

Foreword by the Minister of Health



The Human Resources for Health Plan will assist us in ensuring that we have the right human resource mix in health to fulfill our health care delivery objectives.

Chapter 7 of the National Health Act of 2003 gives a mandate to the Minister of Health, advised by the National Health Council to take concrete steps to develop and manage human resources in the national health system. South Africa has made significant progress in producing policies that are supportive of good quality health for all residents. However, an overall shortage of health personnel as well as an inequitable distribution between urban and rural areas and between the public and private sectors remains a challenge. These challenges will now be more robustly addressed.

The publication of this National Human Resources Plan for Health therefore is an important milestone in health systems transformation in South Africa. The HR Plan has been contextualised within the strategic priorities of the National Department of Health. This identifies Human Resources Planning and Development as a key priority area over the next five years. South Africa identifies with the global health community concerns regarding the crisis with regards to human resources for health.

Through the HRH Plan, we seek to contribute not only in bringing into focus the challenges around Human Resources for Health, but to also share proposals and build on debates aimed at addressing these challenges while also learning from best practices in this regard. At a local level provinces will be involved, at a regional level, we will link up with, and support initiatives aimed at ensuring self-sufficiency with regards to provisioning of health personnel throughout the continent; such as the NEPAD health strategy. At a global level, the Plan subscribes to and aims to facilitate the realization of the Millennium Development goals.

The Plan offers a comprehensive approach to the development and implementation of Human Resources for Health in the country. The Plan provides a framework to guide stakeholders to link their work to the country's desired objectives to provide an adequate and competent workforce to serve its population in their individual effort or in partnership with government.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Tshabalala'.

Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, MP
Minister of Health

Preface

The crucial role of Human Resources in health systems cannot be over-emphasized. Many health programmes have consistently experienced shortages of suitable health personnel, and this has often been one of the major constraints attributed to such programmes not accomplishing their intended objectives. Human Resources for Health are a fundamental and strategic capital for the performance of the health system. The health sector is not only labour intensive but also depends on precise application of the knowledge and skills of its workforce to ensure patient security and health.

In 2004/05, the Human Resources Planning, Development and Management sub-programme was elevated to branch level for the first time, indicating a deliberate strategy by the Department to increase its focus on human resources. In this context, development of a country HRH Plan was prioritized in an effort to address the numerous HRH challenges that the health system is grappling with, amongst these being the high rate of attrition of personnel to the private health sector as well as migration out of the country to wealthier countries, retirement of skilled and experienced professionals and career switching by young professionals to other sectors.

The development of the country HRH Plan has been a very intensive and challenging process for many reasons. Human Resources development in the health sector is by its very nature complex because of the diversity of health professionals required to provide health care within a team framework. It is further complicated by the necessity to ensure an interface between the health services and academic (training and research) platforms. The long periods of training of health professionals also adds to the complexity. Provision of health care and human resources to render services in a resource constrained environment present additional challenges in HRH Planning. Finally, producing a comprehensive Plan is further compromised by the significant gaps in information for planning.

There is therefore a need for significant effort towards developing the necessary capacity with regards to developing information systems, research and instruments to support workforce planning and as such inform solid policy positions on the country's human resources for health. Despite these limitations, this Plan does provide national guidelines for all stakeholders with the intention of influencing their operations in the areas of HR Development, Management and Planning even if these may require refinement in the short to medium term. Regular update of the Plan is thus considered crucial and will be undertaken to bring into focus the interventions that must be put in place to address the HR challenges in the country in the long term.

The provincial health service plans will certainly assist in improving the plan by linking it to the health needs and aggregated on a national basis. A number of provinces are in the process of developing their own plans using this national plan as guidance. These provincial plans therefore have to be drafted with a clear linkage to the service plan.

