

Working for Health

Optimize, build and strengthen
the health and care workforce



United Nations
MPTF Office



International
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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES



World Health
Organization

Putting health and care workers at the forefront

Health and care workers are the lifeline of the health system and the health and well-being of communities and society. They serve at the forefront of routine health services and in crises such as pandemics, conflicts and climate disasters. Their role is crucial in ensuring the continuity of care, preventing disease, providing quality primary care, health promotion and education, community outreach and advocacy.

Decades of neglect and underinvestment have left many countries facing severe challenges in recruiting, deploying and retaining their health and care workers. Using pre-Covid data estimates, we face a global shortage of **10 million health workers by 2030**, especially in low-income countries where the availability and distribution of health and care workers is insufficient to meet population health needs. Health systems around the world are at risk of losing more health workers if together we do not retain and invest in them.

The COVID-19 pandemic, during which at least 115 000 health workers lost their lives and almost half experienced burnout, demonstrated both the critical importance and vulnerability of the health workforce. We all rely on these essential workers to save lives and stop the spread of disease. It is crucial that they are valued, protected, developed and supported. **It is time to act** – a coherent approach is urgently needed to deliver lasting solutions that empower our health and care workers with better employment opportunities, protections, pay, working conditions, career development and support.

“The simple truth is that there is no health without health and care workers.”

Dr Tedros Adhanom-Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization

How Working for Health works

Working for Health harnesses the combined expertise of the International Labour Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and World Health Organization (WHO), to support countries to optimize, build and strengthen the health and care workforce, and accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The United Nations-administered Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), established in 2018, supports partner countries through the multisectoral lens of health, labour and finance – in line with the mandated resolutions of the World Health Assembly¹ and the recommendations of the United Nations High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth.²

Through a unique multisectoral approach, Working for Health brings together health, labour and finance ministries, employers' and workers' organizations and other stakeholders to develop and promote policy, action and investments for aligning the **education, recruitment and retention** of health workers with country and population needs.

¹ WHA resolutions WHA 69.19, WHA 74.14, WHA 74.15, WHA 75.17.

² Working for health and growth: investing in the health workforce. High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth; 2016 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/250040>).

Working for Health objectives

“Policy-makers need to make health a political priority by taking a social justice approach to investments in health and care. This includes investments in social protection, occupational safety and health, and decent work for health and care workers.”

Gilbert F Hougbo, Director-General, International Labour Organization

Multisectoral collaboration and dialogue

- **Social and policy dialogue** that ensures employers, workers and stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the formulation of strategies and policies that relate to them.



Data and evidence

- **Robust data and analytics**, including labour market analyses, assist countries to make evidence-based policies, decisions and investments in their health and care workers.



Policy, planning and decisions

- **Integrated workforce strategies** that ensure health and care worker supply, skills and employment meet the needs of countries, deliver equitable and accessible health services (including in rural areas) and build crisis preparedness.
- **Workforce financing and investment plans** that mobilize domestic and external resources to increase workforce education, employment, skills and retention in the health sector, and secure the sustained long-term workforce funding and recurrent costs that are needed.
- **Gender equity** that addresses significant pay gaps and gender inequalities in a sector in which women make up 67% of the workforce yet hold only 25% of leadership positions.
- **Well-managed health worker labour migration** that provides employment opportunities for health workers and ensures that low-income countries are protected from the active international recruitment of qualified health and care workers.
- **Education reform** that aligns production capacity, curricula, education and training, accreditation and lifelong learning with the health, social and economic needs of the country.
- **Occupational safety and health** that ensures those who work to protect our health are protected from injury and disease, and their well-being is safeguarded in the workplace and in the communities they serve.



Working for Health results

Working for Health has leveraged domestic and donor financing and partnerships to implement sustainable long-term solutions in countries that are delivering impact through evidence-based workforce policies, strategies and investments.

Benin

A new national **Health Workforce Investment Plan** resulted in the recruitment of 2032 additional health workers and Islamic Development Bank funding of **US\$ 17.5 million** for primary health care to recruit a further **2384 doctors, nurses and midwives** and **3000 community health workers** – a total increase **in key health workers of over 40%, a 29% increase** in health workforce density and a projected 8% improvement in access to health services over a 3-year period.

Rwanda

Health labour market analysis has contributed to Rwanda's strategy to increase its workforce, and secure **US\$ 200 million** in flexible funding through the World Bank Human Capital Development Program for policy reforms and improved service delivery. In 2023, the Government of Rwanda approved the **4x4 Reform**, a visionary strategy aimed at **quadrupling the number of health and care workers** in the country within the next 4 years, to a density of at least **four health workers per 1000 population**.



