New Tool Helps Countries Estimate Health Workforces Needs

July 8, 2009

Software launched July 7 by the Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA) will allow countries to better estimate their health workforce needs and scale up their health care systems.

Today, the scarcity of trained health care professionals has reached crisis level in 57 countries. According to the World Health Organization, there is a need for about 4.3 million trained health workers worldwide, a shortage that leaves an estimated 1 billion people without access to basic health care.

“Before the RRT [resource requirements tool], countries were largely trying to estimate their health workforce needs in the dark,” GHWA executive director Mubashar Sheikh said in a statement. “With this vital tool, ministries of health and education and their partners can develop effective, sustainable programs to strengthen their human resources for health, retain more health workers and utilize trained health workers most productively to achieve improved health for their people.”

The RRT addresses health needs specific to each country’s existing health worker distribution and gaps, its training requirements and its overlap between public and private health services, in addition to other factors that help gauge the success or failure of health worker scale-up. Using available data, the application estimates “base,” “optimistic” and “pessimistic” scenarios depending on changing conditions and economic circumstances.

Developed by GHWA’s Financing Task Force in collaboration with the World Bank, the RRT has been piloted successfully in Ethiopia, Liberia, Uganda and Peru.

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