Success of plan depends on partnerships with the private health sector (through vehicles such as the Health Sector Charter); partnerships with sister departments (Education, DPSA, Treasury and Labour). The country faces a challenge with regards to capacity of institutions to produce more health professionals. There are indications that over the years there has been no significant increase in the number of health professionals graduating from our education and training institutions despite an increase in the disease burden. This is an area of deep concern and this plan gives pointers on how to address the issue. The production of health professionals is thus one of the priority areas advanced in this plan.

The operationalization of the Plan has already commenced because of a number of aspects that need not wait for its finalisation. Some of these aspects are critical to the further consolidation of the plan. These are the attention to conditions of service, remuneration, developing an HR Information System and increasing number of health professionals through training and recruitment of selected professional groupings from outside the country.

In drafting this plan, it has been important to build on the work previously done by the team that was led by Professor William Pick, and more importantly, confronting those aspects that have changed since the adoption of the report of this team. Human resource planning is by its nature a dynamic process designed to deal with fluid situations that link several major health aspects – service, education, training, research and health workforce. This dynamism will keep the process of refining the plan over the next few years alive and we hope that it is a process that stakeholders will continue contributing to in a positive manner.



Mr. Thami Mseleku
Director General

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Finally the Department of Health wishes to acknowledge and thank all the stakeholders, Department of Education, Department of Public Service & Administration, Treasury and many individuals that assisted with their comments during the shaping of this document.



Dr Percy Mahlathi
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Abbreviations

CMSA	Colleges of Medicine of South Africa
DoE	National Department of Education
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRH	Human Resources for Health
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRP	Human Resources Planning
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Sector Education Training Authority
JLI	Joint Learning Initiative
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MRC	Medical Research Council
NHC	Forum of Minister and Health Members of Executive Councils in the Provinces
NDoH	National Department of Health
NHIS	National Health Information System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
TechComm	Technical Committee of the National Health Council
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body
STATSSA	Statistics South Africa
WHO	World Health Organisation
WISN	Workload Indicators for Staffing Needs

¹ Definition of Concepts

Human resources for health (HRH - synonyms are health manpower, health personnel, or health workforce) denotes persons engaged in any capacity in the production and delivery of health services. These persons may be paid or volunteers, with or without formal training for their functions, and located in the public or private sector. HRH encompass “all individuals engaged in the promotion, protection, or improvement of population health, including clinical and non-clinical workers.” (JLI, 2004)

Human Resource Plan for Health (HRH) - an overall mapping of at least 5 years that contains a detailed analysis of the human resources for health challenges and issues, strategies, objectives and activities likely to solve the identified priority issues and challenges during the given period. (WHO: Guidelines for Human Resources for Health Policy and Plan Development at Country Level 2004)

Human resources development (HRD), as applied to human resources for health (HRH), includes the planning, production, and management of health personnel.

Human resources planning “...is the process of estimating the number of persons and the kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to achieve predetermined health targets and ultimately health status objectives.” (WHO, 1978) Over the years this function has been broadened to include that of formulating human resources policy, in which the word “policy” refers to statements made by relevant authorities that are intended to guide the allocation of resources and effort. Health services and human resources policies constitute key instruments for implementing decisions affecting the delivery of health care.

Human resources production refers to “...all aspects related to the basic and post-basic education and training of the health labour force. Although it is one of the central aspects of the health manpower (development) process, it is not under the health system’s sole control” (WHO, 1978). The production system includes all the health system’s educational and training institutions, which are increasingly the joint responsibility of service and educational institutions.

Human resources management has been defined as the “mobilisation, motivation, development, and fulfilment of human beings in and through work” (WHO, 1978). It “...covers all matters related to the employment, use, deployment and motivation of all categories of health workers, and largely determines the productivity, and therefore the coverage, of the health services system and its capacity to retain staff.” Management also encompasses programmes for in-service and continuing professional education, as well as for evaluation.

Occupations and occupational categories refer to a set of functions, requiring a specific combination of knowledge and abilities, and associated with a specific title, for example, doctor, nurse, laboratory technician, sanitarian.

