

Assessing the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS on the global health workforce: Implications for attainment of the health-related Millennium Development Goals

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Extended abstract:

The burden of morbidity and mortality, including AIDS-related morbidity and mortality, is heavily concentrated among the world's poor. Increasing recognition among researchers and policy-makers of the linkages between health and poverty is exemplified in the attribution of five of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to issues of health (directly or indirectly) (Table 1). The World Health Organization advocates that the disease burden can be brought down in line with the MDGs only if there is a concerted, global strategy of increasing the access of the poor to essential health services.

The health workforce has a crucial role to play in improving population health and combating HIV/AIDS in particular. However, it is precisely in

Table 1: The Millennium Development Goals
Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4. Reduce child mortality
Goal 5. Improve maternal health
Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development

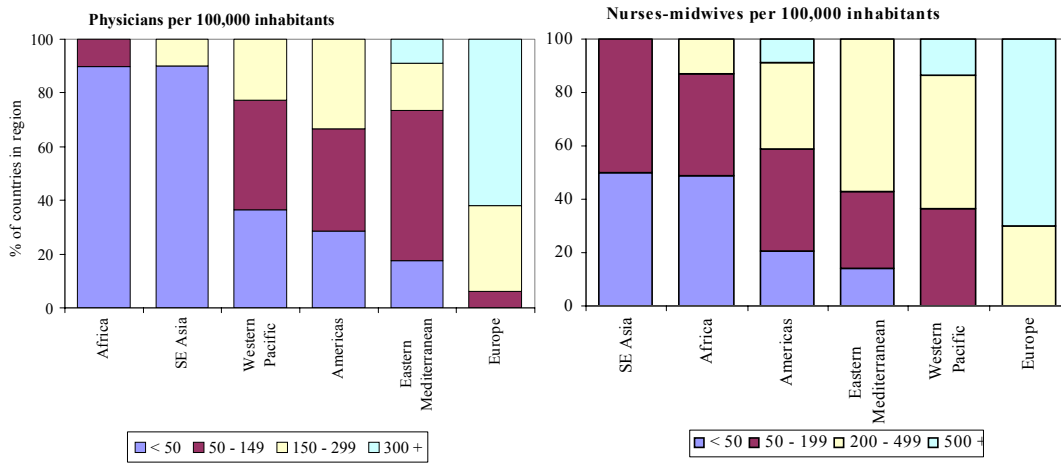
Source: United Nations Development Programme

countries and regions where the AIDS epidemic has hit hardest that not only is there severe shortage of health care personnel, but those personnel would at the same time be most affected by HIV/AIDS. While a few country-specific studies have been conducted, notably in sub-Saharan Africa, little is known about the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS on the health workforce at the global and regional levels.

Estimates of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health workforce are derived using demographic and epidemiological models drawing on data from the WHO Global Atlas of the Health Workforce as well as HIV prevalence estimates from UNAIDS. In particular, the WHO Global Atlas contains information on health human resources for 198 countries around the world: physicians, nurses, midwives, dentists and pharmacists (Figure 1). Data on population size and HIV prevalence are triangulated to estimate the number of infections and AIDS-related deaths among health care workers at the global, regional and country levels. Understanding the scope of the AIDS crisis within the health

workforce is a crucial step to understanding the challenges towards attainment of the MDGs.

Figure 1: Distribution of countries by stock of Human Resources for Health, according to region, late 1990s



Source: WHO