the Pacific to have a voice at ICM.

To further the discussion Associate Professor Judith McAra-Couper, Head of Midwifery at Auckland University of Technology in association with Pacifika Midwives Aotearoa agree to further that imitative. Judith McAra-Couper together with the Pacifika Midwives and NZ College of Midwives hosted 3 days' conference for the Pacific Islands Midwives. Mary Kirk from ICM raised and lead direction for the Pacific midwives to join in ICM in the Year of Nurses / Midwives 2020. The Pacifika midwives Group agreed and we are so thankful for the support by Judith McAra-Couper and NZ team.

Mary Kirk, Judith McAra-Couper as well the College of Midwives of NZ which will be comprehensive of Educational / Research and Midwifery Technical hands on with the support PNG –ICM for the Pacific Midwifery as well the Women and Baby Health in the Pacific. We recognize, however, the central importance of midwifery to achieving universal health coverage and the need for it too to be strengthened. The full potential of midwifery needs to be understood more widely and midwives also need to be able to work to the full extent of their knowledge and skills.

South Pacific Midwifery Society – Pacific – SPNF

Country	Midwifery Rep
Tonga	‘Akesa Halatanu
Tuvalu	Filoiala Sakaio
Solomone	Nancy Pego
Tokelau Telesia	Telesia Perez
PNG	Dr. Julie Kep
NZ	Hemaima Heeghos
Fiji	Salanieta Matiavi
Cook Islands	Parau Ngamata
Samoa	Tauaitala Lees
Vanuatu	Renata Buleban
Solomon	Jenny Narasia
	Jenny Gaiofa

Niue, Nauru Kiribati n Australia are include in the team but their rep did not presented.

‘Ofa atu and wish you all the best

‘Akesa Halatanu