



World Health
Organization

Retention of health workers with a focus on rural areas

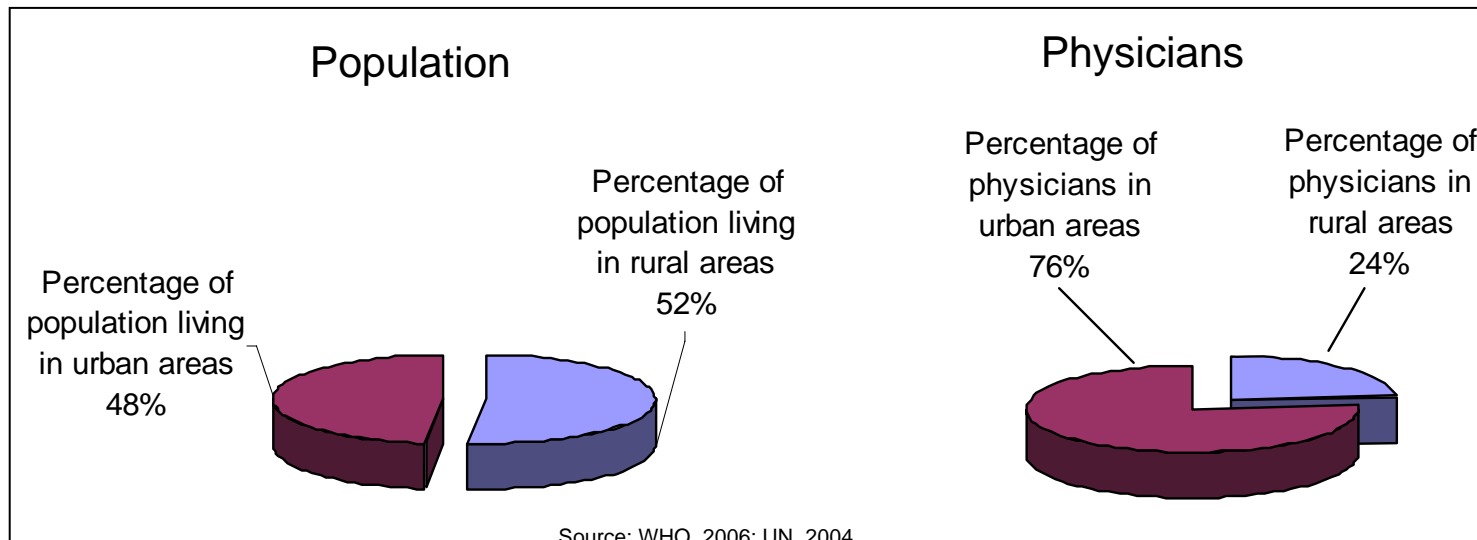
WHO-OECD hosted dialogue on migration and other health
workforce issues in a global economy

Geneva, 20-21 October 2008

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Health Workforce: Geographical Imbalance

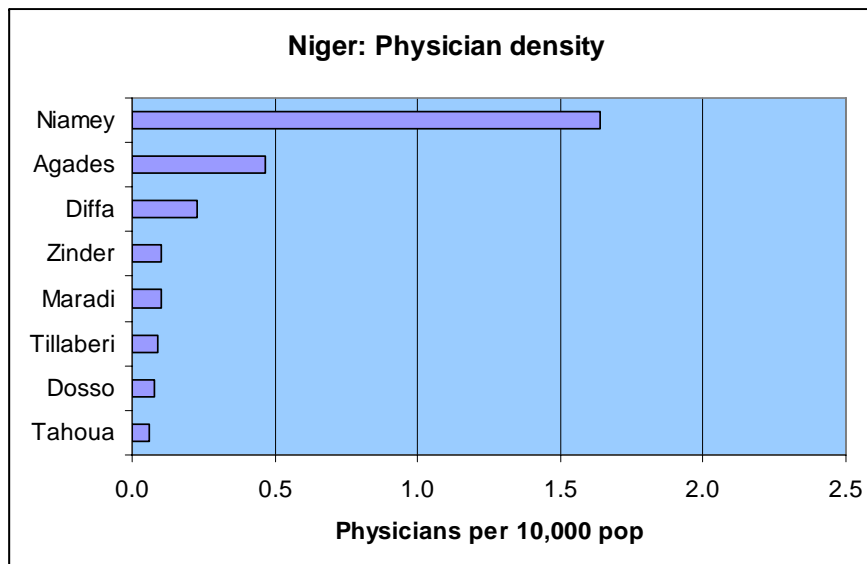
- Rural areas comprise a large share of the world population but a small share of the health workforce



