

Fifth Forum of the African HRH Platform Call to Action

The human resources for health challenge is only too evident. Francis Omaswa rounds up the outcome of the latest policy and action review



The Fifth Forum of the African Platform on Human Resources for Health took place at the Speke Commonwealth Resort, Munyonyo, Kampala, Uganda, from 19th to 21st April 2017 bringing together a wide range of participants from across the African continent and several international partners. The Forum was held under the theme: Positioning the African Health Workforce (HWF) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and explored the need to produce and retain adequate numbers of skilled, motivated and supported health workers (HWs) for every person in every village, and of the challenges and opportunities presented by new HWF global developments and commitments.

These include the transition of GHWA to the Global Health Network (GHWN), the Global HWF Strategy 2030, the follow action on the report of the High Level UNSG Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, the Regional Road Map for Scaling up the Capacity of the HWF in the African Region, and the African Union (AU) Health Strategy 2016. There was a special discussion on the proposed 'Nursing Now' campaign and reports of two separate global Commissions on Epidemic Preparedness and Response that were launched during the Forum.

The presentations and discussions at the Forum were of very high quality and affirmed the following as critical to achievement of our aspirations and SDGs (i) investing in Africa's people by developing human capital, (ii) Africa needs to believe in and invest in home grown solutions, (iii) ensuring that more domestic resources are mobilised, (iv) leadership at all levels including in HWF is needed as 'the future is in our own hands', and (v) we shall leave no one behind.

The Forum agreed that it will require evidenced needs-based comprehensive Human Resources for Health (HRH) planning for requisite recruitment, training, deployment, utilisation, motivation and retention of health professionals in the right mix where their services are needed.

The Forum took note of the resources challenges within African countries and noted the evidence presented that African countries will not have the resources to employ the needed HWF. The Forum further noted the global shift towards reliance on domestic resources and called for more efficient and effective utilisation of available resources, including HRH, to ensure that more was done with the available resources. This will entail innovative utilisation of existing resources, through

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inter-professional, inter-disciplinary collaboration.

The Forum appreciated the progress made in a number of areas during the Millennium Development Goals era, and to build on those gains will require high level political engagement, with the realisation that health is a leading economic and labour sector, that health is not only a development issue, but a human rights issue and an issue of global security. This will require the constant engagement of communities and civil society with the governments taking the leading role.

The Fifth Forum of the African Platform on HRH made the following calls to action:

- To the Ministries responsible for health to provide leadership, and to initiate and engage in high level political dialogue to accelerate domestication, translation and implementation of the various global and continental commitments.
- To the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN family, and GHWN to be assertive in their respective roles especially international coordination.
- To WHO to support the full implementation of the WHO Global Code on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, including building the capacity of countries to report on this code. To promote mechanisms for responsible and equitable sharing of the burden of training and retaining HWs between regions and countries.
- To community actors, civil society and other non-state actors to intensify the advocacy efforts to ensure that HRH remains high on the global agenda.
- To training institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations to scale-up and advocate for transformative approaches to the production of skilled health workers.
- To the Global HRH movement and the global development community to keep a focus on Africa, and to forge partnerships around the African HRH and the realisation of the SDGs.
- To the African Platform on HRH Board of Directors and Secretariat to intensify efforts to mobilise resources for the implementation of the outstanding HRH agenda for Africa, to ensure that the health workforce migration remains a topical issue in the global arena.

The Forum committed to participating effectively at the 4th Global Forum on HRH in Dublin, Ireland in November 2017.

The Forum concluded with a General business meeting of Forum members which directed the Board and the Secretariat to update the Constitution of the Platform, develop a new advocacy and business plan and organise elections for a new Board within the next six months.

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