



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

October 2015

**Sixty-second Session
Kuwait, Kuwait City, 5-8 October 2015**

TECHNICAL MEETING

**NURSING AND MIDWIFERY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

Objectives of the event

The objectives of the event are to:

- brief Member States on the key challenges facing nursing and midwifery in the Region; and
- suggest feasible, high impact, relevant and cost-effective actions to address these challenges.

Background

Nurses and midwives are at the frontline of service delivery. Enhancing their capacity is essential to strengthen and sustain health, academic and regulatory systems in each country worldwide. Nursing and midwifery interventions provide close contact with the client so they provide a platform from which to scale up implementation of universal health coverage and innovative health interventions, particularly in relation to the detection, prevention, control and management of noncommunicable diseases, and to address current and emerging infectious diseases.

Nurses and midwives, especially teaching faculty, researchers and innovators, need to be competent and effective managers and leaders in order to teach and mentor future generations of professionals. With ongoing conflict and instability in the Region and the effects of climate change and environmental disasters escalating, the availability of nurses and midwives who are prepared and able to lead in regional health priority areas is critical.

Nurses and midwives constitute 50% to 60% of the health workforce in the Region. Therefore, it is important that information on nursing and evidence on the economic value and contribution of nurses and midwives in the provision of quality, cost-effective and accessible care in a multitude of settings are integrated into national health systems and policy decisions on health care.

Results from the online Eastern Mediterranean nursing and midwifery survey identified key challenges for nursing and midwifery in the Region. The results revealed that access to quality nursing and midwifery education was poor due to inadequate investment and the low priority given to nursing education. It also revealed poor working conditions, low levels of authority, insufficient rewards and recognition, and low job satisfaction, all of which stand in the way of attracting new recruits and retaining nurses and midwives. Few countries have evidence of a career structure or professional progression structure. Most countries believe that there is potential for the development of an advanced practice role, especially within primary health care and the management and control of noncommunicable diseases. However, constraints to the evolution of this role are considerable, including low government and organizational support, confused public perception, ambiguities in roles, a scarcity of well-educated nurses, physician domination and opposition, and a lack of

resources. Most countries do not have a nursing information system thus making the task of compiling an accurate and complete picture of the nursing and midwifery workforce in the Region difficult.

These challenges can be categorized within the four domains of: governance of nursing; nursing and midwifery workforce; nursing and midwifery practice and services; and access to quality nursing and midwifery education.

Among the lessons learned through work with countries in recent years are that numerous strategies have to be adopted and a wide range of options undertaken if nursing and midwifery is to be strengthened in the Region, and that lessons learnt from international experience should feed into actions formulated to address key regional challenges.

Expected outcomes

The session is expected to identify several feasible and appropriate solutions to address obstacles that are impeding progress in nursing and midwifery in the Region and discuss the framework of action for strengthening nursing and midwifery to address the key challenges. Action points will be identified to strengthen nursing and midwifery for selected key challenges within a short-, medium- and long-term time frame.