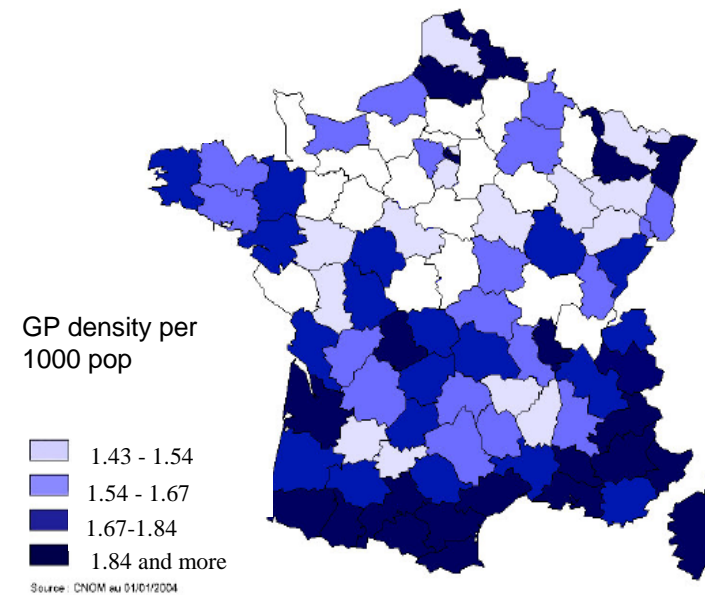
- Remote/isolated and sometimes suburbs or inner cities are also underserved areas

Health Workforce Retention: a Global Concern (1/2)

- Retention is a concern in all countries...
 - Higher or lower income countries
 - Large or small countries

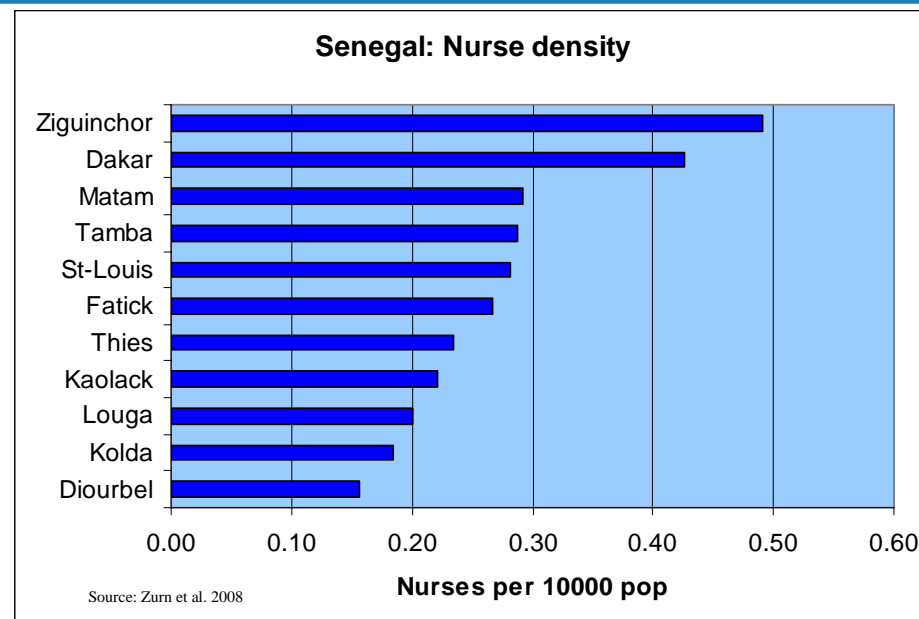
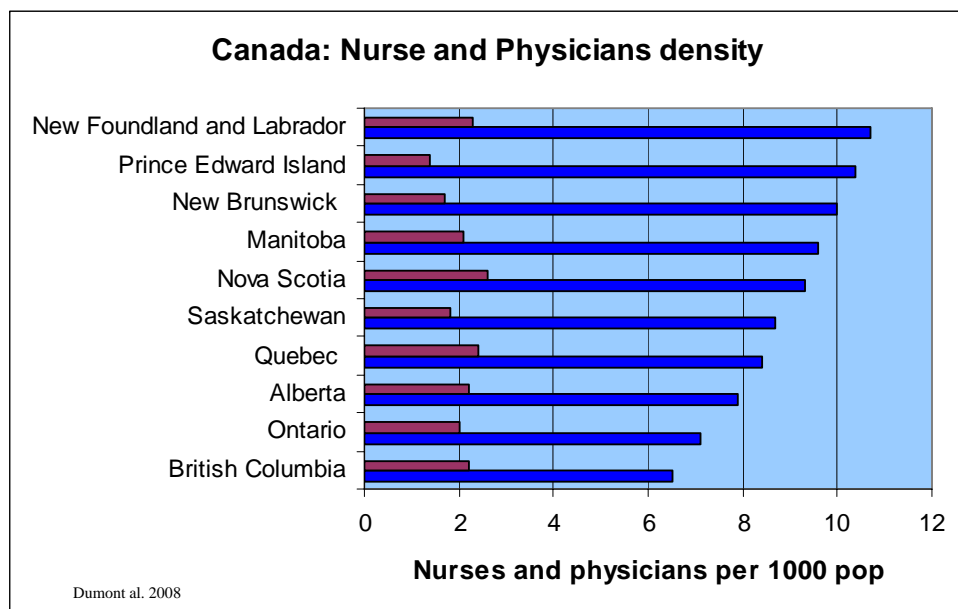


