

PS 2.1

NAVIGATING DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITIONS: IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH

| BACKGROUND

The global demographic landscape is undergoing a profound transformation characterised by ageing populations, declining birth rates, shifting dependency ratios, and migration. These trends are placing unprecedented pressure on health systems, particularly in workforce availability, distribution, and sustainability. As countries navigate the demographic transition, the demand for health and care services, especially for older adults and those with chronic conditions, is rapidly increasing. This reshapes population structures and places growing pressure on the health workforce in terms of supply, financing, and the ability to deliver culturally competent and age-appropriate care. Many countries face critical shortages of qualified health and care workers, exacerbated by internal maldistribution and international migration.

Migration of the health workforce has become a defining feature of the global labour market. While mobility can offer benefits, such as skills development and remittance flows, it poses serious challenges for source countries facing workforce depletion. The movement of health workforce from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to high-income countries (HICs) often reflects global inequality and may compromise health system resilience and the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC).

Human resources for health (HRH) encompasses both professional and non-professional personnel involved in the delivery of health and care services.

This session will explore the impact of demographic transitions on HRH within countries and across regions. It will cover global and regional data on migration patterns, shrinking labour pools, and the implications for system sustainability. The discussion will unpack the "negative chain" of imbalances, such as out-migration, ageing workforce, declining tax bases, and increasing long-term care needs.

This includes consideration of the international recruitment code and often-overlooked challenges like the inflow of internationally displaced persons (IDPs). The session will feature innovative country responses, highlighting practical strategies, such as adaptation of systems to ageing societies, strengthening and retaining local HRH, fostering cultural competence, and leveraging technology and innovation.

By convening policymakers, researchers, international agencies, and frontline professionals, this session aims to promote sustainable, ethical, and equitable solutions for HRH challenges, particularly in LMICs facing significant HRH gaps. The goal is to identify actionable, evidence-based policy responses to ensure no country is left behind.

| OBJECTIVES

- To explore how demographic shifts are reshaping the demand and supply of human resources for health.
- To identify what types of human resources for health are needed and how countries can develop and retain them.
- To share innovations, policies, and practices from a diverse set of countries and stakeholders.



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