

WHO health workforce  
support and safeguards list

2023

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## WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023

### Background

Through decision WHA73(30),<sup>1</sup> the Seventy-third World Health Assembly noted the report of the WHO Expert Advisory Group on the Relevance and Effectiveness of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel (the “report”).<sup>2</sup>

In the report, the Expert Advisory Group recommended that countries with the most pressing health workforce needs related to universal health coverage should be identified, and support and safeguards targeted at them. The Expert Advisory Group further called on leading destination countries and development partners, as well as others interested in providing health workforce related support and safeguards, to commit multi-year flexible funds towards implementation of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel (the “Code”) as a global public good. Accordingly, the WHO Secretariat prepared the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List (SSL) 2020.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth progress report on the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel: fourth round of national reporting, contained in document WHA75/14,<sup>4</sup> noted that the negative health, economic and social impact of COVID-19, coupled with the increasing demand for health and care workers in high-income countries, might be increasing vulnerabilities within countries already suffering from low health workforce densities. Accordingly, the Expert Advisory Group was re-convened to review all countries with low workforce density to consider how disruptions related to COVID-19, particularly health-related vulnerabilities, might require the revision and extension of safeguards against active international recruitment.

Following the findings and recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group,<sup>5</sup> the WHO Secretariat is publishing the WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023.

### WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023

The WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023 (provided in Table 1 below) comprises 55 countries. These countries face the most pressing health workforce challenges related to universal health coverage. In particular, these countries have: 1) a density of doctors, nurses and midwives below the global median (i.e., 49 per 10 000 population); and 2) a universal health coverage service coverage index below a certain threshold (figure 1). The methodology and data sources used are consistent with the approach recommended by the Expert Advisory Group in its 2020 report.<sup>2</sup>

To account for the disruptions caused to health services by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects on health worker mobility and migration, the threshold for the universal health coverage service coverage index for the WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023 has been increased from 50 (the value used for the 2020 list) to 55.

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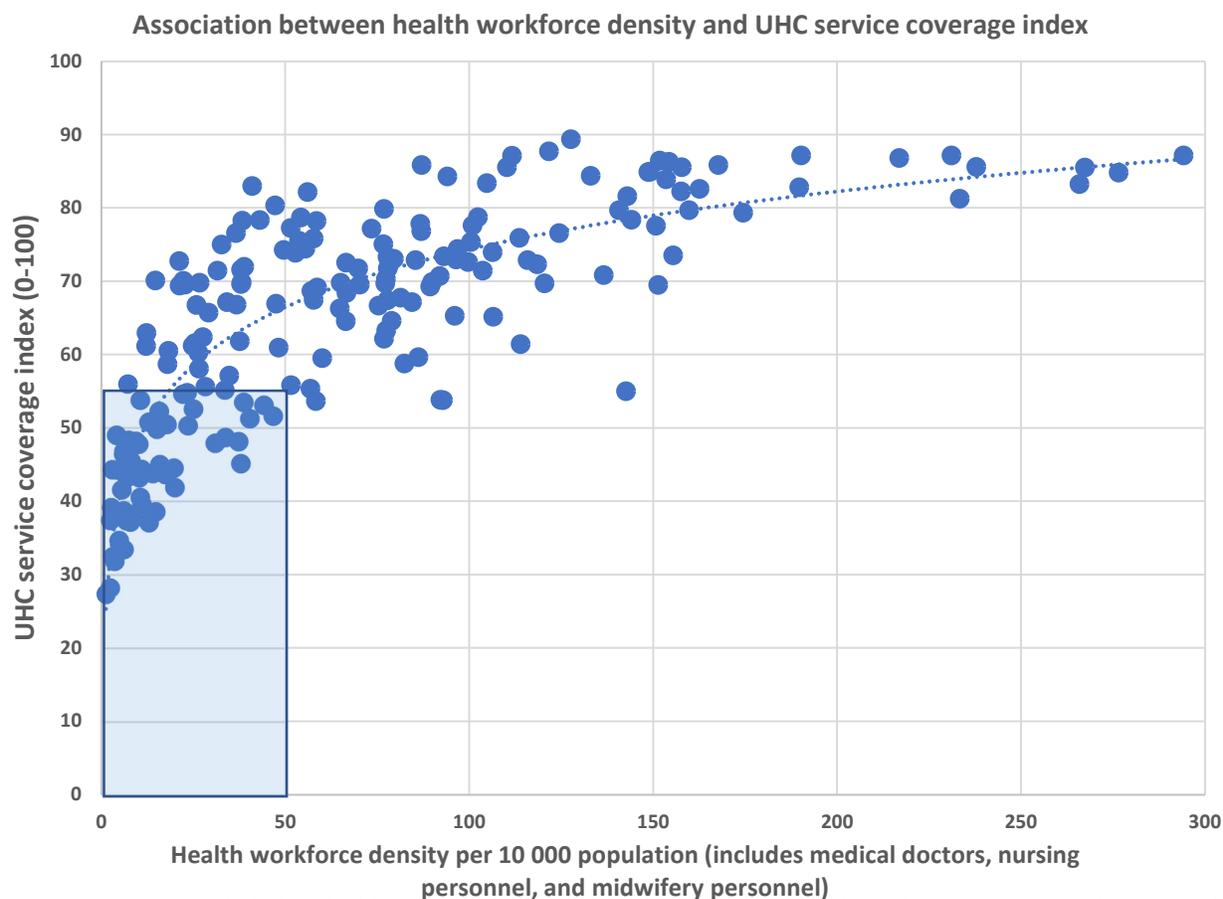
<sup>1</sup> [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\(30\)-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73(30)-en.pdf), accessed 31 January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA73/A73\\_9-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_9-en.pdf), accessed 31 January 2023.

