

# Global strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery 2016–2020







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# Foreword

For the first time in history, the population of people aged 60 years and older outnumber the population of children under 5 years. The implications of this shift, in terms of the demands and costs of health care are immense. Economic growth, modernization and urbanization have opened wide the entry point for the spread of unhealthy lifestyles. Instead of diseases vanishing as living conditions improve, socioeconomic progress is actually creating the conditions that favour the rise of noncommunicable diseases. Communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and in most recent years Ebola and Zika virus disease, continue to devastate communities. Furthermore, addressing maternal and child health is a high priority for the international community that deserves the attention and services of nurses and midwives. Nurses respond to the health needs of people in all settings and throughout the lifespan. Their roles are critical in achieving global mandates such as universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. These mandates provide a challenge as well as an opportunity for making improvements in nursing and midwifery education and services in a comprehensive way that encompasses health promotion, disease prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Nursing and midwifery professions can transform the way health actions are organized and how health care is delivered if they are regulated and well supported. The services they offer can also provide a rallying point for inter- and intradisciplinary health actions, which is at the core of the WHO *Global strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery 2016–2020*. The strategy takes into account the dynamism of global health – five years from now, WHO and partners will take stock and continue to align strategies with evidence-based global health trends. The application of community-responsive interventions within health systems that promote conducive work environments in line with the objectives of universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals can help nurses and midwives to continue to make a difference through the provision of high-impact and low-cost interventions. Strengthening nursing and midwifery to support universal health coverage is a key imperative for improving the health of populations.

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