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Strengthening nursing and midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

A framework for action 2016-2025



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Introduction

This Framework for action on strengthening nursing and midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2016-2025 provides a set of feasible, cost-effective short and long-term actions. The strategic directions and actions are recommended in five key areas: governance and regulation; workforce management systems; practice and services; access to quality education; and research.

This framework for action is intended as a roadmap to guide regional and country actions aimed at strengthening nursing and midwifery, and supporting the move towards universal health coverage and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is the outcome of two years of intensive work by leading national and international experts through several intercountry meetings. The leadership of Her Highness Princess Muna Al-Hussein, WHO Patron for Nursing and Midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, was crucial in seeing the framework through to its completion.

Since the first meeting of the Regional Advisory Panel on Nursing and Midwifery in 1990, tremendous progress has been achieved in nursing and midwifery development, both at the national and regional levels. WHO's collaborative programme in nursing and midwifery with Member States of the Region established and reformed basic nursing education, developed post-basic specialty programmes, strengthened nursing structures in ministries of health, established national strategic plans for nursing and midwifery development, and built national capacity for disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.

Assessment of the current situation of nursing and midwifery in the Region revealed key challenges.

Governance and professional regulation: The professional regulation of nursing and midwifery has not received adequate attention. Even established systems of professional regulation in the Region are focused mainly on registration and licensing, while legislative instruments tend to be static, scattered in a variety of laws, orders or decrees and limited in scope. Leadership and management capacities need further strengthening.

Workforce: Data and information on nursing and midwifery continue to be limited which makes it difficult to have a clear picture and understanding of the current situation. Although the supply of nurses and midwives is increasing in most countries, there has been little significant change in the workforce density over the past 10 years. Sixteen of the 22 countries of the Region have fewer than 15 nurses and midwives per 10 000 population. The majority of the low-income and middle-income countries suffer from urban/rural mal-distribution and acute shortages. While there have been efforts to increase the number of training institutions, progress has been slow.

Practice: The scope of practice in most countries is not sufficiently well articulated to enable nurses and midwives to perform to their full capacity. Policies that promote a positive practice environment are limited, at the institutional level as well as at the national level. Few countries have well-structured career pathways. Most countries follow the national civil service regulations which, in many instances, are inflexible. Insufficient government and organizational support, ambiguities in roles and the shortages of well-educated and trained general and advanced practice nurses and midwives particularly in low-income countries, together with limited allocation of resources, are impeding progress.

Education: Much progress was achieved in most countries towards building the capacity of nursing and midwifery educational institutions in terms of developing new programmes and updating the nursing and midwifery curricula, especially in post-conflict countries. However, the quality of

education in low-income countries requires more attention, particularly with regard to investment in infrastructure, faculty development and programme management.

Research: WHO has been actively promoting a sustainable agenda of nursing research. Research is integrated in most nursing and midwifery curricula, and several promising collaborative efforts in nursing and midwifery research at the national and regional levels have been initiated. However, the limitations in opportunities for research capacity-building and the lack of financial resources available for research in this region still need to be addressed. The mechanisms for identifying research priorities, and for sharing and disseminating results requires more attention.

Strategic directions

The strategic directions cover five domains. Under each strategic direction, a set of priorities are provided with short-term and medium-term actions. Some indicators are also suggested to monitor and evaluate progress and achievements.

Governance and regulation: It is important to address challenges in leadership and management capacity by ensuring clearly defined authority and accountability in the organizational structures. The changes should promote an increasing level of involvement of nurses and midwives in decision-making and shared governance. Progress towards improving nursing scope of practice and assuring the quality of practice can be achieved through strengthening professional regulation.

Workforce management systems: Workforce shortages, skill-mix imbalances, maldistribution, and unplanned migration (rural to urban and abroad) have a negative impact on the population health needs and the quality of health services. Therefore, effective workforce planning and management is required to ensure adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix of nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities.

Practice and services: Clear policies governing practice and service need to be developed and institutionalized to improve the outcomes of nursing and midwifery practice. Promoting and supporting collaborative and multidisciplinary practice and training can motivate competent nurses and midwives.

