OBSERVATORY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES IN HEALTH
(Strategic Model for the Re-launch of the Initiative)
Working document, September, 2010

I. INTRODUCTION

Achieving the political mandate of "health for all" faces the fundamental challenge of the availability of the necessary human resources to achieve that mandate. Even within a financed health system, the availability of "the right people in the right places" is a key challenge, given that ensuring the adequate workforce for the needs of the population requires solid, long-term policies, based on valid information as well as the political will of the governments and stakeholders to reach them. The Observatory for Human Resources in Health (HRH) should be a tool to allow supporting knowledge for decision-making of political and strategic issues related with human resources in health, through coordinated and concerted efforts by all parties.

Within this context, the Observatory for Human Resources in Health in the Americas Region has had an important developmental phase during the last decade. This difference is related to the general conditions in the countries, their health systems, and the level of development of their institutions. A fundamental element within this field is the level of evolution of the role HRH issues play within their corresponding Ministries.

Some countries, particularly those with more highly developed HRH management have embedded observatory functions within their organizational structures and processes. Other counties, however, are in a more precarious situation, without having made progress toward an observatory function or network due to the lack of various resources. Understanding this context is fundamental in order to plan a renewed strategy, considering that today, ten years from the implementation of the Observatory, huge challenges still persist in accordance with the new realities of the public health systems in the Region.

If by the end of the 90s the push of the HRH Observatories strategy was in advocacy to place the Human Resources issues within the national and regional agendas, as well as strengthening the steering roles of the Ministries of Health; then in this decade, the fundamental role of the HRH Observatories should be supporting the countries in the implementation of Strategic Planning of Human Resources for Health, through knowledge management and information, with the view of negotiating human resources in health policies, towards universal coverage and the development of health systems based on primary health care (PHC).

The national Observatory will be an important support for most of the countries in the Region, specifically in the strategic planning area for the Ministry of Health, in

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coordination with the stakeholders and supporting the public policies related to human resources in health, providing information and valuable data for evidence-based decision making.

In the case of the countries with high institutional development, the observatory may become a privileged space to support research and the exchange of innovative experiences that may also benefit the network.

Therefore, the Observatories may provide:

- A panorama of the situation of the health workforce

- An historical mapping of the trends and changes over time

- Relevant aspects on the health workforce that can become an important basis for discussion and debate

- Recommendations for action and intervention

- Forecasts and models with which to explore policy scenarios

- highlighting areas of uncertainty or that require immediate action

- Suggestions for a relevant research agenda

- An area for coordination and collaboration between the different stakeholders

II. DEFINITION

The Observatory for Human Resources in Health is a regional network of governments, academic and service institutions, as well as social organizations, promoted by the Pan American Health Organization for the generation, analysis, access and sharing of information, knowledge and experiences that support decision-making processes and the formulation and implementation of public policies, in accordance to national priorities and the regional goals for human resources in health.

III. VALUES

The Observatory for HRH assumes as their role the same values that guide technical cooperation in PAHO.

- **Equity**. Fighting for impartiality and justice through the elimination of the inequities in health that are unnecessary and avoidable.

- **Excellence**. Achieving the highest quality in what we do.

- **Solidarity**. Promotion of shared interests and responsibilities, facilitating collective efforts to reach common goals.

- **Respect.** Accepting the dignity and diversity of individuals, groups and countries.

- **Integrity**. Ensuring transparent, ethical and responsible performance.

IV. PRINCIPLES

The principles of the Observatory are the following:

- Centered on the development of Human Resources for Health as a strategic factor in the development of Health Systems.

- Grounded in the strengthening of public policies and strategies for the development of Human Resources for Health, through the use of validated and updated information, evidence and the sharing of experiences between the network actors.

- Promoting progressive improvement in the quality of information on Human Resources for Health; promoting the production of official, standardized information for its use by members in the network.

- Generating knowledge, experience and information, taking as publicly shared and actively disseminated goods, through the promotion of communication and exchange, as well as the proactive use of information and communication technologies (TIC).

- A space for solidarity and the continuous strengthening of the network, calling, integrating and actively aiding the work of their members, building agreements and implementing strategies to ensure sustainability with regards to the growing institutionalization levels in their countries.

- A space for shared identity that respects the country's unique characteristics.

