

# WORKING IN COVID19 PANDEMIC: A REFLECTION

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**W**e faced the year 2020 with much enthusiasm and excitement in the hopes of celebrating the International year of the Nurse and Midwife with much gusto. Nevertheless, we were faced with the global pandemic of Covid19, bringing a halt to the plans. In this public health emergency, across the globe nurses took their usual place in the front line. Even in the direst situations, nurses are showing their courage and strength while battling the pandemic. Be it in hospitals, quarantine facilities, isolation, or multiple others areas, where in addition to nurses currently working in the clinical area, those working in nursing education and those currently unemployed joined force to battle the pandemic; each offering their contribution to the best of their ability. Undoubtedly everything counts.

Since I took on the opportunity of contributing to the battle against Covid19 and having seen the picture somewhat close, this is an attempt to reflect on a little component of my journey and means to share my thoughts.

The journey began when the Maldivian Nurses Association (MNA) and Maldivian Medical Association (MMA) initiated a collaborative effort to contribute in

the pandemic. MMA took the lead in strategizing a way to provide health services in since the vulnerable population like the



elderly may not get proper health care in a lockdown situation. The work started way before the lock down situation and impressive work was done. In this effort few dedicated nurses worked countless hours to recruit stay at home nurses, so that necessary care to the community during lock down could be provided. Multiple things like providing PPE training and refresher trainings for the volunteer nurses were envisioned. However, what we were preparing for, “the lockdown” came just few days earlier, putting a stop to these important plans, and preventing us from being as prepared as we wanted. We learnt the lesson, “importance of prompt action”. Nevertheless, we started providing nursing services to individuals at their homes or in more accurate terms “community nursing”; a much needed service in the Maldives. Though a great deal of challenges were faced, there were certain things that kept us going.

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The biggest driving force for me was though small, the dedicated group nurses. Which consists of nurses currently unemployed and some working in areas other than hospitals. Their commitment, vision and desire to serve are truly commendable. Provision of the community service certainly couldn't have been achieved without them. Moreover, most of the consumables we needed including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were provided to us by National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC) . The safety of the volunteers was given utmost importance. Volunteers were encouraged to wear PPE for each visit, and home visits were always done in pairs to ensure safety of home visiting nurses. However, such a huge venture could never be without difficulties.

The biggest challenge was getting volunteers to provide the service. Though we started off with a huge number, it dropped to a handful with the community spread of Covid19. This is not an uncommon phenomenon, and has been seen globally. Fear of taking the virus back home to the loved ones has prevented many from volunteering.

Additionally, owing to the difficult living situations in Male', giving care in the clients' home is equally hard. Having to climb using stairs to 4, 5 or more floors in PPE is tiring and exhausting, especially in the hot and humid weather. Inadequate lighting and confined spaces makes it even more challenging. Nevertheless, our group of dedicated nurses were going against all odds and giving the much-needed care to the community.

Overall, volunteering has offered me a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, since as a nurse I certainly feel an obligation to serve and utilize my nursing knowledge and skills. Though the number of volunteering nurses is comparatively less compared to trained nurses who are currently not working in any hospitals, the bravery and commitment of those nurses who came forward is certainly praiseworthy. The work we are doing is comparatively a very small part of the work being done to control Covid19. Nevertheless it is immensely satisfying to contribute to controlling the crisis of Covid 19.

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