



Nursing and midwifery workforce and the new Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030)

Marli Villela Mamede¹

In September 2015, the (United Nations) UN member countries approved the Global Plan for Sustainable Development with the purpose of enhancing economic, social and environmental indicators for the next generations. This plan is the result of a process started in Brazil, in 2012, during the Rio + 20 Conference, which followed a wide consultation system to ensure diversified perspectives and experiences in the composition of the Post-2015 Agenda. The new agenda titled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” consists of a Declaration with 17 Objectives and 169 goals intended to guide the actions of the international community in the following years (2016-2030), thereby helping countries to achieve sustainable development⁽¹⁾.

This Agenda incorporates the experiences of the Millennium Development Goals and aims to advance along the goals that have not been achieved until now. It seeks to ensure the human rights of all, to reach gender equality as well as the empowerment of women and girls. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are integrated and incorporate three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. This is therefore a plan for the planet, the prosperity, the governments, the society, the academia, and for each one of us individually.

By analyzing the current policy that outlines the action plan for sustainable development, the key questions to be placed are: How does Nursing take place in the 2030 Global Agenda? What is the Nursing’s place in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals?

The literature confirms the contribution of the nursing and midwifery workforce in the improvements in health, provision of essential services in hospital settings, increase in satisfaction, adherence to treatment, reduction of missed consultations, hospital stays and readmissions, unnecessary interventions, such as in cases of processes of birth and delivery, morbidity and mortality in several conditions, among many other contributions. Furthermore, nurses and midwives use a person-centered model of care, which favors closeness with health services users and community, characteristics consistent not only with the third Sustainable Development Goal (health and well-being), but also with the others. Therefore, nurses respond to people’s health needs in all configurations and, throughout life cycle, have responded to the demands of the current global context that signalizes the increase in the elderly population, morbidity and mortality due to diseases including emerging and re-emerging, even accounting for more than 50.0% of the shortage of health professionals around the world. Their roles are crucial for the achievement of the Universal Health Coverage and of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Although the calls for the Universal Agenda 2030 entail many challenges, there are several conquests, due to the opportunities for improvements in the nursing and midwifery workforce, especially with regard to education, nursing and midwifery services, and regulation.

In order to collaborate with countries to reach the Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals, the international nursing and midwifery leaderships, especially represented by the International Council of Nursing, International Confederation of Midwives and representatives of the World Health Organiza-

¹Universidade de São Paulo, Escola de Enfermagem de Ribeirão Preto. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil.

tion, carried out the Global Strategic Directions for the Strengthening of Nursing and Midwifery for the period 2016-2020⁽²⁾. Such guidelines are underpinned by the vision, principles and themes that guide the growth of nursing and midwifery workforce capacity and reinforce their contributions for the improvement of global health. As vision, it establishes the need to speed up the progress towards the Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring the universal accessibility, availability, acceptability, quality, and effective cost of nursing and midwifery care for all, based on the population's needs.

The principles proposed for the support of the strategies of Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery are related to the ethical action in the promotion of quality health services; the development of education, research and service programs in line with health needs and priorities, in addition to evidence; the accountability and involvement in all aspects of collaboration and partnerships; the adoption of evidence-based standards of best practices ensured with effective and updated professional regulation. The themes that guide the strategies are especially aligned with the goals: 1) eradication of poverty; 2) zero hunger and sustainable agriculture; and 3) health and well-being.

In order to ensure that health services are accessible, available and of good quality, the thematic strategies for the Strengthening of Nursing and Midwifery are focused on qualification regarding policy, leadership, management and governance; collaborative partnerships and mobilization of political will in the construction of the workforce that contributes especially to the achievement of the goals.

The workforce should be effectively prepared for the development of Policies, Leadership, Management and Governance to deal with the challenges of the dynamics of health systems and ensure competence in all aspects of the development of the profession. That is, to work in Collaborative Partnerships among professionals, with higher education institutions strengthening the capacity and potential to fight social inequalities, monitoring and assessing their roles, functions and responsibilities in such a way as to reinforce the spirit of solidarity in the provision of health services to the population.

The application of community-based interventions inside the health systems may help nurses and midwives to continue to make a difference by providing high-impact and low-cost interventions, thereby contributing for the achievement of sustainable development. A theoretical understanding of the concept of sustainability may contribute in orienting and establishing the practice of nursing and midwifery, especially in times of health problems related to climatic and environmental changes, since the health sector should meet new demands and prepare itself to contribute for sustainable development.

Because of their professional knowledge on health promotion, disease prevention and care in the event of illness, nurses and midwives have a special responsibility for sustainable development. This responsibility concerns current and future generations, with a view to allowing them to live in environments that do not hinder good health.

References

1. Organização das Nações Unidas. Transformando nosso mundo: a Agenda 2030 para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável [Internet]. 2016 [citado 2017 nov. 13]. Disponível em: <http://www.br.undp.org/content/dam/brazil/docs/agenda2030/undp-br-Agenda2030-completo-pt-br-2016.pdf>
2. World Health Organization. Global strategic directions for strengthening nursing and midwifery 2016-2020. WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data [Internet]. 2016 [cited 2017 Nov 13]. Available from: http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/global-strategic-midwifery2016-2020.pdf?ua=1