South Africa

The new national **2030 Human Resources for Health Strategy: Investing in the health workforce for universal health coverage** was facilitated. It commits to the creation of and investment in 97 000 additional jobs in the health sector by 2025 to improve access, service coverage and health outcomes. As a result, **56 000 health workers have been recruited and 46 000 community health workers integrated into primary health care services.**

Africa Health Workforce Investment Charter & Forum

Africa Health Workforce Investment Charter developed to promote investment in education, employment and retention: enabling countries to secure the domestic and external financing, and partnerships necessary to implement workforce policy priorities for improving access to health and care workers. The inaugural **Africa Health Workforce Investment Forum**, held in Namibia with over 200 high-level participants, launched the Charter along with the **Windhoek Statement**, underscoring the commitment to invest in Africa's health workforce.

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Enhanced intersectoral policy dialogue by 16 health ministers resulting in the development and endorsement of the **SADC Health Workforce Strategic Plan, 2020–2030**. This calls for a **common regional approach and increased investments** by all SADC members to double the health workforce by 2030.

West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)

Launch of the subregional health workforce investment plan, enabling eight WAEMU countries to commit to **creating 40 000 health and care jobs** by 2022; ensuring decent work in the health and care sector through improvements in the work environment; scaling up the training and deployment of community-based workers to deliver primary health care; and enhancing the use of digital and new technologies.

Country-level achievements and highlights



159 813 new jobs in countries

contributed to supporting new employment in countries, particularly for women and youth in rural areas, to increase service access and availability



17 country workforce policies and strategies

produced, prioritized and implemented



5 national investment plans

developed and launched

An approach with scalability

Since 2018 Working for Health has **demonstrated its scalability in 28 countries, 16 of which are on the 2023 WHO health workforce support and safeguards list**,³ where universal health coverage is least likely to be achieved. Catalytic technical and financial support has enabled **19 countries to effectively apply health labour market analyses and multisectoral policy dialogue** to address their most pressing workforce issues.

Working for Health has enabled the development and implementation of **seven national health workforce investment plans**, contributing to improved skills, employment and job creation in supported countries, and increased access and service coverage, especially in rural and underserved communities.

Two subregional health workforce investment plans, for the Southern African Development Community and the West African Economic and Monetary Union, have created clear strategic and investment priorities that will increase the number and quality of health workers in their respective Member States and help reduce the 5.3 million health worker shortfall in Africa.

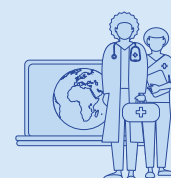
Global public goods

Working for Health also applies key global products that underpin its analytical and policy work at country level, including:

Interagency Data Exchange Platform (IADEX): a mechanism for evidence-based policy and decisions that consolidates workforce data, information exchange and reporting between partner organizations and **193 countries**, including national health workforce accounts and labour force surveys.



International Platform on Health Worker Mobility: a platform that enhances data, knowledge and cooperation for managing the impact and mutual benefits of health worker migration and international recruitment.



Research, guidance and tools: on key workforce topics such as financing and planning, protection and performance, education, skills and employment, and migration.



³ WHO health workforce support and safeguards list. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366398/9789240069787-eng.pdf?sequence=1>).

Working for Health in the future

Working for Health is at the forefront of the transformative movement towards universal health coverage and primary health care. By championing One Health and aligning with global initiatives such as the International Labour Organization's G20 and G7 mandate on social justice, it paves the way for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (Good Health and Well-being) vision of universal health for everyone everywhere.

Its holistic approach, spanning education, employment, labour conditions, gender equality and economic empowerment, not only fills critical workforce gaps but also drives domestic and external investments that are making a significant difference to the health, social and economic outcomes of people and communities.

Working for Health not only ensures quality health for all but also empowers those countries with the largest workforce gaps to drive progress across SDGs 4 (Education), 5 (Gender equality) and 8 (Decent work and growth), and helps deliver a future where health, well-being and prosperity go hand in hand.

Partnering with Working for Health

Join us in supporting, protecting and developing health and care workers around the world.

Partner countries: sharing experience, knowledge and data with other countries on developing a sustainable quality health and care workforce.

Development partners: sharing policy insights and contributing pooled funding into the Working for Health United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

International and nongovernmental organizations: sharing experience, knowledge and data with other countries through Working for Health platforms to inform, enhance and support implementation and action.



W4H

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Get in touch with Working for Health

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ILO

International Labour Organization website

<https://www.ilo.org/industries-and-sectors/health-services-sector>

UN MPTF

United Nations MPTF Office website
Health Workforce action for Countries

<https://mptf.undp.org/fund/whl00>

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development website

<https://www.oecd.org/health/workforce.htm>