



# TORONTO CALL TO ACTION

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*2006-2015*

*Towards a decade of Human Resources in Health  
for the Americas*

*Regional Meeting of  
the Observatory of  
Human Resources in Health  
4-7 October, 2005*



# TOWARDS A DECADE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN HEALTH FOR THE AMERICAS

## THE TORONTO MEETING

The Toronto Call to Action for a Decade of Human Resources in Health in the Americas (2006-2015) brings together the discussions of the working groups of the Seventh Regional Meeting of the Observatories of Human Resources in Health which was held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 4-7 October, 2005. The meeting was jointly sponsored by the Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and Health Canada, with the support of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.

The **Call to Action** aims to mobilize institutional actors, both national and international, of the health sector and other relevant sectors and civil society, to collectively strengthen the human resources in health through both policies and interventions, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and according to the national health priorities to provide access to quality health services for all the peoples of the Americas by the year 2015.

The participants of the Meeting, recognizing the importance of this initiative, recommend that the efforts to respond to the call be addressed at all levels (international, national, regional and sub-regional) and that the Toronto **Call to Action** be a document that promotes the collective efforts of all stakeholders over a Decade of Human Resources for Health for the Americas (2006-2015). This Decade presupposes the need for making long-term, intentional and coordinated efforts to promote, strengthen, and develop the work force in health in all the countries of the Region of the Americas.

These efforts should be based on the following guiding principles:

***Human Resources are the foundation of the health system:*** The development of human resources in health forms the social and technical foundation of the health systems and their improvement. The contribution of the health workers is one of the most essential components of a health system's ability to effectively provide quality care and to ensure equitable access to that care throughout the entire population.

***Working in the health field provides a public service and demands a social responsibility:*** Work in health is a public service and a social good of great importance for human development. There is a need of balance and harmony between the rights and social responsibilities of the health workers and the rights and social responsibilities of the citizens that deserve care and health services.

***The workers in health are the key players in the development and improvement of health systems:*** The development of human resources in health is a social process - not exclusively a technical process - oriented to improving the health situation as well as the social equity of the population through an adequately distributed, well-trained, motivated workforce. The health worker is one of the key players driving this social process.

The participants emphasized the importance of the following themes that should be adequately addressed in the formulation of human resources plans:

- The strengthening of leadership in the public health sector;
- Increasing the investment into the development and improvement of health human resources;
- Coordination, consensus-building, and integration of actions throughout all levels: national, sub-regional, and regional;
- Ensuring the continuity of policies and interventions;
- Improving the collection and management of relevant information on which to base decisions.

So that the agreements reached at the Meeting of the Observatories of Human Resources in Health are made possible, it is necessary that the Toronto Call to Action have a resonant political and social impact on the countries.

To achieve this impact, it will be necessary to develop a platform of broad action that permits the greatest participation of actors and the generation of consensus for the development and implementation of these actions over the decade; to build and strengthen national and international partnerships for the mobilization of resources for the sustainable development of health systems and of their health human resources; and to generate a way to evaluate and monitor the progress and successes of the national plans of the Region.

Those plans and policies should promote **equity in health, and the universal access to health**, while supporting the integrated development of health systems based on **primary care and multidisciplinary teams**. Not less important than these long term goals, the human resources initiatives and activities should promote health services and institutional environments that are safe for both the patients and the health workers.

## **CRITICAL CHALLENGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN HEALTH**

Although the challenges are multiple, they can be grouped into five critical areas:

1. Define long-range policies and plans to better adapt the work force so it will be prepared to meet expected changes in the health systems and to better develop the institutional capacity for defining these policies and revising them periodically.
2. "Place the right people in the right places" - by deploying the appropriate personnel into the fitting positions and into the right areas of the countries, so as to achieve an equitable distribution of quantity and skill set of health workers in the different regions so that they match the specific health needs of those populations.
3. Regulate the migrations and displacements of health workers so as to ensure access to health care for all the population.

4. Generate labor relationships between the workers and the health organizations that promote healthy work environments and foster commitment to the institutional mission to guarantee quality health services for all the population.
5. Develop mechanisms of cooperation between training institutions (universities and schools) and the health services institutions so that it is possible to adapt the education of the health workers to a universal and equitable model of providing quality care to meet the health needs of the entire population.

### **A PERMANENT AND PLANNED EFFORT:**

### **LINES OF COLLECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS**

To meet the challenges and current problems in health human resources development is only possible through a permanent and planned effort, sustained with political will and implemented through specific activities.

To this end, a number of lines of action have been suggested at the **country level**, the **sub-regional level**, and the **regional level**, as well as noting that the activities should be supported by **international cooperation towards and among the countries**. These actions are directed to succeed in obtaining that at the end of 2015, each and every one of the countries has advanced significantly toward the achievement of its objectives in health through the development of its human resources.

### **IN THE COUNTRIES:**

Strengthen the institutional support for the development of the human resources for health:

- Creation and/or strengthening of the national directorates of human resources;
- Strengthening of the Observatories of Human Resources for Health, widening their operational network;
- Strengthening of stable and participatory relationships for consensus-building and negotiation;

Defending and promoting the importance of the health workers:

- Use of specific data and evidence to support political arguments regarding the importance of the human resources for health.
- Sensitization and commitment at the political levels, especially using the activities related to World Health Day 2006.
- Publications and dissemination of information, news, and experiences.

