



NEW FINANCING TOOL TO HELP REVERSE GLOBAL HEALTH WORKFORCE SHORTAGE

Geneva / 8 July 2009 -- Countries will now be better able to identify the financing required to reverse the global health workforce crisis, with the help of a new costing tool launched by the Global Health Workforce Alliance today. The launch coincides with the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review of the UN Economic and Social Council, which will focus on implementing internationally agreed goals and commitments to support global public health.

The World Health Organization estimates that there is a need of 4.3 million additional trained health workers worldwide to address basic health requirements. While the shortage of health workers is a global issue, leading a number of wealthy countries to "import" health workers from abroad, the scarcity of trained health workers has reached crisis¹ level in 57 mostly poor countries.

The new resource requirements tool (RRT) helps countries estimate the financial resources required for meeting their human resources for health plans, including employment and professional training, and to analyze the affordability of these plans. "Before the RRT, countries were largely trying to estimate their health workforce needs in the dark," said Alliance Executive Director Mubashar Sheikh. "With this vital tool, Ministries of Health and Education and their partners can develop effective, sustainable programs to strengthen their human resources for health, retain more health workers and utilize trained health workers most productively to achieve improved health for their people."

RRT addresses a range of factors including the specific health needs of the country, current health worker distribution and gaps, training requirements and crossover between public and private health services, along with many other factors that can determine the success or failure of health worker scale up plans. Based on these factors, users are then able to estimate "base," "optimistic" and "pessimistic" scenarios of resource needs, as well as adjust for changing conditions and economic circumstances. The practical design of the tool means it can be used even when not all data sets are available.

¹ WHO has identified a threshold in workforce density below which high coverage of essential interventions, including those necessary to meet the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is very unlikely. Based on these estimates, there are currently 57 countries with critical shortages equivalent to a global deficit of 2.4 million doctors, nurses and midwives. The proportional shortfalls are greatest in sub-Saharan Africa, although numerical deficits are very large in South-East Asia because of its population size.



Developed by the Financing Task Force of the Alliance, in collaboration with the World Bank, the tool was piloted by Ministries of Health and Education and other authorities in Ethiopia, Liberia, Uganda and Peru with excellent results.

"Scaling up the availability of quality health services and increasing our supply of trained health workers is essential to Uganda's efforts to improve the health of our people and meet the Millennium Development Goals," said Ugandan Minister of Health Dr Stephen Malinga. "The Resource Requirements Tool and the expertise provided by GHWA are the kind of practical, concrete flexible and reliable resources we need to best plan our efforts to increase our national supply of trained health workers, which is vital to the health of all Ugandans."

With today's launch, this highly flexible tool is now available to all countries, which will allow national governments and development partners, working with the Alliance experts, to identify long-term health worker resource needs in just two weeks.

Created in 2006, the Global Health Workforce Alliance is a partnership of national governments, civil society organizations, finance institutions, international aid agencies, academia, UN agencies and professional associations working together to address the global shortage of trained health workers, which leaves an estimated 1 billion people with no access to basic health care.

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