

Call for Action: Human Resources as a Priority

The Seventh Regional Meeting of the Observatories of Human Resources in Toronto, Ontario (Canada) hosted 118 participants, including representatives of 29 countries, 11 international cooperation agencies, 8 regional professional and global associations, and various agencies of the federal and provincial governments of Canada. In addition, World Health Organization representatives from four Regional Offices and from the WHO Headquarters in Geneva contributed to the discussions.

The purpose of the meeting was to reach a broad consensus among the participating countries of the Pan-American Region on the strategies and policy orientations that would best meet the challenges facing the region and the common priority objectives for the next ten years. To this end, each of the participating countries conducted consultations with stakeholders and actors to identify both their longer term objectives for human resources development and management, as well as their current critical human resource problems/needs. These country-specific assessments, led by focal points selected by the Ministries of Health in collaboration with the Observatories network, were put assessed and compiled into one Regional Consultation which highlighted the five most critical challenges that faced the countries of the Region, and the conditions which would be necessary to overcome these challenges.

The objectives and aforementioned strategic challenges that were discussed at the meeting were: policies and long-term plans for the adaptation of the work force to the changes in the health systems and in the health conditions of the population; equitable distribution of the health workers; effective regulation of the migrations of health workers; mechanisms of interaction between training institutions and health services to adapt the formation to a model of universal care, equitable and quality.

Three working group sessions based their discussions on these five priority challenges that had been identified in the Regional Consultation. In these sessions, the participants constructed a “Toronto Call to Action,” which appeals to all countries of the Americas, asking them to mobilize political will, resources, and institutional actors to promote and actualize the development of Health Human Resources as a way of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and of providing universal access to quality health services for all peoples of the Americas by the year 2015.

The working groups agreed that the primary areas of action in facing these challenges should focus on the following: the strengthening of leadership in public health; the increase in investments in human resources; the integration and coordination of human resources activities in all areas; the continuity of policy and intervention; the improvement of systems and processes for gathering and sharing information to facilitate effective decision-making. The working groups also emphasized that education and training should be included in all areas of activities and interventions.

The lines of action proposed by the countries include: to strengthen the development of human resources for health; to keep the health workforce issues high in the political agenda; to promote technical cooperation and to invest in its improvement. Also emphasized was the need for stronger leadership in guiding the articulation and implementation of policies, the need to improve the technical capabilities in this field, and the necessity for more and better information and knowledge to shape better policies.

The next Regional Meeting of the Observatories in 2006 will take place in Peru.

To read the agenda and the presentations please click on the following link:

http://www.observatoriorh.org/Toronto/29SETAgenda_EN.pdf