**ESTABLISHING EVIDENCED-BASED NATIONAL NURSING WORKFORCE GAPS: TECHNICAL INSIGHTS FROM GHANA**

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Globally, most countries are said to be experiencing some shortage of critical health professionals whilst others are classified as experiencing critical shortages. Consequently, stakeholders are making frantic and concerted to address this challenge. Some of the missed health-related targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been partly blamed on insufficient or poorly distributed skilled health workforce. As a result, pursing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) without adequately addressing the human resource challenge would seem a recipe for missed targets by 2030.

One of the critical steps to addressing human resource inadequacies and maldistribution is to determine the actual number and caliber of health workers required by a country, as well as the human resource availability gaps (HRAG). Unfortunately, in many situations there seem to be no empirical data on these for strategic decision making. It is against this background that the Ministry of Health in Ghana adopted the Workload Indicators of Staffing Needs (WISN) tool to develop an evidenced-based staffing standard for the health sector in 2014 to serve as a planning staff distribution tool.

Based on this evidenced-based staffing standard, we undertook a Human Resource Gap analysis to inform our recruitment and redistribution strategies toward the achievement of universal health coverage by 2020.

Contrary to some assertions that Ghana had trained and retained sufficient number of key health personnel, our finding provides new empirical basis to maintain that there are significant staffing deficits, mal-distribution and inappropriate skill mix within the health sector in Ghana. Based on these findings, several initiatives are being put in place to address the challenges and put Ghana on track towards the achievements of its health goals.

Even though our results may be specific to the Ghanaian context, the technical tools and methods used, and the art of their application would benefit other countries seeking to establish staffing standards and/or conduct human resource gaps analysis for their health sector.

**BIOGRAPHIES**

**Mr. James Avoka Asamani** is a Commonwealth scholar and holds a Master of Philosophy in Nursing from the University of Ghana and pursuing a Master of Science degree in Health Economics and Health Policy from the University of Birmingham. He has published considerably in the area of Nursing Management and Human Resources for Health. He specializes in human resource modelling and is an expert in staffing norms/standards development. He is also an Adjunct Faculty member of the Central University in Ghana.

**Dr. Margaret Chebere** hold a PhD in Development Management and a Master of Science in Human Resource Development from the University of Manchester. She is Director in charge of Human Resources Division in the Ghana Health Service. She has several years of experience in human resource planning, management and training. She has been a Human resources for health Consultant par excellence to some low and middle income countries in Africa.

**Mr. Francis Victor Ekey** hold a Master of Public Health degree from Cardiff University and other postgraduate qualifications in statistics and human resource planning. He is Deputy Director in charge of human resource planning at Ghana Health Service. He has consulted for a number of organizations on human resource data management.