¹ WHO monograph, *Health Manpower Planning: Principles, Methods, Issues*, Hall, TL, and Mejia, A., eds: WHO, 1978 (www.hrtoolkit.forumone.com)

Executive Summary

Introduction

South Africa's health system faces the most intricate human resource demands, which are also characteristic of health systems in many other countries. Ensuring an adequate human resource pool for the staffing of the public health sector in particular is a major task that is complicated by the burden of many global disease challenges. Even though the private health sector is not experiencing the same pressures to the same degree, maldistribution within this sector is a serious issue. The human resource demands are an integral part of the challenges confronting the national health system. In this context developing a National Human Resource Plan to address these matters must be seen as one of the steps government is taking to strengthen the entire health system.

It is globally recognised that a focused human resource strategy backed up by an appropriate implementation plan is a critical ingredient of positive change in health care. Success in this area helps to create a positive image and an environment conducive for health care to flourish. The equity, efficiency and effectiveness of the health system depend on the two elements of a visionary strategy and a focused plan being appropriately developed and implemented.

Context

Both the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the National Health Act Number 61 of 2003 mandate the National Department of Health to ensure delivery of health services to the South African society. This signifies ensuring the provision of adequate human resources to enable the health system to deliver on that mandate. At the national health summit held on 2 – 3 December 2004 the Department of Health committed itself to developing a strategic framework to serve as a basis for a long-term national human resource plan. The consultation process had started in November 2004 and the strategic framework was presented to all stakeholders during August 2005, with the expectation that they would contribute positively to the process.

The process of conceptualisation started with a review of the work that had previously been carried out in an attempt to address the human resource challenges to health. Central to this approach was a rapid appraisal of the work done by a task team led by Professor William Pick and gathering the views of a number of people who had provided input to that process. The report of this task team (2001) in its introduction stated: *"In order to give expression to the Primary Health Care (PHC) approach, the vehicle through which basic health care will be made accessible to all, the Department is committed to ensuring, through proper planning, that a continuous supply of, suitably qualified, competent human resources will be available to staff primary, secondary and tertiary health facilities"*.

In addition to the legislative and constitutional mandate to provide good quality health services to the nation, the 2001 National Human Resource Strategy provided the context for developing a human resource plan.

Approach to Developing the HRH Plan

The Department's Drafting Team used the WHO HR Toolkit (2004) as a basis for drafting an initial framework. The framework was drafted in a format that would make it easy to modify into a Plan after the necessary consultations with stakeholders had been undertaken. The framework document was therefore constructed in such a way that it already took the form of a national human resource plan. The purpose of this National Human Resource Plan for Health is to guide the development of Provincial HR plans and also to serve as a reference point for the private health sector. It is furthermore intended to guide education and training institutions in the production of human resources for the national health system.

Initial consultation proved very useful in broadly scoping the work and identifying the initial gaps that needed to be addressed. Many stakeholders made available some information that was also used in crafting the

strategic framework. This HRH Plan, the end result of that extensive consultation process is therefore presented here as work in progress because it is subject to further development of the required planning capacity and tools e.g. HR information system, further research and analysis to yield data required to refine the targets.

Underpinning this Plan is a set of core guiding principles representing the commitment of government to ensuring that the national health system possesses the necessary human capital to deliver health to the nation.

Core Guiding Principles

Principle 1: Stewardship for health care lies with the National Department of Health

The Bill of Rights, supported by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, declares healthcare as a basic human right. It is therefore the responsibility of government to ensure that all citizens enjoy access to healthcare services. To optimise this right, the National Department of Health commits itself to providing effective stewardship for the national health system.

Principle 2: South Africans must enjoy a reliable supply of skilled and competent health professionals for self-sufficiency

Over the years the production of health professionals in this country has either declined, remained static or increased marginally. Overall, this output has not kept up with the demand for supplying health professionals, made more pressing by the increasing burden of disease. The National Department of Health in partnership with other government departments like the Department of Education and National Treasury has committed itself to finding ways of increasing the production of health professionals in sufficient numbers to ensure a reliable supply for the national health system. On their part, the education and training institutions have committed themselves to providing South Africans with skilled and competent health professionals.

