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# HSR Series

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# 28

## Proposal for the Development and Strengthening of Nursing in Latin America and the Caribbean

LATIN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF NURSING SCHOOLS  
(ALADEFE)

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## FOREWORD

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This document was prepared in the context of a redefinition of the organization and policies of the Human Resources Development Program of the Pan American Health Organization. Its purpose is to determine future lines of action in the area of development of human resources for nursing, based on an analysis of the results of technical cooperation provided to date and of the progress achieved by the countries, taking into account changes in the general context and especially in health systems.

In accordance with the terms of reference suggested by the Human Resources Development Program (HSR), preparation of this document drew on an initial proposal drafted by members of the Executive Council of the Latin American Association of Nursing Schools (ALADEFE). They carried out a broad literature review on the labor situation, the labor market, nursing education, and regulation of nursing in the region, and presented a first draft that analyzed the impacts on nursing arising from the context, from reforms, and from the globalization process underway today. They also described key problems, challenges, and actors involved, as well as some strategies for shaping change.

The initial document was analyzed by the Human Resources Development Program of PAHO/WHO and by a group of nurses from the region who sent in their observations and suggestions. This process resulted in a second version which was then discussed by a group of nursing experts who raised questions regarding the critical problems and lines of action.

The text below briefly presents the following: a) background on PAHO/WHO technical cooperation in nursing; b) critical problems that must be solved in the next five years; c) objectives for a technical cooperation policy by the Human Resources Development Program of PAHO/WHO; and, finally, a matrix to guide technical cooperation.



## 1. BACKGROUND ON PAHO TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN HUMAN RESOURCES FOR NURSING

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The Pan American Health Organization has played a role in the development of nursing in Latin America since the 1940s. The contribution of PAHO to the countries of the Americas for the development and training of human resources for nursing has involved technical cooperation in the following areas:

- Planning of the educational process at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including continuing education, encompassing all categories of personnel.
- Structuring of a proposal on regulatory frameworks, both for practice and for the educational process, and for the professionals themselves.
- Implementation of a research support program that includes diagnostic study, a frame of reference, program guidelines, realization of concrete projects, and dissemination of results through colloquia.
- Holding of meetings of experts to structure and update the textbook program, as well as to make recommendations in specific areas of knowledge.
- Creation and updating of the inventory of nursing schools.
- Preparation of a proposal for competency-based training as a bridge between education and employment.
- Inclusion of innovative methodologies in study programs and curricula at all levels of training.
- Updating and adaptation of study programs and curricula.
- Education of personnel through fellowships for graduate-level programs.
- Strengthening of academic exchanges between institutions and between countries.
- Support for meetings on technical and scientific aspects of nursing.
- Production and dissemination of documents on various areas of knowledge and practice.

- Coordination with collaborative centers, nursing organizations, universities, and foundations.
- Advisory services for education.



## 2. CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN NURSING THAT MUST BE SOLVED IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

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The table below synthesizes the principal problems of nursing in Latin America, as set forth in the study "Health Sector Reform and Its Implications for Nursing Practice, Regulation and Education: A 5-Country Study." Problems are listed by the area of intervention, along with their impacts.

### PROBLEMS OF NURSING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

AREA	PROBLEM	IMPACT
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heterogeneity of categories and training programs, and shortage of skilled personnel.</li> <li>• Poor quality of education.</li> <li>• Failure to respond to the reality of the labor market and demands imposed by sectoral reforms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of services that are of poor scientific-technical quality.</li> <li>• Low problem-solving capacity.</li> <li>• Low work productivity.</li> <li>• Single-disciplinary perspective on problems and solutions, and conflicts in multidisciplinary teamwork.</li> </ul>
<b>LABOR MARKET</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequitable distribution of nursing personnel, both geographically and among institutions and categories of personnel.</li> <li>• Insufficient human resources in nursing.</li> <li>• Limited clarity in delineating competencies and an increase in the number of tasks that nursing personnel must assume.</li> <li>• Limited professional autonomy and restricted participation in decision-making.</li> <li>• Weak programs of continuing education.</li> <li>• Absence of processes for professional certification and recertification.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work overload and exhaustion.</li> <li>• Deterioration in physical and mental health.</li> <li>• Poor quality of care.</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction among users of the services.</li> <li>• Inequity in service coverage.</li> <li>• Lack of motivation for work.</li> <li>• Work organized vertically.</li> <li>• Failure to keep up-to-date with scientific techniques.</li> <li>• Lack of regulation of professional practice.</li> </ul>
<b>SERVICE PROVIDED TO USERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance of professionals from users of the service.</li> <li>• Bureaucratization of care.</li> <li>• Care provided by unskilled and untrained personnel.</li> <li>• Depersonalization of nursing care.</li> <li>• Errors in nursing diagnoses, in care plans, and in care.</li> <li>• Commercialization of service.</li> <li>• Deficiencies in information systems and underreporting.</li> <li>• Absence of criteria for use of technology.</li> <li>• Absence of accreditation process for the health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dehumanization of service provided.</li> <li>• Increase in risks of care.</li> <li>• Cost increases in the services.</li> <li>• Lack of reliable information.</li> <li>• Increasing inequities.</li> <li>• Inefficiency in service.</li> <li>• Limited community participation.</li> <li>• Emphasis on physical and curative care at the expense of preventive actions and health promotion.</li> <li>• Lack of articulation in the processes of care.</li> <li>• Inappropriate utilization of technology.</li> <li>• Lack of systematized experiences.</li> </ul>



