Ecuador’s efforts towards retention and building health worker capacity

Ecuador made 6 commitments at the Third Global Forum to implement as part of their current health plan: to offer incentives for training to students interested in working in the health field; to increase the current wages of health workers; to provide wage and accommodation incentive mechanisms; to implement a plan to bring back health professionals who migrated in the 1990s; and to develop a multi-year plan to train talented health professionals.

One of the most significant actions taken to date by the Ministry of Health was to develop a program through which students are able to study abroad for up to five years in order to obtain their Master or PhD degree, and in return agree to come back and work for the Ministry of Health for the same amount of time they spent abroad. In addition to this program, which has had a very good uptake, the Ministry of Health opened 5000 training positions for new students who passed the entrance examination.

As part of Ecuador’s commitment to increase wages and provide incentive mechanisms, clinical staff salaries have been increased, and with support from PAHO and WHO, hospital manager posts were created; new positions providing attractive remuneration packages have been created. Since the beginning of 2014, two wage incentive mechanisms have been implemented to retain and attract health workers. A program was established to attract back to Ecuador health professionals who migrated overseas during the 1990s.

All of these actions aim at building up the capacity of talented health workers and to provide them with appropriate support mechanisms and incentives for the purpose of retaining them. With the policy objective of improving availability through both retention and the production of new health workers, Ecuador’s Ministry of Health is working with the WHO to draft a multi-year plan to train additional health workers, expected to be adopted by the end of 2014.