

The Nursing & Midwifery programme at WHO

What Nursing and Midwifery Services mean to health



Nurses and midwives play a central role in health service delivery— promotion, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation – in areas of great health need, where they may be the only frontline providers of health, especially in remote areas. Health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, maternal and child health and mental health, alongside emerging diseases, put the strengthening of the health workforce high on national agendas. Since in most countries nurses and midwives form the bulk of the clinical health workforce, developing and strengthening human resources for health means recognizing that *nursing and midwifery services play a vital role in improving health service delivery.*

Nursing and Midwifery in WHO

Several World Health Assembly resolutions (WHA42.27, 45.5, 47.9, 48.8, 49.1, 54.12 and WHA59.27) on nursing and midwifery demonstrate the importance WHO Member States attach to nursing and midwifery services as a means of achieving better health for all communities. The most recent resolution, WHA 59.27 resolution reiterates the importance of nursing and midwifery:

...recognizing the critical contribution of nursing and midwifery professions to health systems, to the health of the people they serve, and to efforts to achieve the internationally agreed health related development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and those of WHO Priority Programmes...

Scope and functions in WHO HQ

Located in the Department of Human Resources for Health (HRH), the work on nursing and midwifery is directed towards:

- facilitating the integration of nursing and midwifery services in WHO programmes;
- providing evidence-based information;
- supporting technical efforts for capacity building;
- forging networks for effective networks and partnerships.

Strategic directions

The Strategic Directions for Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery Services (2011-2015), developed by WHO and its partners, provide an overarching framework for collaborative action to the common goal enshrined in its vision: ***Improved health outcomes for individuals, families and communities through the provision of competent, culturally sensitive, evidence based nursing and midwifery services***

Strategic areas

The main strategic areas are:

- Strengthening of health systems and services.
- Nursing and midwifery policy and practice.
- Education, training and career development.
- Nursing and midwifery workforce management.
- Partnership for nursing and midwifery services.

The Strategic Directions provide both a framework for WHO action to support countries in improving the quality of nursing and midwifery services, and a possible guide for action at national levels.

Our principles

These principles presented below inform future action taken by the WHO and partners.

Partnership: working together on common objectives, acting collaboratively and supporting each others' efforts.

Relevance: developing health services and systems guided by health needs, evidence and strategic priorities.

Ownership: adopting a flexible approach that can guide action at global and national levels and be implemented with local involvement.

Ethical action: planning and providing health care services based on equity and fairness and respect for gender and human rights.

Key contributions within WHO and to its partners

The Programme strives to contribute to evidence for global health policy and development of guidelines for planning and management of human resources. It also works to:

- build and maintain workforce databases;
- identify and provide support to priority programmes (such as HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, TB, malaria and mental health);
- provide direction to and chart global trends in nursing education and practice;
- pursue and foster research (such as migration, shortages and retention, interprofessional education and collaborative practice);
- establish linkages;
- build capacity;
- develop care standards and generate best practices in care.

How do we operate?

The Program at WHO headquarters is supported by the Regional Advisers for Nursing and Midwifery in the six WHO regional offices, as well as the Global Advisory Group on Nursing and Midwifery (GAGNM) and the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery Development (GNWHOCC).

Our partners

We work with a broad range of partners which include, the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres in Nursing and Midwifery Development; International Catholic Committee of Nurses and Medico-social Assistants; International Confederation of Midwives (ICM); International Council of Nurses (ICN); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Labour Organization; International Society of Nurses in Cancer Care; Sigma Theta Tau International Honour Society of Nursing; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Population Fund.

What are the benefits to our partners?

- greater **insight** on global issues and programmes related to nursing and midwifery;
- **access** to current information on health policies, research and service delivery;
- increased opportunities for **networking** at global, regional and national levels;
- faster **linkage** to packages on essential care standards for nursing and midwifery;
- increased **visibility** of expertise of collaborating centres and the WHO priority programmes;
- enhanced opportunities for **resource mobilization**, both human and financial.