### 3. OBJECTIVES FOR A POLICY ON TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN NURSING BY THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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- Seek strategies to increase the quality and productivity of nursing personnel in the health services and in patient care.
- Support initiatives aimed at improving the availability, distribution, and flow of professional, technical, and auxiliary nursing personnel in the countries.
- Support strategies that seek to ensure efficiency and low risk in health care and in nursing services, including design of mechanisms for accrediting health institutions that would include, among other requirements, minimum criteria for provision of nursing personnel in terms of both quantity and quality.
- Encourage governments to introduce incentives for productivity, work quality, and performance, as well as promotion systems based on merit and performance.
- Advise on the establishment of systems for monitoring and improving working conditions in order to reduce occupational risks, facilitate processes, and improve the quality of services.
- Promote adoption of systems to improve the quality of nursing care, a culture of evidence-based practice, and the use of rigorously designed standards, protocols, and guidelines for intervention.
- Support the planning of competency-based training and guide the design of curricula with a view to achieving academic quality and social relevance.
- Guide the adoption of a minimum curriculum for undergraduate nursing education so that it facilitates the processes of program accreditation and professional certification and the mobility of personnel.
- Support the design of national and regional systems of information on human resources for nursing, so that they contribute to the knowledge needed to plan supply and demand and facilitate decision-making.
- Generate knowledge of regulatory frameworks, both for training and for professional practice.

- Support the design and implementation of multifaceted research on the labor market, working conditions, productivity of nursing services, and cost effectiveness of health care offered by nursing personnel.
- Promote processes of continuing education that respond to training needs and that utilize the pedagogical and technological potential available.
- Promote programs for upgrading personnel with innovative methodologies, in accordance with the needs of the countries.

## 4. MATRIX TO GUIDE TECHNICAL COOPERATION BY HSR/PAHO IN NURSING

### LABOR MARKET

Critical problems in the labor market	Substantive activities	HSR/PAHO cooperation	Expected results
<p>New models of care derived from reforms in health systems; gap between training and work.</p> <p>Weak capacity in management of communication.</p> <p>Failure to keep up-to-date on technical processes, management of services, use of technology, and evidence-based practice.</p>	<p>Identify competencies required of nursing personnel as a result of health reforms.</p> <p>Strengthen the capacity to communicate.</p> <p>Strengthen strategies of continuing education by linking education and service.</p>	<p>Technical support for designing methodologies to identify competencies.</p> <p>Workshops and advisory services on communication that provide tools for management of communications media, and for speaking out on health to the community.</p> <p>Mobilization of actors to design and carry out continuing education programs and systematization of continuing education experiences with articulation of education and service.</p>	<p>Identification of competencies.</p> <p>More information in the community on health systems, services, care, and programs.</p> <p>Change in the public image of nursing.</p> <p>Diagnosis of needs in continuing education.</p> <p>Development of programs for continuing education in specific subjects.</p>
<p>Heterogeneity of occupational categories without specification of their competencies and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Define the categories of nursing personnel needed in order to provide quality care.</p> <p>Guide the definition of policies for upgrading personnel.</p>	<p>Invite the ministries of health and nursing organizations to workshops aimed at defining categories of nursing personnel and the relevant competencies for each.</p> <p>Establish guidelines and policies for upgrading personnel.</p>	<p>Definition of categories of nursing personnel and the competencies corresponding to each.</p> <p>General guidelines for upgrading nursing personnel.</p>

