

## Highlights from the fourth AAAH Conference in Vietnam

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The people's health is the foundation for socio-economic development of each nation. Human resource for health is the most precious resources in the health care system in providing health care services for the population.

We are all aware of the crisis in global human resources for health. Many countries are facing the shortage of human resource for health, especially qualified staffs, mal-distribution, inappropriate skill-mix, and support system. Problems regarding human resources for health are hindering the technical and professional performance of the healthcare system and the roadmap in achieving the MDGs.

Globally, about 50% of population living in the rural and underserved areas are served by only 38% nurses and 24% of doctors. Therefore, it's required to get committed health workers to the underserved and rural areas in order to provide equitable access and quality health care services for populations.

The AAAH/WHO Joint Conference with the theme "Getting committed health workers in underserved areas: a challenge for the health systems" was held in Hanoi, Vietnam from 23-26 November 2009. This was the fourth AAAH annual meeting and the third meeting of the WHO Expert Group. The Con-

ference was organized by the Ministry of Health Vietnam, Asia-Pacific Action Alliance on Human Resources for Health (AAAH), and the World Health Organization, with support from the Global Health Workforce Alliance, the Rockefeller Foundation, the China Medical Board, and the World Bank. There were more than 150 delegates from 15 AAAH member countries, Africa, WHO experts and resource persons

The objectives of the joint conference are:

- To gain an in-depth understanding of the current situation and strategies to tackle the problems of inequitable distribution of health workforces, especially those in the underserved areas.
- To discuss and refine a set of draft recommendations initiated by WHO, to support countries in formulating and implementing appropriate, comprehensive and feasible interventions to get committed health workers to underserved areas.
- To learn experiences from different countries/continents concerning the distribution and retention of health workers in underserved areas, and
- To foster networking and capacity building of institutions, researchers and policy makers in the area of human resources for health among partners.

During the Conference, the delegates have followed presentations made by WHO representative on the status of human resource for health in the world and in the region. Delegates from different countries have made 16 presentations and shared practical experience on issues relating to utilization and retention of health workforce working in the rural and underserved areas. Reports and discussions have pinpointed influencing factors and impacts on retaining human resources for health working in rural and underserved areas. Regarding to the retaining of health human resources to work in underserved areas, recommendations have been focused on training, policies, financing, and improvement of working environment and incentives for health workers. Also during the Conference, delegates joined the field trips to Vietnamese private and public health facilities.

After 3 days of working the joint AAAH/WHO Conference with the theme "Getting committed health workers to the underserved areas: a challenge for the health systems" has successfully completed.