

WHO Global Forum for Government Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers, 14-15 May 2014, Geneva, Switzerland:

Nursing and Midwifery Workforce and Universal Health Coverage

Forum Statement

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) encompasses principles of equity and social justice, arising from the 'Health for All' movement of the 1970s, and enshrined in *the Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care* in 1978. The Government Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers (GCNMOs) participating in the 2014 Global Forum recognize that to achieve UHC, several factors must be in place. In particular, a functioning and efficient health system that meets population health needs through people-centred integrated care is essential. Such a system should ensure that people seeking health services do not suffer financial hardship when using and accessing health care services. Above all, there should be appropriately educated, regulated, and motivated health workers to provide the services.

The nursing and midwifery professions continue to evolve and their roles are influenced by local and global challenges. Nurses and midwives are prepared to respond and manage health care needs across the life span. Within the context of primary health care and UHC, nursing and midwifery services contribute to reduction of morbidity and mortality, resulting from emerging and re-emerging health problems. Nurses and midwives are frontline professionals who use an integrated and comprehensive approach including health promotion, disease prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care.

The GCNMOs support global commitments that call for governments to work towards universal access to affordable and quality health care services. We are committed to lead in the development of a competent nursing and midwifery workforce at all levels of the health care delivery system. Universal health coverage takes into account the critical role played by all sectors, therefore as GCNMOs, we further commit ourselves to take a holistic approach in the implementation of strategies towards UHC in our own countries as follows:

1. Leadership and management

- a. Build political support at the highest level of the health system to ensure continuity in the pursuit of UHC.
- b. Formulate nursing and midwifery policies that encapsulate the vision for UHC to ensure integrated people-centred services.
- c. Develop and or strengthen policies for improving the quality of education and training, recruitment, retention and deployment.
- d. Develop evidence-based policies for effective and efficient nursing and midwifery workforce management.

2. Education and training

- a. Support educational institutions to develop and implement curricula that take into account the quantity, quality and relevance of the nursing and midwifery workforce to meet the local and national changing health needs.
- b. Build and sustain the technical capacity to ensure quality education and practice through continuing professional development programmes.
- c. Work and support partners' effort to assess the gap between the need for a health workforce, actual supply, geographical distribution (stock, skills mix and competencies) and the population's demand for health services.

3. Collaborative partnerships

- a. Identify key partners including service users to support and build the capacity of the nursing and midwifery workforce to contribute to UHC.
- b. Develop and support nursing and midwifery interventions that lead to improved access to health care services.
- c. Develop strategies that support the creation of links between public, non-governmental and private sector to minimize barriers of access to health services in rural and remote or hard to reach areas.