

National Health Workforce Accounts

Implementation Guide

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National health workforce accounts: implementation guide
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+ Table of Contents

Abbreviations	iv
Contributions and acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Purpose of this Guide	2
Target audience	2
Guiding principles	2
How to use this Guide	3
NHWA implementation structure overview	3
Summary of steps	4
Schedule for implementing and reporting on NHWA	5
Bodies and roles	5
Overview of NHWA implementation	8
+ Phase I Conceptualization	11
Step 1. Governmental “buy-in”	12
Step 2. Governance	14
Step 3. Scoping and planning	16
+ Phase II Operationalization	19
Step 4. Legal framework	20
Step 5. Data compilation and analysis	22
Step 6. Validation	24
Step 7. Dissemination	25
+ Phase III Scaling up and sustainability	27
Step 8. Process revision	28
+ References	30

Abbreviations

HRH	human resources for health
IT	information technology
NHWA	National Health Workforce Accounts
SOP	standard operating procedure
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization

Contributions and acknowledgements

Under the direction of the World Health Organization (WHO) Health Workforce Department, this Implementation Guide has been developed as an accompanying document to the National Health Workforce Accounts Handbook, to support the implementation of the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030.

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Introduction

With the objective to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage, and to facilitate adoption of the Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030 (1), the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly resolution WHA69.19 (2) in 2016 urged all Member States to consolidate *“a core set of human resources for health data [...] as well as progressive implementation of national health workforce accounts”*.

Reporting on standardized indicators on HRH was further encouraged by the Health Assembly in 2017 (3), which called for the enforcement of the recommendations recently published by the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth (4). In line with the Global strategy on human resources for health, the 10th recommendation of the High-Level Commission, established by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2016, specifically highlights the need for data, information and accountability to *“undertake robust research and analysis of health labour markets, using harmonized metrics and methodologies, to strengthen evidence, accountability and action”*.

The National Health Workforce Accounts (NHWA) is a system through which countries progressively improve the availability, quality, and use of data on their health workforce, and thus achieving universal health coverage, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and other national and global health objectives. While this Implementation Guide uses the generic wording of the NHWA, an equivalent system may already exist in a country to monitor information on the health workforce, using similar terminology such as human resources for health (HRH) registry or health workforce observatory, that fulfils the same objective.

The NHWA follows a labour market analysis framework (5) in which key indicators have to be monitored to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of the health workforce in the country. This framework encompasses several sectors to produce an inclusive assessment of HRH data, requiring not only information on the density of health workers, but also information on health workforce education, finance, migration, etc. The indicators are described in detail in the 10 modules of the WHO NHWA Handbook (6). In addition, a web platform was elaborated for countries to store data, monitor their indicators and report key national statistics on their health workforce to WHO. Access to the web platform and to NHWA supporting documents is available on the WHO Health Workforce Department website.¹

Implementation of the NHWA is based on the commitment of all Member States. It requires organization and coordination at the national level to ensure sustainable processes to identify,

¹ National Health Workforce Accounts, www.who.int/hrh/statistics/nhwa/en/.

collect, monitor, use and report on harmonized HRH data in a progressive way. It is expected that the data to be gathered will be from existing national health and HRH information systems, complemented by available data from other sectors such as education and finance. This Guide has been developed to assist such an integration of data sources within wider health reporting frameworks. It should also provide a valuable insight for Member States to better interpret the impact of HRH capacity on health systems delivery and efficiency, and to identify any changes required.

Purpose of this Guide

Member States need a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of their health workforce. The Guide proposes recommendations that enable countries to develop or improve systematic gathering and use of relevant HRH information in a sustainable and standardized manner to achieve this goal.

Target audience

The document is primarily addressed to:

- Policy-makers and programme managers involved in HRH policy and strategy in the Ministry of Health, or bodies delegated to undertake this function.
- Policy-makers, officials and programme managers in relevant areas such as education, employment and labour, social affairs and economy and finance; civil service commissions, statistical organizations and institutes for health at the national level; academia, health worker organizations, health professional councils, and public and private insurance representatives.
- Other organizations and advisors involved in the monitoring and use of HRH data at national and international level.
- Researchers with interest in the production and analysis of HRH data.

Guiding principles

The following key guiding principles should be borne in mind when reading this document.

- NHWA terminology is proposed throughout this document, but need not replace existing

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