Access to quality education: An education system that produces quality health care professionals in adequate numbers is a key element in improving the quality of health service delivery. It is therefore essential to increase investment in quality nursing and midwifery education, particularly infrastructure, accreditation/quality monitoring systems, teaching and learning methods, and preparation of teachers and deans/directors, aligning pre-service and in-service training curricula. There is also a need to develop and make use of the full range of teaching/learning modes available, including distance and open learning.

Research responsive to health priorities: Translating research evidence into clinical practice, governance, education and service development enhances the well-being of individuals, families and populations. It is equally important that research evidence is used to develop and evaluate the impact of developments in nursing and midwifery, including education, standards of care, service delivery and regulation, on the provision of quality, cost-effective and accessibility of care in a multitude of settings.

Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure the sustained implementation of the framework, it will be critical to demonstrate progress. This will only be possible through a structured monitoring and evaluation framework with defined indicators and mechanism. In this way, achievements can be monitored and, where necessary, priorities and plans can be adjusted. The framework for action proposes some monitoring indicators. Each country can review the proposed indicators and agree on a set of indicators that is appropriate for their priorities and context. In addition, some studies may be required and should be linked to the monitoring and evaluation process of the implementation of the framework for action. The research activities should be linked to an agreed agenda for research and building research capacities of the nurses and midwives.

Next steps

It is proposed that Member States:

- develop a costed national plan based on the regional action framework for strengthening nursing and midwifery, with a minimum time-frame of 3-5 years and built-in monitoring and evaluation system;
- establish a multisectoral forum led by the Ministry of Health to guide the strengthening of nursing and midwifery at the national level.

Framework for action 2016–2025

Vision

Nurses and midwives, as part of the multidisciplinary health care team, contribute to improved health outcomes and well-being of the society, supporting the move towards universal health coverage and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Guiding principles

Ethical values: Health services respond to health needs and are planned and provided in a way that strives for equity, integrity, fairness and respect, as well as being gender-sensitive and respectful of human rights.

Relevance: Health services and nursing and midwifery human resources development, management and deployment systems are guided by health needs, evidence and best practice.

Leadership: Nursing and midwifery professionals have vision and advocate for quality care, involvement in decision-making and fostering of collaboration within the interdisciplinary teams.

Ownership: All partners promote a flexible approach with active local involvement, reflecting the political, economic and cultural realities in the Region, and in line with national health policies and strategic priorities.

Care process: The care process is respectful, supportive, honest, sensitive and protective, preserving the dignity and humanity of the person, family, group or community receiving the care.

Responsiveness: Nurses and midwives are aware of and responsive to current and emerging national and global social, political and economic burdens of health in moving towards universal health coverage and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Partnership: All partners work towards common objectives by acting collaboratively and supporting each other's efforts and are willing to involve all national, regional and international stakeholders.

Framework for action on strengthening nursing and midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2016–2025

Domain	Strategic direction	Priorities
Governance and regulation	Nurses and midwives will play a major role in the governance of nursing and midwifery services to meet the national health priorities Nurses and midwives are regulated through legal bodies/authorities which are mandated to implement sustainable and robust regulatory policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and strengthen a nursing and midwifery department/ directorate in the Ministry of Health and other key health sectors • Establish and strengthen national nursing and midwifery regulatory bodies/and regulatory processes
Workforce management systems	Human resources planning and management ensure maintenance of adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix for nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure continuous monitoring of the nursing and midwifery workforce using standard indicators • Ensure countries have a national nursing and midwifery workforce plan. • Increase recruitment capacities • Introduce flexible deployment and retention strategies for nurses and midwives
Practice and services	Nurses and midwives practise to the full extent of their education and experience to deliver quality care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop quality improvement standards for nursing and midwifery services • Introduce expanded or advanced practice roles in nursing and midwifery
Access to quality education	Nursing and midwifery education produce adequate numbers of generic and specialized nurses with relevant competencies to meet the population needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in strengthening capacities and quality of nursing and midwifery education • Improve/strengthen the quality of nursing/midwifery education programme delivery • Build the capacity of persons involved in nursing and midwifery education planning, management and evaluation
Research responsive to health priorities	Nurses and midwives are engaged in research that is responsive to health priorities and that informs policy and practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate research evidence into nursing practice and education as well as national health priorities