<sup>3</sup> [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/health-workforce/hwf-support-and-safeguards-list8jan.pdf?sfvrsn=1a16bc6f\\_5](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/health-workforce/hwf-support-and-safeguards-list8jan.pdf?sfvrsn=1a16bc6f_5), accessed 31 January 2023.

<sup>4</sup> [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA75/A75\\_14-en.pdf](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA75/A75_14-en.pdf), accessed 31 January 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Report to the Director-General on the Update of the Support and Safeguard List, January 2023.



*Note: Countries included in the blue rectangle are included in the WHO health workforce support and safeguard list 2023. They have a health workforce density less than the median of 49/10 000 pop and a UHC service coverage index less than 55.*

*Figure: parameters for inclusion in the WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023*

Consistent with the guiding principles of the WHO Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, laid down in Article 5 (Health workforce development and health systems sustainability) and Article 10 (Partnerships, technical collaboration and financial support), and, as called for in the report, the listed countries should be:

- *Prioritized for health personnel development and health system related support; and*
- *Provided with safeguards that discourage active international recruitment of health personnel.*

While reiterating the principle that active recruitment from developing countries facing health workforce challenges is discouraged, WHO advises that government-to-government agreements related to health worker mobility, under certain circumstances, are not proscribed for the listed countries, but should:

1. *Be informed by a health labour market analysis and the adoption of provisions to ensure adequate domestic supply in countries;<sup>6</sup>*
2. *Explicitly engage health sector stakeholders, including ministries of health, in the dialogue and negotiation of relevant agreements;*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240035546>, accessed 31 January 2023.

3. *Specify benefits to the health system of source countries that are commensurate and proportional to the benefits accruing to destination countries; and*
4. *Be notified to the WHO Secretariat through the respective National Health Workforce Accounts and Code reporting processes.*

Consistent with the principles of the Code, extension of the safeguards approach to additional low- and middle-income countries is encouraged as good practice.

The WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023 replaces the 2020 list and the list of countries with critical health workforce shortages contained in the 2006 World health report. WHO will update the list every three years (or more regularly if warranted by the situation), with the next updates scheduled for publication in 2026 and 2029.

Table: WHO health workforce support and safeguards list 2023

African Region (37)	African Region (37) (cont.)	Eastern Mediterranean Region (6)
Angola	Madagascar	Afghanistan
Benin	Malawi	Djibouti
Burkina Faso	Mali	Pakistan
Burundi	Mauritania	Somalia
Cameroon	Mozambique	Sudan
Central African Republic	Niger	Yemen
Chad	Nigeria	
Comoros	Rwanda	<b>South-East Asia Region (3)</b>
Congo	Senegal	Bangladesh
Côte d'Ivoire	Sierra Leone	Nepal
Democratic Republic of the Congo	South Sudan	Timor-Leste
Equatorial Guinea	Togo	
Eritrea	Uganda	<b>Western Pacific Region (8)</b>
Ethiopia	United Republic of Tanzania	Kiribati
Gabon	Zambia	Lao People's Democratic Republic
Gambia	Zimbabwe	Micronesia (Federated States of)
Ghana		Papua New Guinea
Guinea	<b>Region of the Americas (1)</b>	Samoa
Guinea-Bissau	Haiti	Solomon Islands
Lesotho		Tuvalu
Liberia		Vanuatu

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