V. MISSION

Contribute to the generation and analysis of information and knowledge through a joint effort to strengthen the response capacity of the steering entity and formulation and management of human resources for health policies and plans, toward universal coverage and the development of health care systems based on primary health care.

VI. VISION

A Regional Network composed of active and interconnected Observatories at the national and subregional level, which offers information and knowledge for

monitoring the HRH situation in the countries in the Region, as well as generating policies towards approaching priority issues. It also constitutes a space to rally and define the public policy agendas around HRH, through the participation of institutions committed with the initiative in the countries.

VII. OBJECTIVES

1. Produce HRH evidence through the critical and systematic analysis from different perspectives, related to the health needs in the countries.

2. Generate standardized information on HRH matters.

3. Evaluate and monitor human resources for health situations and trends related with the Regional Human Resources for Health Goals and the Five Challenges of the *Toronto Call for Action*.

4. Improve the quality of information and strengthen the human resources for health information systems.

5. Identify information and needs gaps in the research on HRH matters.

6. Design communication and information dissemination strategies, evidence and concerted actions.

VIII. REFERENCE MODELS

The observatory is composed by three reference models, which work simultaneously:

1. Governance
2. Information Management
3. Technology

1. Governance Model

Definition

Governance refers to the design and organization of the Observatory around common objectives, the relationship between its members and the mechanisms related with its relationship with other entities. It is a dynamic process which guides, norms and evaluates stakeholder activities in the network to reach their objectives. Its concrete experience should take into account flexible mechanisms to adapt to the diverse realities within the subregions, countries and institutions. The governance model is particularly relevant for the regional architecture of the Observatory and is a point of reference for organizing its activities at all levels. Within these common structures, the network members have a space to define their activities with regards to their interests and contexts.

The mission, the values and principles established in the strategic model of the Observatory are essential points of reference for the governance model, which also include the organizational and basic normative elements which guide the actor's roles.

Services and contributions

The Observatory Network offers the following services

- Collection and Management of information
- Supporting key actors in the countries in the analysis of the information
- Advocacy at the political level on the importance of managing Human Resources for Health
- Promoting wide dialogue on Human Resources in Health issues
- Diffusion at a regional and global scale of the production of the network
- Promoting/Sponsoring meetings and common activities
- Managing financing for specific studies
- Informatic tools

Contribution from the network members

- Contribution to the database with standardized information
- Orientation of their activities by regional mandates such as the Toronto Call to Action and the Regional Goals for Human Resources
- Active participation of investigation and studies for the priorities of the common agenda
- Production of knowledge and international quality research
- Active participation in the diffusion of knowledge and activities to the other network members
- Active participation in promoting and supporting the development activities of the new Observatories in other countries
- Design and maintain the websites as a means of communication and dissemination of information

Levels

For their action, the Observatory has three levels:

Regional Observatory: Corresponds to the regional coordination level and the responsibility of its administration falls on the PAHO regional team in WDC,

which works with an executive committee that also collaborates as an editorial committee, under the responsibility of the HRH consultant from PAHO.

The main functions at this level are:

- Systematize from the relationship with the countries and the common areas of interest, the policy, and priority activities in HRH matters,

- Facilitate and generate joint policy agreements for the development of HRH in the Region,

- Call on members and ensure dynamic interactions through the organization of joint activities, especially at the Annual or Biannual Regional Meetings, among others.

- Promote and establish institutional ties around the regional HRH agenda. This support will be relevant for countries with weak HRH institutional bodies.

- Inform the governments in the Region, through the PAHO steering bodies on the progress and delays in matters of HRH policy in their countries.

- Organize the Committee of Organizing Partners (Cooperation agencies, International Organisms, Host countries, advising countries) at the regional meetings of the Observatories for HRH.

- Manage an attractive Web Portal of the Regional Observatory, which connects the different rings in the region and interacts with other networks at the global level, promoting and facilitating the navigation and integration between the members and visitors.

Subregional Observatory: Corresponds to the coordination level of a group of countries in a region and the responsibility falls on the subregional coordination at PAHO, through an executive committee that also works as an editorial committee, also composed by the PAHO country representatives. The person responsible for this committee is the PAHO subregional consultant.

The main functions at this level are the following:

- Articulate the regional agenda with that in the countries.