Governance and regulation			
Strategic direction 1: Nurses and midwives will play a major role in the governance of nursing and midwifery services to meet the national health priorities			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Establish and strengthen a nursing and midwifery department/ directorate in the Ministry of Health and other key health sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate current governance structure of nursing and midwifery at the national, subnational, and institutional levels. Where necessary, appoint a Chief Nursing/Midwifery Officer (CNMO) supported by professional and administrative staff. Verify and make necessary changes to the job description of the CNMO (or country's most senior nurse) in line with WHO recommendations on the role of the CNMO. Establish mechanisms to enhance nurses and midwives' involvement in policy and decision making related to education and practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a national coordination mechanism to enable the CNMO to collaborate with regulators, educators and other relevant stakeholders. Ensure full execution of CNMO's job description. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Countries have a nursing department/directorate headed by a Chief Nurse. Membership of nurses and midwives on non-nursing/midwifery health related committees/ forum.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical support to strengthen CNMO/ Nursing/Midwifery Department at the Ministry of Health. Disseminate WHO document on the role of Chief Nurse. http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/cnweb.pdf Technical cooperation to conduct studies on the value, contribution and return on investment of nursing and midwifery to health care in terms of improved health outcomes and to inform policies 			

Governance and regulation

Strategic direction 2: Nurses and midwives are regulated through legal bodies/authorities which are mandated to implement sustainable, and robust regulatory policies and practices

Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Establish and strengthen national nursing and midwifery regulatory bodies/and regulatory processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the current status of nursing/midwifery regulation and its mandate. Ensure legal frameworks for regulation of nursing and midwifery are in place. Establish/strengthen regulatory body with necessary infrastructure, sufficient financial and human resources. Establish national nursing and midwifery competencies and standards (code of conduct, education and practice). Communicate the regulatory processes and procedures with nursing and midwifery professionals and the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in building the capacity of regulators with the required skills and Develop a computerized registry for nurses and midwives. Establish a mechanism for registration and relicensing processes. Evaluate the performance of the regulators. Develop and implement mechanism for notifications and managing complaints. Uphold professional code of conduct and the rights of clients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functioning regulatory bodies/authorities exist in all countries Competencies and standards for nursing and midwifery are developed by countries

WHO technical cooperation

- Technical cooperation with Member States in establishing/ strengthening national health professional regulatory bodies and systems.
- Develop a policy brief outlining policy options for nursing and midwifery regulation on various key elements of a regulatory system.
- http://reprolineplus.org/system/files/resources/Regulation_Resources_and_Links_Sec1.pdf ;
- http://reprolineplus.org/system/files/resources/Regulation_Resources_and_Links_Sec2.pdf
- http://reprolineplus.org/system/files/resources/Regulation_Resources_and_Links_Sec3.pdf

Workforce management systems			
Strategic direction 3: Human resources planning and management ensure maintenance of adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix for nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Ensure continuous monitoring of the nursing and midwifery workforce using standard indicators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a set of indicators to monitor nursing and midwifery workforce. • Conduct a situational analysis to identify gaps, weaknesses and quality of data on nursing and midwifery. • Identify sources and mechanisms to gather and maintain the required data. • Build capacities to compile and analyse nursing and midwifery information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure financial and human resources to improve and manage nursing and midwifery information. • Ensure regular analysis, presentation and dissemination of information. • Ensure that data is used to determine evidenced-based decisions on nursing and midwifery human resources for education and practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agreed on set of indicators to monitor nursing and midwifery workforce is available and accessible in all countries. • Nursing data is incorporated into the national health information system.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate the human resources for health information system minimum data set for health workforce registry http://www.who.int/hrh/statistics/minimum_data_set.pdf • Technical cooperation to develop the minimum data set for nursing information system. • Develop and revise nursing/midwifery country profiles for follow up. 			