Principle 3: Planning and development of human resources linked to the needs and demands of the health system must be strengthened

The National Health System undertakes to plan and develop human capital strategies linked to the needs of recipient communities. This demands the establishment of health information systems that cut across the public / private divide. Both sectors therefore pledge themselves to invest in systems that will enable the country to address more accurately the needs of South Africans. The Department of Health must ensure that it has the technical expertise necessary to lead health workforce planning.

Principle 4: The optimal balance, equitable distribution and use of skilled health professionals to promote access to health services must be developed

South Africans who inhabit rural areas have their access to health services compromised by the poor availability of skilled health professionals at the health facilities closest to them. The Department of Health commits itself to working continuously to provide skilled health professionals and/or to ensure effective referral systems to promote such access.

Principle 5: Health workers must have the capacity and appropriate skills to render accessible, appropriate and high quality care at all levels

Human beings, like any other creatures, do not choose when and how to fall sick. Only health professionals are armed with the knowledge and skills to alleviate or cure illnesses and diseases. The skills and knowledge possessed by professionals are however not enough to ensure high quality health care. Values and ethical conduct are also vital qualities that health professionals must possess. Health professional associations and organisations therefore should take the responsibility of ensuring that their members adhere to a value system that places the patients' needs uppermost.

Principle 6: Work environments must be conducive to good management practice in order to maximise the potential for the health workforce to deliver good quality health services

The democratic government inherited poorly planned health facilities and most were in unsatisfactory states of preservation. These now pose a serious challenge in terms of the environment that health professionals demand. The department pledges to work hard to improve the physical and management environment of these facilities so that they are conducive to the services of the health workforce. The department will ensure that, starting in 2006, it will offer high quality management training sessions designed to improve management in its facilities.

Principle 7: South Africa's role in international health issues contributing to leadership, scientific advances and global health professions is critical

The national health system (public and private) will continue to contribute positively to global health leadership and scientific advances. Both sectors therefore commit themselves to sharing information, resources and the like to ensure that South Africa fulfils this role by providing visionary leadership and partnership based on trust.

Principle 8: South Africa's contribution, in the short to medium term, to the global health market must be managed in such a way that it contributes to the skills development of health professionals

South African health professionals are recruited by a number of health systems internationally. This, in the short term, has resulted in a decrease in such human resources in their country of birth. The Department of Health interacts with other countries through various government-to-government agreements, and multilateral organisation-sponsored protocols like the Commonwealth Ethical Recruitment Protocol. The department therefore commits itself to ensuring better management of the exchange or migration of health professionals without compromising the constitutional rights of South Africans to choose where to work.

Principle 9: Mobilization of funding to ensure successful implementation of the Plan

The National Health System must be adequately resourced to ensure that health workers have the necessary tools and knowledge to provide health services to South Africans. The private health sector must find a role to play utilising various instruments like the Health Sector Charter.

Principle 10: The Department of Health must ensure that it has the technical expertise necessary to lead health workforce planning

South Africa must possess advanced expertise and technical skills in order to plan, research and manage health workforce planning. This expertise must be supported and funded also by the private health sector through appropriate mechanism that enhance the private sector's responsibility for the development of human resources for health at certain levels.

Principle 11: There must be reasonable remuneration of health professionals and attractive working conditions to enable them to regard the public health sector as employer of choice

Health professionals must be remunerated at levels commensurate with the responsibility placed upon them for the provision of health services. Linked to this must be the provision of attractive working conditions that will serve to enhance their confidence in the public health sector and lead to it being an employer of choice. In such instance a sense of fulfilling national service will be entrenched and done with commitment by the health professionals.

