

Part 1: Key messages

- Healthcare facilities cannot operate without medicines. The availability of both medicines and a pharmacy workforce in adequate numbers with appropriate competencies is crucial to ensuring a well functioning pharmaceutical system.
- There is a general trend towards pharmaceutical care and patient focused roles for pharmacists which have spurred reforms in pharmacy education and practice. Changing roles have also driven an increase in pharmacy workforce demand.
- The capacity to provide pharmaceutical services in each country is dependent upon having an assured competent workforce and a similarly integrated academic workforce to train sufficient numbers of new pharmacists and other support staff at both basic and enhanced levels.
- Fifty-seven countries, 36 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, have a health workforce crisis. The human resources for health crisis is a threat to the delivery of health services and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Many countries continue to experience shortages of pharmacists and marked urban-rural distribution imbalances despite general increases in pharmacy workforce levels over time.
- Pharmacy workforce density varies considerably between countries and is associated with economic development. African countries have both low densities of pharmacists and pharmacies.
- Pharmacy technicians form an important component of the pharmacy workforce, comprising up to 75% of the pharmacy workforce in some countries. The development of the pharmacy technician workforce and roles may serve as an important strategy to support the changing roles of pharmacists.
- Ensuring mechanisms for assured practitioner competence (and ultimately performance) is now a key goal for pharmacy education policy. Systems and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support should be oriented to enable competence-based lifelong development for all practitioners
- Pharmacy workforce planning should aim towards self-sufficiency and be integrated into broader health workforce planning. They should encompass all cadres providing pharmaceutical services and be aligned to local needs. The planning process should be informed by reliable workforce data, evidence on factors and issues affecting the workforce and comprehensive workforce modelling.
- Strategic partnerships between stakeholders such as Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, training institutions, professional bodies, regional and international organisations, amongst others, have been shown to be valuable in enabling progress in pharmacy workforce planning and development, regulation, and reform in education and practice.