

FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR HEALTH EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH (2017–2021)



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ISBN 978-92-4-151414-9

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Suggested citation. Five-year action plan for health employment and inclusive economic growth (2017–2021). Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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Printed in Switzerland.

WORKING FOR HEALTH

FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN FOR HEALTH EMPLOYMENT AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH (2017–2021)



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WORKING FOR HEALTH

Five-year action plan for health employment and inclusive economic growth (2017–2021)

Summary

One vision:	Accelerate progress towards universal health coverage and attaining the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by ensuring equitable access to health workers within strengthened health systems
Two goals:	Invest in both the expansion and transformation of the global health and social workforce
Three agencies:	International Labour Organization (ILO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Health Organization (WHO)
Four Sustainable Development Goals:	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3); Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4); Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5); and Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8)
Five workstreams:	To facilitate the implementation of intersectoral approaches and country-driven action and catalyse sustainable investments, capacity-building and policy action: (1) advocacy, social dialogue and policy dialogue; (2) data, evidence and accountability; (3) education, skills and jobs; (4) financing and investments; and (5) international labour mobility.



Background

1. In its report entitled *Working for health and growth: investing in the health workforce*, the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth (“the Commission”) proposed 10 recommendations and five immediate actions to transform the health and social workforce for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ Implementation of these will require game-changing interventions and action by Member States, led by ministries of health, education, employment and finance, as well as the international community.

2. Dismantling the long-held belief that investment in the health workforce is a drag on the economy, the Commission found that health workforce investments coupled with the right policy action could unleash enormous socioeconomic gains in quality education, gender equality, decent work, inclusive economic growth, and health and well-being. This paradigm shift provides new political impetus for Member States to implement WHO’s global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030² adopted by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016.³

The High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth was established by the United Nations Secretary-General on 2 March 2016 in response to United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/183 on Global Health and Foreign Policy: Strengthening the Management of International Health Crises adopted on 17 December 2015.

The Commission was chaired by H.E. President of France, Mr François Hollande, and H.E. President of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma; and co-chaired by Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, Mr Ángel Gurría, Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and Mr Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour Organization. The Commission launched its report on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 20 September 2016.

The Commission’s report was welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-first session.¹ The General Assembly urged Member States to consider its recommendations, “including the development of intersectoral plans and investment in education and job creation in the health and social sectors” with the aim of “contributing to global inclusive economic growth and the creation of decent jobs and achieving universal health coverage”.

The Executive Board of the World Health Organization at its 140th session in January 2017 considered and welcomed the Commission’s report. It requested the Director-General of WHO to work with Member States to adopt measures focusing on the key recommendations.

¹ High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth. *Working for health and growth: Investing in the health workforce*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016 (<http://www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/reports>, accessed 5 April 2017).

² Available at: http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/pub_globstrathrh-2030/en/ (accessed 5 April 2017).

³ Resolution WHA69.19.(2016).

3. The Commission identifies the health and social sector¹ as a major and growing source of employment, and as strategic areas for investment that translate into more decent work opportunities than most other industries and sectors, particularly for women and young people.² As populations grow and change, the demand for health workers is estimated to almost double by 2030 with the expected creation of around 40 million new health worker jobs, primarily in upper-middle and high-income countries.³ Each health and social worker job is supported on average by at least two additional jobs in other occupations in the broader health economy, offering the potential for job creation in and beyond the health and social sector. Few economic sectors present opportunities for steady growth in decent work, especially in light of large potential job losses in other economic sectors due to rapid technological advances and the changing organization of production and work.⁴

4. However, the projected growth in jobs takes place alongside the potential shortfall of 18 million health workers if universal health coverage is to be achieved and sustained by 2030, primarily in low- and middle-income

countries as envisaged in WHO's global strategy on human resources for health. Without targeted interventions, the situation in resource-constrained settings could be further exacerbated by increased labour mobility towards countries with the greatest demands, thereby undermining already vulnerable health systems. Investing in the quality of jobs in terms of working conditions, labour protection and rights at work is the key to retaining health workers where they are needed.

5. The Commission called for immediate, bold and game-changing interventions to challenge the status quo and alter the projected trends in the health and social workforce. Achieving a sustainable health and social workforce is an intersectoral pursuit that requires coordinated leadership and action across the sectors of government responsible for finance, labour, education, health, social affairs and foreign affairs, as well as close collaboration with employers' and health workers' organizations, professional associations and other key stakeholders. Ten recommendations and five immediate actions (Table 1) are proposed in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹ Note that the draft five-year action plan includes all occupations that contribute towards improved health and well-being in the health and health-related social care sectors, and thus refers to the health and social workforce engaged in health care in all its deliverables.

² Investing in the care economy: a gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries, March 2016. Brussels: International Trade Union Confederation; 2016 (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/CareJobs>, accessed 5 September 2016).

³ Liua JX, Goryakin Y, Maeda A, Bruckner TA, Scheffler RM. Global health workforce labor market projections for 2030. Policy Research Working Paper. Report number WPS7790. Washington, DC: World Bank; 2016 (<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/546161470834083341/Global-health-workforce-labor-market-projections-for-2030>, accessed 5 April 2017).

⁴ See Report of the ILO's Director-General: The future of work centenary initiative. Conference paper. 104th International Labour Conference, 2015 (http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/104/reports/reports-to-the-conference/WCMS_369026/lang--en/index.htm, accessed 5 April 2017) and The Learning Generation: Investing in Education for a Changing World. International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity. September 2016. (http://report.educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Learning_Generation_Full_Report.pdf, accessed 30 November 2016).

Table 1. Recommendations and immediate actions from the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth

Recommendations	Immediate actions by March 2018
<p>Transforming the health workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stimulate investments in creating decent health sector jobs, particularly for women and youth, with the right skills, in the right numbers and in the right places. 2. Maximize women's economic participation and foster their empowerment through institutionalizing their leadership, addressing gender biases and inequities in education and the health labour market. 3. Scale up transformative, high-quality education and life-long learning so that all health workers have skills that match the health needs of populations and can work to their full potential. 4. Reform service models concentrated on hospital care and focus instead on prevention and on the efficient provision of high-quality, affordable, integrated, community-based, people-centred primary and ambulatory care, paying special attention to underserved areas. 5. Harness the power of cost-effective information and communication technologies to enhance health education, people-centred health services and health information systems. 6. Ensure investment in the International Health Regulations (2005) core capacities, including skills development of national and international health workers in humanitarian settings and public health emergencies, both acute and protracted. Ensure the protection and security of all health workers and health facilities in all settings. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Secure commitments, foster intersectoral engagement and develop an action plan B. Galvanize accountability, commitment and advocacy C. Advance health labour market data, analysis and tracking in all countries D. Accelerate investment in transformative education, skills and job creation E. Establish an international platform on health worker mobility
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Raise adequate funding from domestic and international sources, public and private where appropriate, and consider broad-based health financing reform where needed, to invest in the right skills, decent working conditions and an appropriate number of health workers. 8. Promote intersectoral collaboration at national, regional and 	

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