The Tanzania Nursing Initiative: using the HRH Action Framework to strengthen Tanzania’s healthcare workforce

Tanzania Nursing Initiative

Challenges

Tanzania faces a severe shortage of nursing tutors and inadequate resources in nursing schools. In response, the Tanzanian Nursing Initiative (TNI) was established in 2006 through collaboration between the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), Dar es Salaam, and University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), with a long-term goal of improving nursing services in the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Project description

The TNI’s activities target four main areas:

1. nursing education (curriculum development)
2. nursing school support
3. nurse faculty development
4. nurse leadership

The initiative aims to build lasting capacity among Tanzania’s nursing professions, by specifically targeting partnerships, stakeholders and leaders. To achieve these objectives, TNI has created partnerships with governments, in particular with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), and other non-governmental organizations and local and international nursing associations. Two major areas that TNI has contributed to were:

- The Tanzania HIV and AIDS Nursing Education Curriculum (THANE): designed to update nurse educators’ skills and knowledge on HIV prevention, treatment and care so that they could properly train nursing students.
- Nurse Diploma and Nurse Certificate Curricula Revision: TNI, in partnership with MOHSW Nursing Training Unit and other stakeholders has worked on ensuring that all curricula be competence-based and in line with the National Accreditation Council for Technical Education (NACTE) with National Technical Awards (NTA), while incorporating selected HIV/AIDS content from the THANE program.

Outcomes

Pre-service training: a 12-module curriculum curriculum was developed to address and prepare nurses with entry-level knowledge of HIV/AIDS. All nurse tutors in Tanzania also completed a two-week training course so that they would be able to properly educate their students on HIV/AIDS.

Nursing Laboratory Skills Harmonization: TNI coordinated a working group that brought together all the organizations that provided lab skills to nurses, resulting in a standardized training model and sustainability plan.

Standardized Lesson Plans/Module Development: The MOHSW has provided further support to TNI for technical assistance in developing modules to accompany the Nurse Diploma and Certificate programmes.

Advanced Diploma to Bachelors of Nursing Transition: TNI is converting the current specializations of the Advanced Diploma Nursing program to a Bachelor of Nursing (BN) Degree that will follow the NTA system.

Bachelor’s curriculum review: TNI engaged with MOHSW and stakeholders to provide holistic review and gap analysis. The conclusion aims to harmonize the Tanzania Commission of Universities, the NTA system and BScN courses across all universities.

TNI conducted a needs assessment of the Tanzania National Nurses Association (TANNA) and the Tanzania National Nurse Midwives Council (TNMC) in 2009 and has attempted to strengthen TNMC’s public relations and media strategies and organizational capacity areas that were identified in the needs assessment.

Conclusions

The TNI has been successful in strengthening nursing education in Tanzania by providing leadership and technical support to MOHSW and nursing schools. It has also collaborated with the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) to develop standardized nursing curricula and improve the quality and relevance of nursing education in Tanzania. The initiative plans to collaborate with the nurse faculty and partners to develop holistic programs to train nursing faculty, to work with the MOHSW and nursing schools to develop standardized nursing curricula, and to build leadership, technical, and organizational capacity among Tanzania’s nurse leaders to promote a responsive and effective national nurses’ association.