



HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH

Increasing access to basic health care—and responding to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria—relies on a strong and well-supported health workforce. Yet shortages and poor distribution of health workers



pose serious problems in many developing countries. IntraHealth mobilizes local talent to respond to these challenges at every level of the health care continuum—from government decision-makers to the organizations that educate and support health workers to the health providers themselves and the communities they serve.



IntraHealth leads the Capacity Project, a global USAID-funded partnership to help developing countries plan, develop and support the health care workforce, and is assisting more than 20 countries to strengthen human resources for health

(HRH). We work by 1) rapidly assessing the HRH situation, 2) building strong alliances and leadership to address the challenges, and 3) designing and implementing practical and creative solutions to tackle the problems.

Strengthening Human Resources Information Systems

A strong human resources information system (HRIS) gives health care leaders the data they need to quickly answer the key policy and management questions affecting health care service delivery. Our five-step HRIS strengthening process includes:

- Building local HRIS leadership
- Strengthening infrastructure
- Developing HRIS software solutions
- Effectively using and analyzing data
- Ensuring that users can support and improve the system themselves.

To decrease the implementation costs and ongoing maintenance of HRIS, IntraHealth has developed the iHRIS suite of freely available Open Source software systems, which can be quickly customized for local needs:

- iHRIS Qualify tracks health worker training, certification and licensure
- iHRIS Manage maintains personnel deployment, performance and attrition information
- iHRIS Plan models long-term workforce needs.

For more information and to view software demonstrations, visit www.capacityproject.org/hris

Fostering Data-Based Planning and Policies

Our work in Uganda shows how we can increase a country's capacity, through its Ministry of Health and other institutions, to develop and carry out a data-based plan to strengthen the health workforce. Key components of this effort in Uganda include strengthening HRIS; designing a participatory workshop on data-driven decision making for policy planners and HR managers; testing strategies to encourage health workers to remain in their jobs; developing a workplace safety program to protect health workers against HIV; building the communications skills of the country's health professional associations; and guiding supervisors in approaches to improve health worker performance and service delivery.

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IntraHealth International mobilizes local talent to create sustainable and accessible health care in developing countries. A not-for-profit organization, IntraHealth has worked in more than 50 countries over the last three decades.

The program in Uganda has been strengthened by knowledge sharing among its leaders and those working on similar issues in other countries.

Learning for Performance

Too often, education and training programs for health workers have focused on “know all” rather than “know how.” IntraHealth’s *Learning for Performance: A Guide and Toolkit for Health Worker Training and Education Programs* offers a step-by-step, customizable approach designed to improve health worker performance through more efficient training programs that focus on priority on-the-job performance outcomes. Available in English and French at www.intrahealth.org.

Improving Retention and Productivity

Two key strategies in addressing health worker shortages are to keep existing workers in their jobs and to help workers use their time most effectively. Through the Capacity Project we are conducting studies in Uganda and Tanzania that will guide the design of promising approaches to influence health worker retention and productivity.

Revising Scopes of Practice for Health Workers

In many developing countries, access to vital health services can be increased by shifting tasks from scarce physicians and nurses to other health workers. IntraHealth assists in demonstrating that particular groups of health workers can safely and effectively perform certain tasks and supports policy revision to authorize new scopes of practice. Examples of this work include demonstrating that *matrones* can perform a life-saving practice to prevent postpartum hemorrhage in Mali, deploying health extension

workers in Ethiopia to increase the use of services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and shifting postabortion care services from overburdened hospitals to private-sector nurse-midwives in Kenya.

Strengthening Health Professional Associations

Professional associations for health care workers can promote high standards of practice, advocate for the needs of both consumers and providers and liaise with legislative and regulatory bodies. Strengthening professional associations is an effective strategy for addressing global HRH issues such as out-migration of nurses and doctors and lack of an adequate supply of well-trained professionals to deliver HIV/AIDS services. IntraHealth works to build the capacity of professional associations in areas such as HRIS, governance, developing standards for continuing education and professional development, and communications and advocacy skills.

Expanding Knowledge on Human Resources for Health

To enable health care leaders and managers to find, share, contribute and use knowledge and tools on human resources for health, we launched the HRH Global Resource Center (www.hrresourcecenter.org) in 2006. This web-based library offers more than 1,000 HRH resources and features personalized librarian support. The website provides information and assistance to improve strategic planning and decision making, support HRH advocacy and enhance professional development. In Southern Sudan, for example, the HR policy development task force used resources from the library to design a national HRH policy and national training plan. The website has been visited by users from 182 countries.

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