Innovative Strategies to Expand Quality Human Resources for Health in Africa

Pape Gaye
July 10, 2018
In Africa, the stock of health workers is projected to grow from 1.9 million in 2013 to 3.1 million by 2030—a 63% increase.

Source: Global Strategy on HRH Workforce 2030
Even so, the health worker crisis in Africa is expected to worsen from a shortfall of 4.2 million health workers in 2013 to 6.1 million by 2030.
So what can we do to improve this sobering projection?
Improved Preservice Training: Uganda

We doubled the placement of priority anesthesia, pharmacy technicians, and theatre assistants.

Quality Improvements:
• Reviewed curricula for priority health cadres
• Improved training of clinical instructors and mentors

Efficiency Improvements:
• Strengthened capacity for leadership & management of health training institutions
• Reviewed scopes of practices for clinical cadres
• Provided scholarships for priority cadres
Creation of New Health Cadres: Central America

Challenge
- Just 36% of people living with HIV in Guatemala are enrolled in antiretroviral treatment (ART)
- Only about 65% are ART adherent

Solution
- We introduced new, facility-based health workers called adherence promoters
- Adherence promoters have helped retain more than 4,000 people at risk of dropping out of ART
Affordable Loans for Health Professional Students: Kenya

The Afya Elimu Fund has supported over 12,500 needy students since its establishment in 2013. Of those, 2,478 have graduated and 62% of those employed are repaying back their loans.
Raise Mandatory Retirement Age of Health Professionals: Namibia

• Mandatory retirement age of nurses in the public sector in Namibia = 60

• As people are living longer, healthier lives, 60 starts to look very young

• Through advocacy, we recruited & deployed 80 formerly retired nurses to the areas with the greatest HIV prevalence and highest unmet need for antiretroviral therapy
"The most important thing for treating obstetric fistula is human resources—the surgeons, the people who clean the rooms, nurses, urologists—all of them are important.

This is why IntraHealth’s approach is best, because it is based on local human resources. You could have brought Americans here to do this, but you said, ‘No, we’re going to help you develop your own human resources and introduce training for fistula surgery.’

So now you’re not only taking care of fistula patients, you’re improving the overall quality of care in Mali.”
HRH: More Complicated Than Just Increasing the Numbers

HRH: availability, accessibility, acceptability, quality, and effective coverage

Source: Campbell et al., 2013.
Focus on Service Utilization: West Africa

• We use civil society to increase family planning service utilization.
  – We engaged **272** youth as FP advocates.
  – We engaged **120** religious leaders who are advocating publicly for FP investments & services.
Focusing on service utilization has contributed the rising rate of contraceptive use regionally.

Source: FP2020
Focus on HRH Quality: Togo

“Although the midwives had learned in their clinical training that multiple pregnancies—too early, or too closely spaced—put the health of both mother and baby at great risk, they also learned to honor a client’s voluntary informed choice when it comes to contraceptive decisions.”

-Stembile Mugore, Intra Health Senior Advisor
“Health is the biggest employment sector in the world that offers careers and opportunities for women, and the data from that study have had a profound influence on global discussions about gender equality.”

-Jim Campbell, speaking on the High-Level Commission on Health Employment & Economic Growth
Call to Action

3. Good Health and Well-being

3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.