Unlocking demand for health workers

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To meet the health SDGs

• Around 75% of the total needs are health system needs.
• More than half of the health system needs are for the health workforce.
• So, about 40% of the total SDG needs are for the health workforce.
Insufficient supply

- This equates to a gap of about 18 million health workers, mainly in low-income and lower middle-income countries.
- Is it a shortage (supply problem) or deficiency (demand problem)?
- We argue that, at global level, it is a shortage that “locks up” population demand for health services.
- In order to “unlock the demand”, many new health workers will need to be trained.
Global market in health workers

• Unlocking demand means, therefore, **lifting restrictions on the supply of health workers**, especially in rich countries.

• Since many of the needs for health-workers in rich countries are met by the migration of health workers from developing countries.
Economics 101

• It is natural for health workers to migrate.
• The data show lower-income countries need to offer higher relative wages in order to retain health workers.
• And in higher-income countries, relative wages are lower (though higher in absolute terms).
Relative wages show where supply is being limited

![GDP per capita index]

- High: GHED 2.3, ILOSTAT 1.3
- Upper middle: GHED 3.5, ILOSTAT 2
- Lower middle: GHED 5, ILOSTAT 3.7
- Low: GHED 9, ILOSTAT 5.5
- Global: GHED 3.8, ILOSTAT 3.3
Conclusions

• The barriers (especially in rich countries) to creating the necessary supply of health workers need to be addressed.

• Training domestic health workers in rich countries is arguably (?) more effective than international aid.

• More health workers = a global Win/Win.