Retention of health workers with a focus on rural areas

WHO-OECD hosted dialogue on migration and other health workforce issues in a global economy


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World Health Organization, Geneva
Health Workforce: Geographical Imbalance

- Rural areas comprise a large share of the world population but a small share of the health workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Physicians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population living in rural areas</td>
<td>Percentage of physicians in urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of population living in urban areas</td>
<td>Percentage of physicians in rural areas</td>
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<td>48%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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Source: WHO, 2006; UN, 2004

- Remote/isolated and sometimes suburbs or inner cities are also underserved areas
Health Workforce Retention: a Global Concern (1/2)

● Retention is a concern in all countries...
  – Higher or lower income countries
  – Large or small countries

France: General Practitioner density

Niger: Physician density

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<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Physicians per 10,000 pop</th>
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<td>Zinder</td>
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<td>Maradi</td>
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<td>Tillaberi</td>
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<td>Dosso</td>
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<td>Tahoua</td>
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GP density per 1000 pop
- 1.43 - 1.54
- 1.54 - 1.67
- 1.67 - 1.84
- 1.84 and more

Source: UNDP report 01/07/2004
Health Workforce Retention: a Global Concern (2/2)

...and for all health occupations

- Doctors
- Nurses/Midwives
- Pharmacists
- Dentists
- Health associate professions

Canada: Nurse and Physicians density

[Bar chart showing nurses and physicians density per 1000 pop for various provinces in Canada]

Senegal: Nurse density

[Bar chart showing nurse density per 1000 pop for various cities in Senegal]

Source: Zum et al. 2008
Underserved Areas and Health System Performance

- Health professionals and the coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
  - Regions with lower health professionals density tend to have a lower coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
  - Poorer regions tend to have a lower density of health workers and a lower coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
  - Inequality and inequity in health workforce distribution

The case of Senegal
Improving Retention in Rural Areas

- Factors affecting the decision to go to or stay in rural areas:
  - Personal factors
  - Professional environment
  - Social and local environment

- Working in rural areas in Niger: Health professionals expectations

Source: Sedes, 2008
Policies to Improve Retention in Rural Areas (1/2)

- A large range of policies and initiatives have been developed
  - Education related measures
    - Student enrolment
    - Rural training/placement
    - Return of service
  - Regulatory measures
    - Bonding schemes
    - Provisional licence
  - Financial incentives
    - Remuneration (mode and level)
    - Special allowances
    - Pension
Policies to Improve Retention in Rural Areas (2/2)

- Improving working conditions
  - Career development
  - Support for training
  - Network support/multidisciplinary health centres
  - Provision of adequate equipment
  - Security

- Creating different types of cadres (substitution, task shifting)

- Improving living conditions
  - Housing
  - School for children
  - Transportation
  - Communication

- Community initiatives
  - Integration in the community (for the health worker, spouse and children)
Key elements

- Retention in rural areas is a complex issue but essential to address
- Most policies are based on financial incentives
- No "single bullet" but a mix of solutions adapted to each specific context
- Importance of intersectoral approach
Selected Issues - Perspectives

- Evaluation of policies
- Identification of most promising policies
- Sustainability of policies
- A global strategy for improving retention
A WHO programme for increasing access to health workers in rural areas through improved retention strategies

- Building and sharing evidence based good practices
- Supporting countries
- Developing and disseminating global policy recommendations
### WHO's programme of work:

**process to develop guidelines and recommendations for retention of health workers**

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<thead>
<tr>
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#### Technical brief on scope and the process for the guidelines

- Kampala Forum
- Initial consultations
- Mali case study
- Clarification of needs and scope
- Evidence gathering literature reviews, expert opinion
- Development of partnerships and technical collaboration
- Methodology meeting

#### Guidelines for retention of health workers

- WHO-OECD Policy dialogue
- Production of guidelines and recommendations