

## Scaling-up health workforce

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Human resources for health (HRH) are increasingly being recognized as fundamental and critical for the functioning of health systems. Some studies have clearly shown the strong relation between density of health workforce and achievement of desirable health outcomes, stating and documenting the obvious <sup>(1)</sup>. The recent focus on health workforce issues has led to the discovery of the huge gap the world faces in the number of health workers, estimated to be nearly 4.3 million including vital categories such as doctors, nurses and midwives <sup>(2)</sup>. Developed and developing countries are all alike in experiencing this shortage although the former usually solve their problems at the expense of the later through the phenomenon of medical migration.

Therefore, scaling-up the health workforce for the globe became a fashion during recent years. To give a comprehensive meaning to 'scale-up of HRH', the frame-work for the health workforce proposed by the World Health Report, 2006 is a good example to use. The report presents three phases to tackling health workforce issues: entry, current workforce, and exit <sup>(2)</sup>. To achieve scale-up at the entry phase, countries need to increase their educational capacity through measures such as enhancing intake and strengthening educational institutions to produce big numbers of health workers. Strategies at the phase of the current workforce revolve around improving productivity to maximize the efforts of each individual health worker. Measures usually quoted in this aspect include in-service training, improving work environment, better management, task shifting and efficient and flexible employment. At the exit stage,

some strategies are also pertinent including migration management, extension of retirement age and part-time arrangements.

Thus, the scale-up of health workforce is not equal to enhancing education and production of HRH; rather it includes strategies and measures traversing the life span of the health workforce in any country. That is not of course to jeopardize in any way the importance of education and training in compensation for the shortages in health workers. All countries, rich and poor are in need of scaling-up their health workforce. Different countries can use different strategies but what remain clear is that global solidarity and cooperation are fundamental for any successes in this front. International organizations have key roles to play in terms of providing technical support, enhancing leadership and encouraging country driven actions in response to the health workforce crisis

### References

1. Joint Learning Initiative. Human Resources for Health: overcoming the crises. Harvard University Press. 2005.
2. World Health Organization. The World Health Report 2006: Working together for health.. WHO, Geneva. 2006.