- Promote the definition of common agendas that encompass the countries in the Subregion according to their particularities to promote joint actions.

- Coordinate initiatives between the countries within the geographical integration bodies.

- Promote the Observatories for HRH in the countries of the subregion, through the development of information, monitoring the regional goals, and research incentives.

- Develop and maintain subregional WebPages and promote the development of individual country WebPages.

- Provide methodological support to homogenize the concepts in the measurement of data and the research areas, so information is comparable between the countries and throughout the Region.

- Support the countries in finding cooperation mechanisms for the development of HRH.

National Observatory: Corresponds to the coordination level in each country, established by the health authority, in coordination with the national PAHO offices. It counts with a body that brings together the stakeholders in human resources matters. These actors may be training, research or service institutions accredited by the government, which produce information and specific knowledge around HRH matters, or social actors involved with the issue, which contribute to the analysis and generation of public policy proposals. Also at the national level, it is advisable to form an executive committee, composed by the country representatives and the institutions, and that they define, among other things, calls for working meetings, information which will be uploaded to the webpage, lines of research which may be jointly addressed. The committee will be lead by a representative at the Ministry of Health.

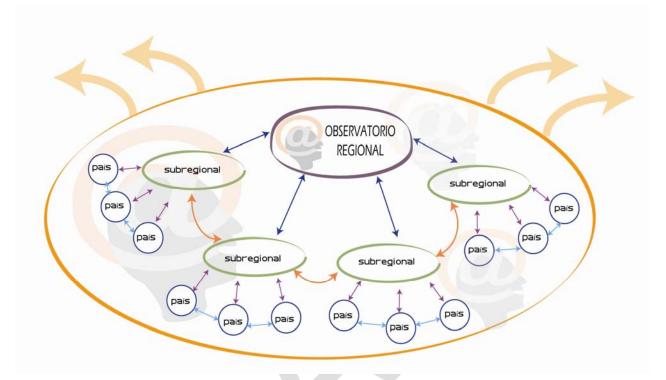At the national level we find the following functions:

The health authority:

- Define a coordination mechanism for the network of observatories for human resources in health and organize how it will work.

- Formulate the policy guidelines and the information and research priorities and research on human resources in health.

- Contribute with the subregional observatory and the regional observatory with information and national analyses.

- Inform the corresponding entities to create the Subregional Observatory.

The institutional and social actors:

- Contribute to the production of publications, research projects and good practices.

- Actively participate in the activities of the National Observatory.

- Contribute with information, analyses and opinions for decision-making on human resources in health issues.

- Contribute to improving the information systems in human resources in health issues.

- Maintain connections through the National Observatory website as a means for interacting with the Human Resources in Health Network.

2. Information management model

The network of the Observatory will work with a Content Management System, which is shared with the Subregional Observatories and the Country Observatories.

A critical element for this network to function is the availability of basic information, whose composition will be established at the Regional level, taking into account the development reached by the different countries.

This must be standardized information, making it necessary to advance in the homologation of definitions, in order to allow the countries to understand, produce and later on, exchange required information with a common basis.

The responsibility of supplying the system with basic information will be under the governments, entities which should officially approve them. Therefore, it will be the health authority in each country, under the framework of the National Observatories, which will have the privilege of adding his information at a Regional level.

In this manner, the challenge of the Observatory at all levels is not only the recollection of basic data, but also the identification of background information

that is standardized and applicable at the Regional level. The need to recollect this standardized information from the countries requires that the regional and subregional levels establish a codified system for the database, which will be shared by the countries. This would also require an effort on behalf of the countries with regards to the quality of this information, the systematization in the production of data, the strengths of the HRH policy units, and their relationship with the institutions generating national information.

Under the idea of continuous improvement, the regional level should define a second level of information, above that of basic data, which gradually leads to directing the action of the countries towards the desired goals. This second generation information should also be officially approved by the countries and may admit an intermediate reliability expressed by the governments (as long as their publication is of interest in a progressive development logic), or may be fully validated by the authority. This will depend on the degree of development in the countries.

Furthermore, within this approved information by the countries, there should be data regards the monitoring of the 20 regional goals, which should be flexibly worked with in the countries, considering that some of these data are more qualitative than quantitative.

