



Editorial

Nursing, midwifery, and the sustainable development goals: An editorial series leading up to the World Health Organization's “Year of the Nurse & Midwife”



In 2015, as part of the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 193 nations agreed to 17 Sustainable Development Goals ('SDGs'). A collection of 17 global goals (Fig. 1), the Sustainable Development Goals are the first time the countries of the world have come together to agree on key areas for promoting a better quality of life for all people. Health is crucial to many aspects of sustainable development and nurses and midwives have a key role in achieving these goals.

It is worth restating the goals here:

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

It is easy to focus simply on the direct contribution of nurse and midwives to health. Publishing research that demonstrates and supports such a contribution is a core aspect of what we do as a journal and in early 2018 we published a special issue on the impact of nursing (Griffiths and Norman, 2018). While the Sustainable Development Goals are not just relevant to the least developed or other developing countries, such countries do face many of the biggest challenges and experience the consequences of a lack of sustainable development most keenly. We noted in our 2018 editorial that there was a relative lack of research about or for nursing and midwifery in developing countries, where health needs are often greatest and the potential contribution of nurses and midwives is huge (Crisp and Watkins, 2018). Building workforce capacity in the least developed countries, where need is greatest, is complex and remains a significant challenge (Ridge et al., 2018). Nursing and midwifery as professions also have significant potential to support gender equality, as female dominated professions in most countries. With that in mind, it is somewhat disheartening that two papers we have recently published highlight the continued gender pay gap in nursing (Muench and Dietrich, 2019; Punshon et al., 2019), with men seeming to be advantaged over women, while the profession has also been subject to criticism for not fully embracing the challenge of gender diversity (Harrell and Sasser, 2018).

While it is important to recognise that nurses and midwives are not always able to deliver to their full potential for a variety of reasons (Crisp and Watkins, 2018), to achieve the sustainable development goals requires ambitious actions across the globe and nursing and midwifery can and, we trust will, make a major contribution. In support of that endeavour, we have assembled a collection of global voices of nurses, midwives, and their interdisciplinary partners for an editorial series highlighting nurses and midwives contribution to achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the run up to 2020, declared by



Fig. 1. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (used with permission).

the United Nations 'the year of the Nurse and Midwife'. We begin the series in this issue (Squires et al., 2019).

As we publish these editorials over the coming months, we hope that we will see more submissions that focus on nurses' and midwives' contributions to sustainable development, whether directly, through contributing to health and well-being, or indirectly because of the role of nurses in society or by addressing nurses' and midwives' contribution to wider societal challenges that affect health, such as inequality, discrimination, pollution and poverty.

References

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