Workforce management systems

Strategic direction 3: Human resources planning and management ensure maintenance of adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix for nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities

Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Ensure countries have a national nursing and midwifery workforce plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current status and plans of nursing and midwifery workforce planning and management Establish mechanisms to foster collaboration among persons/departments responsible for health workforce planning and management. Develop a comprehensive and costed national nursing/midwifery workforce plan aligned with the national health workforce plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop mechanisms for convening national stakeholders to address nursing and midwifery workforce issues and facilitate implementation of the plan. Develop position statements and policy briefs elaborating specific nursing and midwifery workforce issues in the plan. Develop strategies to attract and train adequate pool of recruits to balance supply and demand in line with the plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All countries have national policies and plans for nursing/midwifery workforce as part of or aligned with national health workforce plans.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical cooperation to develop the nursing / midwifery workforce plan. Disseminate good practices for health workforce planning, projections and forecasting, policy interventions and assessment. Disseminate good practices for increasing the pool of potential recruits. 			

Workforce management systems			
Strategic direction 3: Human resources planning and management ensure maintenance of adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix for nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Increase recruitment capacities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a recruitment plan in accordance with nursing and health workforce strategic plan to meet the requirements. Secure resources to implement recruitment plans. Develop recruitment campaigns to encourage families and students to study nursing and midwifery. Develop and implement innovative solutions to attract and retain well-prepared nurses / midwives in different settings and locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure decent jobs and decent employment conditions. Develop national recruitment policies congruent with the <i>WHO global code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel</i>. Ensure institutional recruitment policies exist that are in line with national recruitment policies and plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All countries have national and institutional recruitment policies congruent with regional and global standards. Recruitment strategies and plans, and trends are reviewed and monitored for efficiency A rise in the numbers of national nursing and midwifery workforce
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of national recruitment policies congruent with the WHO global code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel. http://www.who.int/hrh/migration/code/practice/en/ 			

Workforce management systems

Strategic direction 3: Human resources planning and management ensure maintenance of adequate numbers, distribution and an appropriate skill-mix for nurses and midwives to meet national health priorities

Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Introduce flexible deployment and retention strategies for nurses and midwives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop advocacy plans to introduce flexible working options such as part-time, job sharing, and nursing bank to reduce attrition rates of nurses and midwives. • Promote positive practice environments (PPE). • Establish remuneration system and innovative incentive schemes to attract and retain staff, especially in primary care settings and underserved areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a career pathway built on lifelong learning and recognition of existing and changing competencies. • Establish skill-mix, task shifting/sharing and staffing norms for different settings. • Improve access to continuing professional and inter-professional development (CPD). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration, retention and attrition rates. • Job satisfaction levels.

Who technical cooperation

- Technical cooperation with countries to establish skill-mix, and task shifting/sharing and staffing norms for different settings.
- Technical cooperation to establish standards and indicators for PPE.
- Technical cooperation to develop national career/structures.

Practice and services			
Strategic direction 4: Nurses and midwives practise to the full extent of their education and experience to deliver quality care			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Develop quality improvement standards for nursing and midwifery services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and evaluate current patterns of nursing and midwifery practice. Define scopes of practice, and job descriptions in line with changing demographic and epidemiological trends and health systems response. Develop competencies required in accordance with the defined scope of practice. Develop nursing/midwifery standards of care and performance indicators for nursing and midwifery services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the quality improvement system/standards for nursing and midwifery services. Develop framework for capacity building through mentorship, on-job training and supportive supervision. Promote collaborative practice models. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality improvement system/standards for nursing and midwifery services are developed and implemented.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical cooperation to develop national practice standards. Prepare a guide on nursing and midwifery performance indicators. 			

Practice and services			
Strategic direction 4: Nurses and midwives practise to the full extent of their education and experience to deliver quality care			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Introduce expanded or advanced practice roles in nursing and midwifery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the regional framework for specialist practice to guide the development of advanced practice nursing. • Develop the appropriate regulatory requirements for advanced practice nursing and midwifery cadre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish career pathway for approved advanced practice nursing and midwifery cadres. • Establish/expand advanced practice nursing and midwifery training and education programmes in line with current health demands. • Identify specific settings for a high level of autonomy for advanced practice nurses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries have a strategy and framework for specialist nursing/midwifery practice. • Number of nurses and midwives working in the advanced practice role. • Number of nursing and midwifery programmes providing specialist and advanced practice education. • Career pathways are integrated into the nursing and midwifery systems and health workforce planning.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for increased investment in specialist nursing education. 			