France: General Practitioner density



Health Workforce Retention: a Global Concern (2/2)

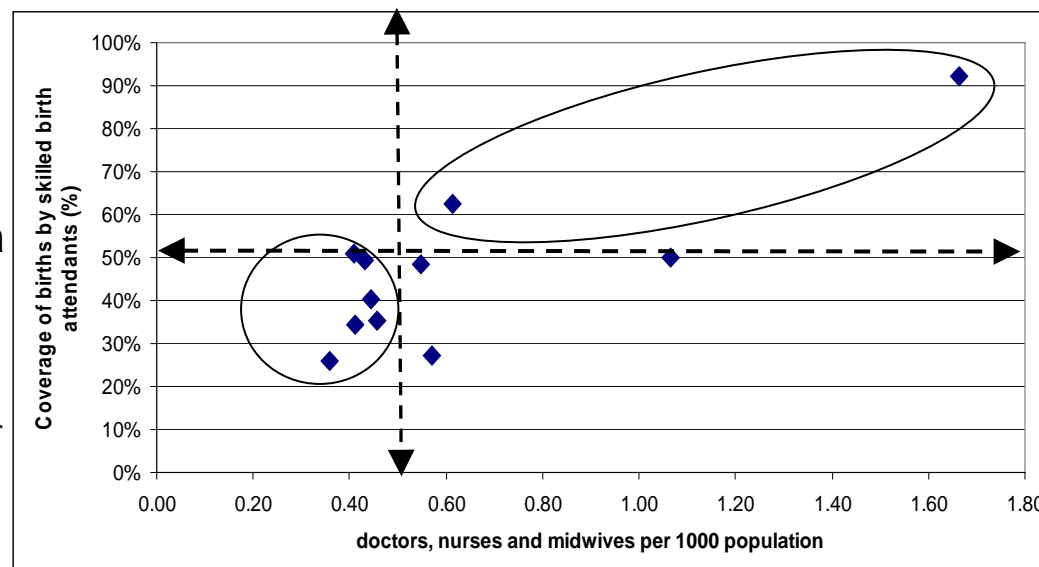
- ...and for all health occupations
 - Doctors
 - Nurses/Midwives
 - Pharmacists
 - Dentists
 - Health associate professions



Underserved Areas and Health System Performance

- Health professionals and the coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
 - Regions with lower health professionals density tend to have a lower coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
 - Poorer regions tend to have a lower density of health workers and a lower coverage of births by skilled birth attendants
 - Inequality and inequity in health workforce distribution