### Financing for the development of health personnel

- Advocacy on behalf of the development of the health workforce so that it is seen as an indispensable social investment
- Discussions and negotiations with the Ministries of Budget and Finance for the expansion of the fiscal space that is devoted to health services.
- Alignment, harmonization, and coordination of international cooperation so as to increase financing according to the national priorities

### Improving the technical capacity for human resources management and training:

- Consolidation of the technical capability of the teams responsible for HR policies and for the management of human resources, developing a common language and a shared vision for leadership development.
- Bringing together the health services and the universities and Schools of Public Health to work cooperatively in human resources planning and the development of human resources management programs as part of the public health and related curricula.
- Developing the capacity to deal with emerging paradigms, especially related to the need of interprofessional education and new approaches for capacities in Primary Health Care teams.

### Expansion of the bases of information and evidence in Human Resources:

- Generation and expansion of information systems that makes it possible to monitor the numbers, skills, and movements of the health workforce.
- Expanding the use of the Health Human Resources Observatories and developing similar strategies for information sharing.
- Development and Strengthening of abilities to manage data so that the information gathered can be effectively used to guide decisions on human resources planning and policies.
- Study and identification of health human resources indicators to better understand human resources impacts on health and services.
- Promotion of research policies on health worker issues, including best management practices, so as to make it possible to base political decisions on evidence.
- Dissemination of knowledge gathered by the Observatories regarding the characteristics and conditions of health workers, so that this knowledge is utilized by decision makers

### **AT THE SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL:**

- Agreements/advocacy in the areas of political and technical integration (Meeting of the Health Sector in Central America and Dominican Republic - RESSCAD, Caribbean Community - CARICOM, Common Market of the South -MERCOSUR, Andean Community - CAN)
- Exchange of experiences and information at the sub-regional level with emphasis on good practices, the generation exchange networks, and horizontal cooperation
- Development of training/educational processes –with an emphasis on leadership training at the sub-regional level.
- Coordination of schools of public health at the sub-regional level for the strengthening of the research and training in public health
- Identification of common human resources themes to collaborate in the seeking of funds to support joint development efforts

### **THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION:**

- The projects for strengthening the health systems should emphasize human resources strategies as a central part of their transformation proposals.
- It is necessary to maintain the enthusiasm of the international community around the subject of human resources, so that long-term processes can be successfully implemented, to avoid short cycles of fluctuating interest.
- The principal strategies for the plan of action will be: advocacy, policy design and planning, production of evidence, and developing better management, through technical cooperation and partnerships.
- As the need for a long-term intervention has been demonstrated, the international community should support and promote the idea of a Decade of Human Resources for Health, in accordance with the report of the *Joint Learning Initiative*, Rockefeller Foundation, and the subsequent discussions within World Health Organization; therefore there is a need to support actively the construction of the "Action Learning Network" in the Region.
- An initiative for the American hemisphere is advisable, with a broad, inclusive platform, but with an approach that centers on the countries, with specific commitments.
- The concept of human resources for health should be expanded to include other (non-traditional or non-western) paradigms of care and an expanded role for women.
- It is necessary to coordinate activities so as to avoid the problem of fragmented interventions ("in silos") of the agencies.

- It is important that political and financial support for vertical intervention programs address the wider infrastructure issues of health system and human resources development that will be impacted by these programs and will likewise impact the success or failure of these initiatives.
- Support for the national Observatories should be provided in order to maintain and improve the data, information, knowledge and arguments; the social dialogues; and to strengthen the operation of the international network.

This Call to Action should promote alliances between agencies and countries around projects of common interest. In view of the fact that overcoming health human resources challenges requires the development of national capabilities, as well as the modification of sub-regional or global approaches, responses limited to only one country or to a single agency are no longer sufficient.

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

The VII Regional Reunion of the Observatories of Human Resources in Health was an important opportunity to agree:

- That the Call to Action will be a useful frame of reference for the formulation and implementation of human resources planning (national, sub-regional and regional) during the next decade in the Americas.
- That the countries will aim to develop these plans and interventions according to the principles and strategic orientations that were discussed by the participants during the working sessions of the Toronto Meeting.
- That active cooperation among all the actors interested in this subject is necessary and that both the countries and the agencies that were represented at the Toronto Meeting wish to continue working together on joint activities that promote, strengthen, and develop the health workforce;
- That the adaptation of the number and capacities of health workers so they match the needs of the population is a very complex activity, because it must take into account both the epidemiological and the socio-demographic changes of the countries; and it requires permanent investments into building mechanisms that enable both medium and long-term planning.
- That it is necessary for the participants of the Toronto Meeting to continue communicating with each other and with other social actors, because this communication is of vital importance to achieve the necessary mobilization around the common objective of building sustainable policies of human resources development in the Region;

- That the immediate actions should be oriented to building an agenda for the next decade, and at the same time achieve short term results that we may share and disseminate for World Health Day 2006, the Health Week in the Americas, and the next Meeting of the Observatories of Human Resources for Health, to be held in Peru in November 2006.

In the hope that this Call to Action signifies a first and very important collective step to decision-making and to the implementation of concrete, effective, sustainable, and permanent actions for development of human resources in health in the Americas, we encourage all to disseminate these ideas to the broader audience, so that the Call to Action may serve as a reference and a tool for all those who aim to develop human resources policies as part of more equitable and quality health systems for the countries of our Region.