Access to quality education			
Strategic direction 5: Nursing and midwifery education produce adequate numbers of nurses with relevant competencies to meet the population needs.			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Invest in strengthening capacities and quality of nursing and midwifery education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current level of investment in nursing and midwifery education. Establish and strengthen national accreditation standards and institutions for nursing and midwifery education. Advocate with relevant national authorities to secure their commitment to increase investment in nursing and midwifery education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish/strengthen pre-service nursing and midwifery education, post-basic and specialization programmes to meet the country's needs. Assure adequate implementation of the national accreditation standards and institutions for nursing and midwifery education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National accreditation standards and processes are agreed upon. Level of national spending on education. Number of institutions currently implementing an internal quality improvement programme congruent with national recommendations. Financial and human resources to support accreditation are available.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current state of nursing and midwifery education in the Region (number of schools, financing, governance, faculty development, students, curriculum, Teaching/learning resources, regulation, and accreditation). Disseminate guidelines for transforming and scaling up health professionals' education and training. http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/transf_scaling_hpet/en/ Technical cooperation to build country capacity in developing an accreditation system for nursing/midwifery education. Advocate for increase investment in nursing and midwifery education in the region. 			

Access to quality education

Strategic direction 5: Nursing and midwifery education produce adequate numbers of nurses with relevant competencies to meet the population needs

Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Improve/strengthen the quality of nursing & midwifery education programme delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and adapt who standards for nursing/midwifery education to national context. Review and revise the curricula for competency based education in line with the national education standards. Expand clinical training settings' including community based approaches at health institutions with conducive learning environment. Strengthen the teaching/learning strategies to maximize the capacities and potential of nursing and midwifery students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement inter-professional education and training programmes. Explore alternative modes of programme delivery e.g. part-time, distance and e-learning options to foster lifelong learning and continued competency. Incorporate available information communication technologies (ICT) in nursing education methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of education programmes using e-learning, and offering distance learning. All countries have introduced flexible and or blended learning models including part-time and distance learning and e-learning modes.

WHO technical cooperation

- Disseminate regional education standards for nursing and midwifery, http://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/emropub_2015_en_1866.pdf
- Promote mechanisms to encourage and guide inter-professional learning.

Access to quality education			
Strategic direction 5: Nursing and midwifery education produce adequate numbers of nurses with relevant competencies to meet the population needs			
Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Build the capacity of persons involved in nursing and midwifery education planning, management and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set national educational criteria for recognition as a nursing/midwifery educator. Prepare and implement training programmes for educators and leaders involved in education planning, management and evaluation. Develop and implement policies to attract and retain nursing/midwifery educators and leaders. Expand and promote the continuing professional development opportunities for nurses, clinical teachers and preceptors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a system for progressive acquisition of educator competencies using multiple paths and methods. Build the capacity of the faculty on the standards of education, the competency based curricula, the accreditation standards. Develop teaching and learning capacity to use innovative educational approaches and the use of educational technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of senior teachers acquiring educational management and leadership skills. Programmes preparing educators are available.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate models and good practices to strengthen links between education and practice (faculty practice, joint appointments, and clinical adjunct faculty). Facilitate capacity-building programmes for senior managers in education institutions. Facilitate capitalizing on the regional expertise in nursing education to strengthen nursing education programs in the different countries. 			

Research responsive to health priorities

Strategic direction 6: Nurses and midwives are engaged in research that is responsive to health priorities and that informs policy and practice

Priorities	Action for countries		Monitoring indicators
	Short-term	Medium-term	
Translate research evidence into nursing practice and education as well as national health priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a research agenda for nursing and midwifery research. • Assure that nursing/ midwifery education programmes incorporate acquisition of research competencies at the appropriate educational level. (BS, MS, PhD). • Build the research capacity of nurses and midwives at all levels through, in-service and on the job training as well as CPD. • Create a culture for multidisciplinary research and evidence based practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance monetary and non-monetary incentives (career track) to encourage nurses/midwives to conduct and participate in research activities. • Establish national platform for enhancing the use of nursing and midwifery research evidence to develop nursing and midwifery education, practice, and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of nurses or midwives participating in health and nursing/midwifery research. • Number of regional and national nursing and midwifery research networks. • Numbers of nursing and midwifery research publications.
WHO technical cooperation			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a national research network and setting regional research agenda 			

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