The different stages of information mean that the countries advance in the following manner:

1. Obtain, complete and validate the basic data through the work in the HRH Units, with the support of other country institutions.
2. Input the information into the Observatory Platform, provided by PAHO.
3. Advance in obtaining the second level information, gradually adding it to the platform and categorizing it according to their level of validity and reliability. This categorization is the responsibility of the countries.
4. At the same time, maintain the information that allows the monitoring of the 20 regional goals.

Furthermore, this proposal option allows:

1. Visualizing in a comprehensive manner the system of information and linking it with the challenges in HRH planning.
2. Guiding and directing the work in the countries.
3. Implementing scaled and flexible strategies so the countries may advance towards a HRH strategic information system.
4. Present intermediate achievements to encourage the countries to push the process of obtaining and systematizing the information.

At the same time, the system of information at the regional level, should consider the prior research completed, differentiating it from the official reports, which will count with the approval of the corresponding health authority and the editorial committees at the national Observatories.

Official information (Approved by the countries)	Basic information (Core Data)
	Second level information • Intermediate reliability (in process) • Validated
	Regional goals
Non-official information (Research institutions and professional organizations)	Specific data provided by each institution or organization
Official research and articles	Conducted by public or governmental organizations, approved by the health authority
Independent research and articles	Conducted by institutions and private actors, approved by the editorial committee at the National Observatory

The data model for the HRH Observatory should recollect the main problems in the country, especially, those that set the regional trends. Monitoring trends will allow establishing priorities for action and feeding the decision making in this area. The Content management system therefore acquires great relevance due to its inter-operable character, allowing the websites of the national and subregional Observatories to incorporate their production, making it accessible for the actors in the network, constituting a resource and reference for the HRH managers in the region, and the rest of the world.

The Observatory, as a space for exchange and production of information, is a fundamental component for the generation of public policies and strategic plans on human resources in health, process that is also supported by different institutional actors which are linked, for example, from the areas of coordination and intersectorial negotiation.

3. Technological Model

The technological model of the HRH Observatory Network, responds to its strategic model and the fulfillment of its mission to contribute to the generation and analysis of information and knowledge through collaborative work in networks and strengthening the response capacity of the steering entity.

Based on the general Observatory principles, this technological model has the following specific principles:

- The infrastructure and applications should respond to the Observatory needs
- The surroundings and information management should be sensitive to the user needs and implemented in an opportune fashion
- The technological diversity is controlled to minimize the non-trivial costs of maintenance and connectivity between different processing environments
- Software and hardware should be based on standards that allow the interoperability of data, applications and technologies.

The connectivity and functioning between the countries, the institutions and people, will be ensured through the operationalization of the interoperability and self-management strategy, which is why there will be dynamic and open platforms that can work in networks.

The technological pillar of this project is based on the exploitation of advanced technologies which have recently been implemented, for the interaction and collaborative work, with international standards.

Each node in the network that composes the Observatory should have the following **minimum** resources:

- A Web Portal supported on a Content Management System (CMS) for information, news and events that allows the inclusion of RSS channels. The Portal will have a common, basic design for all of the subregional, national and institutional nodes in the Observatory network.

- Institutional coordinators of the project for the management of different services and resources in the Portal. Special priority will be given to the system of basic HRH information.

- Technical, specialized personnel to implement and ensure the functioning of the technological package in the project that covers the functions of design, web server and content administrator.

The regional node of the Observatory, due to its integrating function, as well as having the prior minimum resources, will have:

- A system for the management of basic HRH information which includes all of the nodes of the Observatory Network
- Integrating collaboration tools for communication between the Network nodes, such as the Elluminate video-conference application

- Capacity for hosting the sections of the technological package that an integrating institution may not have; given justified reasons
- Conditions for monitoring, supporting and training of the participating nodes

The component of information and communication of the HRH Observatory is developed through portal networks, integrated by each of the WebPages, the resources and the functionalities of the nodes at the subregional, country or participating institution level, continuously interoperating them with the aggregate portal of the regional node. This node is the responsibility of PAHO, where all of the information resources are permanently and dynamically shared. These include learning tools and research that are uploaded by each of the actors to be shared among others.

Given the convergence of the strategic Observatory models and the Virtual Campus for Public Health, the technological platforms and the main information and communication services of both projects are integrated in a function of strengthening the community of practice among both networks, which supports the development of Human Resources in Health and Public Health in general.