

## Strengthening nursing and midwifery

The Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the reports on health system strengthening;<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing the need to build sustainable national health systems and to strengthen national capacities to achieve the goal of reduced health inequities;

Recognizing the crucial contribution of the nursing and midwifery professions to strengthening health systems, to increasing access to comprehensive health services for the people they serve, and to the efforts to achieve the internationally agreed health-related development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and those of the World Health Organization's programmes;

Concerned at the continuing shortage and maldistribution of nurses and midwives in many countries and the impact of this on health care and more widely;

Acknowledging resolution WHA62.12 on primary health care, including health system strengthening, which called, inter alia, for the renewal and strengthening of primary health care, as well as urging Member States to train and retain adequate numbers of health workers, with appropriate skill mix, including primary care nurses and midwives, in order to redress current shortages of health workers to respond effectively to people's health needs;

Acknowledging the ongoing WHO initiatives on the scaling up of transformative health professional education and training in order to increase the workforce numbers and the relevant skill-mix in response to the country health needs and health systems context;

Recognizing the global policy recommendations by WHO on increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention<sup>2</sup> as an evidence platform for developing effective country policies for rural retention of nursing and midwifery personnel;

Taking note of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel;<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Documents A64/12 and A64/13.

<sup>2</sup> *Increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention: global policy recommendations*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Adopted in resolution WHA63.16.

Reaffirming the call for governments and civil society to strengthen capacity to address the urgent need for skilled health workers, particularly midwives, made in the WHO UNFPA UNICEF World Bank Joint Statement on Maternal and Newborn Health;

Noting the importance of multidisciplinary involvement, including that of nurses and midwives, in high-quality research that grounds health and health systems policy in the best scientific knowledge and evidence, as elaborated in WHO's strategy on research for health, endorsed in resolution WHA63.21;

Noting that nurses and midwives form the majority of the workforce in many countries' health systems, and recognizing that the provision of knowledge-based and skilled health services maximizes the physical, psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals, families and societies;

Recognizing the fragmentation of health systems, the shortage of human resources for health and the need to improve collaboration in education and practice, and primary health care services;

Having considered the reports on progress in the implementation of resolution WHA59.27 on strengthening nursing and midwifery;<sup>1</sup>

Mindful of previous resolutions to strengthen nursing and midwifery (WHA42.27, WHA45.5, WHA47.9, WHA48.8, WHA49.1, WHA54.12 and WHA59.27) and the new strategic directions for nursing and midwifery services in place for the period 2011–2015;<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing the need to improve the education of nurses and midwives,

1. URGES Member States to translate into action their commitment to strengthening nursing and midwifery by:

- (1) developing targets and action plans for the development of nursing and midwifery, as an integral part of national or subnational health plans, that are reviewed regularly in order to respond to population-health needs and health system priorities as appropriate;
- (2) forging strong, interdisciplinary health teams to address health and health system priorities, recognizing the distinct contribution of nursing and midwifery knowledge and expertise;
- (3) participating in the ongoing work of WHO's initiatives on scaling up transformative education and training in nursing and midwifery in order to increase the workforce numbers and the mix of skills that respond to the country's health needs and are appropriate to the health system context;
- (4) collaborating within their regions and with the nursing and midwifery professions in the strengthening of national or subnational legislation and regulatory processes that govern those professions, including the development of competencies for the educational and technical preparation of nurses and midwives, and systems for sustaining those competencies; and giving

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<sup>1</sup> See documents A61/17 and A63/27.

<sup>2</sup> Document WHO/HRH/HPN/10.1.

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consideration to the development of the continuum of education that is necessary for attaining the required level of expertise of nurse and midwifery researchers, educators and administrators;

(5) strengthening the dataset on nurses and midwives as an integral part of the national and subnational health workforce information systems, and maximizing use of this information for evidence-based policy decisions;

(6) harnessing the knowledge and expertise of nursing and midwifery researchers in order to contribute evidence for health system innovation and effectiveness;

(7) engaging actively the expertise of nurses and midwives in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of health and health system policy and programming;

(8) implementing strategies for enhancement of interprofessional education and collaborative practice including community health nursing services as part of people-centred care;

(9) including nurses and midwives in the development and planning of human resource programmes that support incentives for recruitment, retention and strategies for improving workforce issues, such as remuneration, conditions of employment, career development and advancement, and development of positive work environments;

(10) promoting the establishment of national and subnational mechanisms in order to develop and support the effective interventions proposed in the global policy recommendations on increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention;<sup>1</sup>

(11) implementing the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, given the national impact of the loss of trained nursing staff, as appropriate at national and local level;

## 2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to strengthen WHO's capacity for development and implementation of effective nursing and midwifery policies and programmes through continued investment and appointment of professional nurses and midwives to specialist posts in the Secretariat both at headquarters and in regions;

(2) to engage actively the knowledge and expertise of the Global Advisory Group on Nursing and Midwifery in key policies and programmes that pertain to health systems, the social determinants of health, human resources for health and the Millennium Development Goals;

(3) to provide technical support and evidence for the development and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes on interprofessional education and collaborative practice, and on community health nursing services;

(4) to provide support to Member States in optimizing the contributions of nursing and midwifery to implementing national health policies and achieving the internationally agreed health-related development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;

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<sup>1</sup> *Increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention: global policy recommendations*. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2010.

(5) to encourage the involvement of nurses and midwives in the integrated planning of human resources for health, particularly with respect to strategies for maintaining adequate numbers of competent nurses and midwives;

(6) to report on progress in implementing this resolution to the World Health Assembly through the Executive Board, in a manner integrated with the reporting on resolution WHA63.16 on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.

Tenth plenary meeting, 24 May 2011  
A64/VR/10

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