Summary of Strategic Objectives Associated with Guiding Principles for the National Human Resource Plan

Guiding Principle	Strategic Objective
<p>1</p> <p>Stewardship for Health Care lies with the National Department of Health</p>	Provision of leadership through guidance of the Public and the Private Health Sectors
	Defining a vision and developing an overarching National Human Resources Plan
	Establishing shared values and a shared base with provinces regarding issues of HR planning, management and development
	Establishment of reliable monitoring and evaluation systems
	High level investment and resource allocation decisions
	Management of regulatory environment and oversight function
	Development of partnerships spanning all formations in the health sector
<p>2</p> <p>South Africans must enjoy a reliable supply of skilled and competent health professionals for self-sufficiency</p>	Ensuring regular and up-to-date projection of national, regional and local HR needs in line with identified priorities
	Setting up mechanisms and structures for the periodic/regular projection of health worker needs and subsequent adjustment of plans
<p>3</p> <p>Planning and development of human resources linked to the needs and demands of the health system must be strengthened</p>	Application of HRH research and knowledge to advance the health system as a whole
	Alignment of training and education resources to the health system's needs
<p>4</p> <p>The optimal balance, equitable distribution and use of skilled health professionals to promote access to health services must be developed</p>	Provision of human resources to render adequate, accessible and appropriate services in rural and other under-serviced areas
	Development of incentive systems for health service provision in under-serviced areas
	Balancing health worker categories, aligning and synergising scopes of practice across the professions
<p>5</p> <p>Health workers must have the capacity and skills to render accessible, appropriate and high quality care at all levels</p>	Provision of initial and continuing education and training that meets the identified health needs of the country by training institutions
	Provision of high quality and appropriate experiential learning
	Establishment of skills monitoring and assessment systems
	Promotion of life-long learning and research-based practice among all health workers
<p>6</p> <p>Work environments should be conducive to good management practice in order to maximise the potential for the health work force to deliver quality health services</p>	Creating a culture of valuing all workers
	Providing adequate tools or technology for professionals working within the health system to perform their duties in line with their training
<p>7</p> <p>South Africa's role in international health issues contributing to leadership, scientific advances and global health professions is critical</p>	Influencing global HR research and production
	Promotion of cooperation between the South African Health System and other health systems regionally and internationally
	Influencing and directing international aid towards the country's capacity development priorities
	Exerting influence through advocacy in international forums
	Understanding and influencing global HR market trends

Guiding Principle	Strategic Objective
8 South Africa's contribution in the short to medium term to the global health market must be managed in such a way that it contributes to the skills development of health professionals	Optimisation of the bilateral agreements that South Africa enters into with various countries
9 Mobilisation of funding to ensure successful implementation of the plan	Appropriate funding of provincial initiatives to develop and implement HRH plans
	Appropriate HR Information Systems to enable good planning
	Active contribution of the private health sector in HRH production
10 The Department of Health must ensure that it has the technical expertise necessary to lead health workforce planning	Possession of high expertise through acquiring of sound technical skills to plan, research and manage health workforce planning
	Interaction through collaboration with other countries that engage in workforce planning
	Development of internal expertise through promotion of research into human resources for health
11 There must be adequate remuneration of health professionals and good work conditions to enable them to regard the public health sector as employer of choice	Improvement of remuneration of all health professionals
	Improvement of working conditions to serve as an influential factor in the retention of health professionals

In order for the plan to be up to date in addressing the HR challenges faced by the country, stakeholder participation in reviewing this document and the proposals made was strongly encouraged. The gulf between the public and private health sectors needs to be reduced and the plan is therefore geared towards the attainment of national goals. There is also an absolute need for the health system to possess credible data and information regarding human resources for health so that the health department as a whole can plan better.

During the consultation process stakeholders seeking to contribute to the process were particularly requested to cover the following in their submissions:

- Identify the gaps – i.e. what has not been covered that you feel is critical to include in this framework?
- Concrete suggestion/s on how such gaps can be addressed
- What kind of resources do you think will be needed to address this gap?