- The case of Senegal

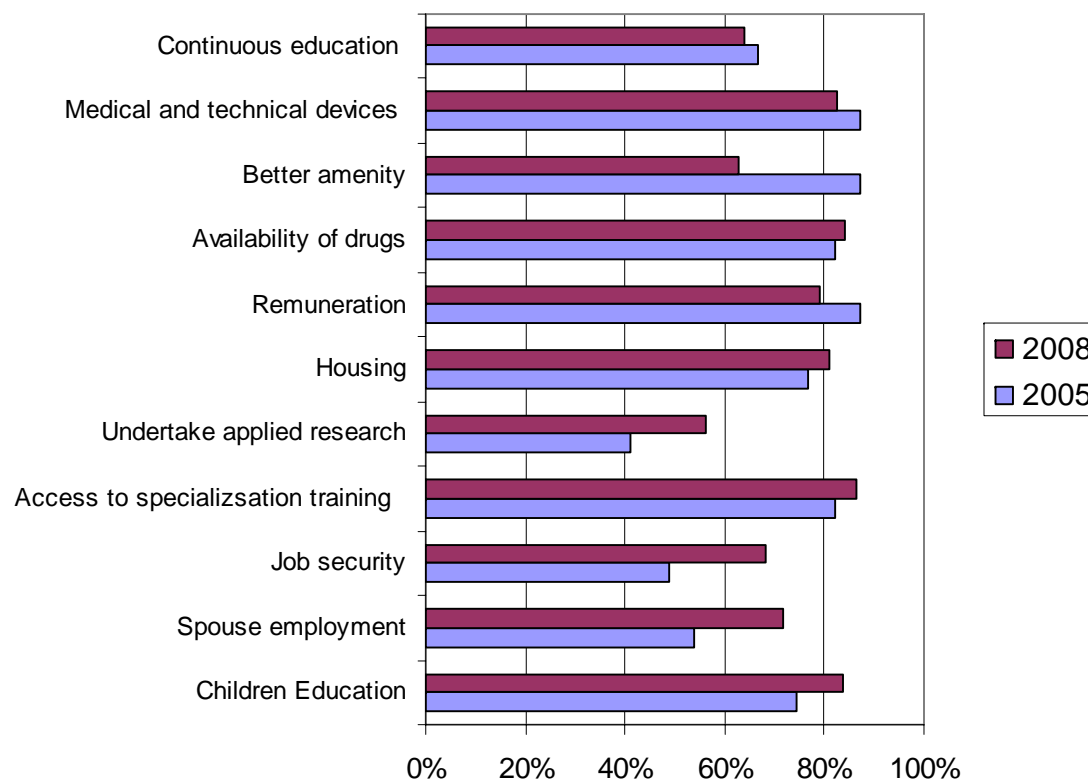


Improving Retention in Rural Areas

- Factors affecting the decision to go to or stay in rural areas:

- Personal factors
- Professional environment
- Social and local environment

- Working in rural areas in Niger: Health professionals expectations



Source: Sedes, 2008

Policies to Improve Retention in Rural Areas (1/2)

- A large range of policies and initiatives have been developed
 - Education related measures
 - Student enrolment
 - Rural training/placement
 - Return of service
 - Regulatory measures
 - Bonding schemes
 - Provisional licence
 - Financial incentives
 - Remuneration (mode and level)
 - Special allowances
 - Pension

Policies to Improve Retention in Rural Areas (2/2)

- Improving working conditions
 - Career development
 - Support for training
 - Network support/multidisciplinary health centres
 - Provision of adequate equipment
 - Security

- Creating different types of cadres (substitution, task shifting)

- Improving living conditions
 - Housing
 - School for children
 - Transportation
 - Communication

- Community initiatives
 - Integration in the community (for the health worker, spouse and children)

Key elements

- Retention in rural areas is a complex issue but essential to address
- Most policies are based on financial incentives
- No "single bullet" but a mix of solutions adapted to each specific context
- Importance of intersectoral approach

Selected Issues - Perspectives

- Evaluation of policies
- Identification of most promising policies
- Sustainability of policies
- A global strategy for improving retention

Selected Issues - Perspectives

- A WHO programme for increasing access to health workers in rural areas through improved retention strategies
 - Building and sharing evidence based good practices
 - Supporting countries
 - Developing and disseminating global policy recommendations

WHO's programme of work: process to develop guidelines and recommendations for retention of health workers

