

A Model for Advancing Professional Nursing Regulation: The African Health Profession Regulatory Collaborative

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The African Health Profession Regulatory Collaborative (ARC) was launched in 2011 to help countries develop or strengthen nursing regulations to ensure safe and sustainable nurse-initiated and nurse-managed HIV treatment. ARC supports teams of national nursing leaders from 17 countries to engage in rapid regulatory strengthening through regional meetings, regulation improvement grants, and in-country technical assistance. The ARC initiative has awarded 33 regulation improvement grants on topics such as continuing professional development, scopes of practice, nurse practice acts, and entry-to-practice examinations. Progress is measured by a novel tool that captures meaningful advancements in national regulations. The ARC initiative

ARC Initiative

The ARC initiative is supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the U.S. Centers for Disease

Regulatory Improvements

Since ARC began, the initiative has awarded 33 regulatory

TABLE 2

Lesotho's Progress Measured by the Regulatory Function Framework

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Criteria	CPD is voluntary. CPD framework for nursing and midwifery may be in planning stages.	National CPD framework for nursing and midwifery is developed. CPD is not yet mandatory for relicensure. Implementation of CPD requirement is in pilot or early stages.	CPD program for nurses and midwives is finalized and nationally disseminated. CPD is officially required for relicensure. Compliance monitoring strategy is under development.	Electronic system is in place to monitor CPD compliance. Penalties for non-compliance with CPD exist. Available CPD includes content on national HIV service delivery guidelines for nurses and midwives.	Multiple types of CPD are available, including Web-based and mobile-based models. CPD content aligns with regional standards or global guidelines. Regular evaluations of CPD program are conducted.
Lesotho's progress	Baseline (2011)	End of ARC Year 1 (2012)	End of ARC Year 3 (2014)	End of ARC Year 4 (2015, expected)	
<i>Note.</i> CPD = continuing professional development; ARC = African Health Profession Regulatory Collaborative.					

Discussion

ARC has supported the idea that rapid and sustainable improvements in regulations, such as CPD, scopes of practice, and entry-to-practice, are achievable. The initiative was conceived and implemented with nurses and midwives from ECSA countries; however, the ARC model could be successfully applied in other countries and regions with any health care cadre wanting to advance their professional regulations.

ARC has seen an increase in collaboration among the key nursing leadership institutions at the country level. When the ministry of health, regulatory council, professional body, and academic institutions aligned in their pursuit of new regulatory improvements, change happened quickly. They relied on each other to address challenges, gain stakeholder support, and roll out new reforms. The ARC regional meetings provided a platform for professional exchange and networking among national nursing leadership teams and their colleagues in similar positions in the region.

The ARC grants afforded local nursing and midwifery institutions the opportunity to serve as the lead partner on an international, donor-funded project. For many countries, the ARC grant was their first direct funding, having previously received technical assistance through nongovernmental organizations. The successful management of grant funds and the achievement of project deliverables demonstrated the institutions' capability to handle development resources. Several countries, including Malawi, Seychelles, South Africa, and Swaziland, leveraged the successful implementation of their ARC grants to garner additional funds to support continued regulatory reforms, an added benefit of receiving ARC funding (Agricole, Hoarau, Suzette, & Sinon, 2014; Chilomo, Mondywa, & Wasili, 2014).

The RFF served as an effective tool to measure regulatory improvements, objectively documenting countries' advancements in core regulatory functions. The RFF could be utilized and adapted by other regulatory bodies seeking to measure progress in specific regulatory functions. The RFF, or an adapted framework, enables regulators to measure regulatory improvement in targeted areas of intervention.

The ARC initiative demonstrates the feasibility of advancing national regulatory frameworks by supporting collaborative work on identified priorities, using a quality-improvement, peer-to-peer approach. The cooperation of national leaders on the reform agenda promoted timely progress, fostered novel partnerships, and removed barriers to change. The peer-to-peer approach allowed countries to learn from one another, share insights and resources, and eliminate redundancies. Utilization of the ARC model could assist leaders looking to promote rapid regulatory advancements that require engagement and harmonization across multiple institutions.

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