The National Human Resource Plan is a national guideline for all stakeholders. It outlines broad issues whilst taking the lead in some areas in order to facilitate the resolution of some of the chronic systemic challenges facing the health system. In implementing this plan, all stakeholders will be required to adapt to the guidelines expressed here. It is envisaged that there will be a measure of variation between the provinces, because each province must take into consideration the prevailing conditions and demands on its human resource capacity to plan objectively. National norms, where these are declared, are therefore guidelines, not absolutes.

The provincial and private sector HR Plans must at least address the attainment of the following goals:

- HR planning in line with national guidelines or framework
- Appropriate organisational development and change management
- Total number of employees, professional and non-professional, required to deliver health services adequate for the population
- Appropriate percentage breakdown of professional versus non-professional workers
- Appropriate percentage of health trained versus non-health trained professionals
- The appropriate skill-mix of the province or organisation's health workforce
- Appropriate composition of the health workforce by race, gender, age, disability, in order to achieve employment equity targets
- Recruitment, selection and retention of appropriately qualified staff

- Appropriate geographical allocation of the health workforce
- Effective implementation of a performance management system.

At a national level the HRH Plan must address strategic or macro-health workforce issues such as:

- Production of health professionals and monitoring of the trends
- Funding of health sciences education and training
- Improvement of strategies aimed specifically at international recruitment of skills needed in the health sector and at retention of skilled staff
- Strategies for retention of skilled staff in national institutions of education, research etc
- Development of health management capacity at national level
- Development of indicators to enable monitoring of the provincial HRH plans
- Development and maintenance of a national HRH Databank to enable better national health workforce planning
- Harmonisation and management of internationally funded human capital building programmes
- Constantly determining demand versus supply, as informed by the gap analysis done at provincial level.

As human resource management is critical to the attainment of the national strategic priorities, it is essential that the Department of Health identify strategic partners for the implementation of the various aspects of this plan. Successful implementation of these elements will also better the performance of other policy instruments, e.g. the Health Sector Charter, in so far as transformation issues are concerned, District Health Services as regards staffing, participation at international level where South Africa currently plays a significant role and is one of the suppliers of well trained health personnel and so on.

The action plan has prioritised certain areas for immediate implementation. Although this plan does not seek to provide solutions to daily operational challenges it provides a framework for managing such challenges or problems in the long term. Improvement of the conditions of service and remuneration for health professionals within available resources constitute the most urgent priorities. Development of an HR databank is essential for better workforce planning throughout the health system and has therefore also been prioritised. Skills improvement of hospital managers is likewise prioritised because of the immediate impact on the quality of health services that is gained by keeping management skills at the highest level. The efficiency and effectiveness of managers impact positively on health workers.

This national plan proposes a number of strategies and actions that need to be taken in resolving the challenges that the health system faces. It is the responsibility of each province to constantly review its health service plans. Health service plans greatly influence operational budgets, student intakes at health education and training institutions and most importantly human resource planning spanning student recruitment to recruitment of foreign health professionals to work at South African public health institutions. It is therefore necessary that certain principles relating to the status of this plan be communicated.

This plan:

- Must link very closely to the provincial health service plans
- Must be refined over time to ensure that it assists in realising the stated strategic objectives
- Must seek to promote a unified national health system and must therefore override provincial plans as a mechanism to ensure equity over time, thus giving an expression of a solid national health system
- Must in exceptional cases allow for deviation of provincial plans only in absolute instances of necessity (after agreement with national department)
- Must be supported by strong funding streams to address the chronic funding challenges that the system has faced in its human resource field
- Must be linked and interpreted in the context of South Africa's Human Resource Development Strategy as adopted by the Cabinet
- Must be complemented by close interaction in planning with other government departments especially the Departments of Education, Finance and Public Service and Administration
- Must, in the area of production of health professionals be a national guideline for health sciences education and training institutions. In this instance final targets arrived at nationally must be the minimum and no reduction permitted unless expressly agreed to with the National Department of Health and in line with Department of Education policy.
- Must enable monitoring of training targets to be done at national level.

A budget for this plan has not been included in this document. It will derive from the Provincial Human Resource Plans that are linked to service plans and to the various sub-components of this plan that are national in character.