

The results of the online Eastern Mediterranean nursing and midwifery survey revealed:

- shortages of nurses and midwives require rapid scale up of nursing and midwifery workforce;
- information on nursing and midwifery provides limited understanding of the current situation;
- level of investment in nursing and midwifery education and training capacities is low;
- the limited scope of practice of nurses needs to be revisited in many countries;
- regulation of nursing and midwifery professionals is yet to be developed/strengthened in many countries, raising quality concerns;
- policies that promote positive practice environment, job satisfaction and motivation are limited, leading to increasing international mobility of nurses and midwives.

All of this stands in the way of attracting new recruits and retaining nurses and midwives. Few countries have evidence of a career structure or professional progression structure.

Over the years, resolutions on nursing and midwifery adopted by the WHO World Health Assembly have helped to provide a strong foundation for strengthening nursing and midwifery services. The most recent resolution, WHA 64.7, gives WHO the mandate to develop and strengthen strategies such as: capacity of nursing and midwifery workforce through the provision of support to Member States on developing targets, action plans and forging strong interdisciplinary health teams as well as strengthening the dataset on nursing and midwifery.

The mandates have been operationalized through the various strategic directions of strengthening nursing and midwifery. The "Global strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery 2016–2020", being the third in the series follows the versions of 2002–2008 and 2011–2015.

Together with the "Global strategy on human resources for health: workforce 2030" the global strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery 2016–2020 provides a robust WHO strategic response to develop nursing and midwifery as it outlines critical objectives.

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