Unequal distribution of nursing personnel, geographically and among institutions and programs, and absence of information systems on nursing supply and demand and the flow of nursing personnel.	<p>Develop information systems on nursing supply and demand and the flow of nursing personnel.</p> <p>Analyze with the ministries policies for distribution of nursing personnel and the correct make-up of work teams in terms of their skills mix.</p>	<p>Coordinate the information with the human resources observatories of the countries.</p> <p>Raise the awareness of personnel on the importance of generating and utilizing information.</p> <p>Guide policies for distribution of nursing personnel in order to enhance coverage and quality of services.</p>	<p>Formation of a virtual network of nursing associations, institutions, and networks (REAL, Enfermundi) for development of a database and information system on nursing in the region.</p> <p>Positive changes in the delivery of nursing services and quantitative changes in the make-up of work teams.</p>
Management of human resources and nursing services.	<p>Support processes for accreditation of hospitals and certification of nursing professionals in the various practice settings.</p> <p>Illustrate the module on management of human resources with cases drawn from studies of human resources management in nursing.</p> <p>Establish systems for performance evaluation and incentives for quality and productivity.</p>	<p>Coordination between the HSO cooperation process and the nursing action plan.</p> <p>Utilization of the module by in-service nursing personnel, systematization of the experience, and feedback for adaptation to human resources management in nursing.</p> <p>Support for processes of performance evaluation.</p>	<p>Accreditation of hospitals and certification of nursing professionals.</p> <p>Utilization of the online nursing module for improvement of human resources management .</p> <p>Policies and strategies for performance evaluation established in the countries.</p>
Weak consolidation of groups and networks for research on priority problems and lack of up-to-date information for decision-making in the field of human resources for nursing.	<p>Invite and encourage researchers to develop collaborative projects relevant to decision-making in the field of human resources for nursing.</p>	<p>Promote the implementation of multi-center research.</p> <p>Publish announcements on priority research problems in the field of human resources for nursing.</p>	<p>Three multi-center studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparative analysis of legislation on nursing practice in the countries of Latin America.</li> <li>• Determinants of the demand for nursing personnel.</li> <li>• Characterization of the contracting and incentive systems.</li> </ul>

## REGULATION

Critical problems in regulation	Substantive activities	HSR/PAHO cooperation	Expected results
Absence of regulation for education of nursing personnel, especially technical and auxiliary personnel.	Develop guidelines for regulation of education of nursing personnel, especially technical and auxiliary personnel.	Guide preparation of guidelines for regulation of education of nursing personnel, especially technical and auxiliary personnel.	Criteria established and approved by government agencies and nursing organizations for education of technical and auxiliary personnel.
Absence of process for accreditation of teaching institutions in the majority of the countries, and absence of minimum guidelines for establishment of nursing schools.	Design processes for accreditation of institutions through subregional initiatives that are sufficiently flexible to facilitate confirmation of academic titles.	Continue to support work by the subregions in conjunction with the centers of excellence of nursing in this area.	Accredited nursing programs and processes underway in most of the training institutions.
Absence of legislation on professional practice or failure to keep it up-to-date.	Invite groups and associations with experience in the area to prepare directives that can guide the countries in preparing or updating legislation on nursing practice.	Contact the associations with greater experience; collect results of the study on comparative analysis of legislation; offer advisory services to help the countries prepare or update the respective legislation.	Legislation on professional nursing practice, in line with the changes in service delivery and trends in the profession.

## TRAINING

Critical problems in training	Substantive activities	HSR/PAHO cooperation	Expected results
Absence of information systems on nursing education programs at the college, graduate, and continuing education levels.	Design a database that permits constant access to information on available nursing education programs (SIEDE).	Link this subproject to the Human Resources Observatory.  Offer logistical support to ALADEFE in order to commit the training institutions to supporting the system (SIEDE).	Have an up-to-date information system on nursing education coordinated by REAL and ALADEFE and by the PAHO Human Resources Observatories.
Difficulties in dissemination and updating of knowledge; shortages of material to support curriculum reforms and of up-to-date and accessible bibliographic material on the discipline.	Review existing material in PALTEX (Expanded Textbook and Instructional Materials Program).  Promote publication series.  Develop a dissemination plan.  Promote the holding of the Pan American Colloquia on Nursing Research.	Carry out an evaluation of the program with regard to the issues included, currency of texts, and distribution.  Invite experts on specific subjects to present texts for publication.  Evaluate and select basic texts available in English in order to publish them in Spanish translation.  Continue to support the holding of the Pan American Colloquia on Nursing Research.	Have a catalog of books and materials for teaching core competencies in nursing.  Widen the scope of themes included in the textbook program.  Facility in approval of purchases, including purchases via the internet.  Two Pan American Colloquia on Nursing Research.



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