A checklist for implementing rural pathways to train and support health workers in low and middle-income countries

Background
There is a strong interest in investing in rural pathways to develop and support the rural health workforce and improve rural health outcomes, worldwide. However, there has been limited consolidation of evidence to inform effective action.

Objective
This WHO-sponsored project involved the development of a Rural Pathways Checklist: a complete guide to implementation of rural pathways in a range of contexts, particularly low and middle-income countries (LMIC).

Method
The Checklist was based on:
- Concept mapping via two focus groups with LMIC stakeholders
- A scoping review of evidence including 127 articles spanning effective pathway strategies in LMIC
- A policy analysis and review of LMIC rural health context
- 3 stages of virtual consultation, involving feedback from rural pathways implementers
- Regular meetings of a Steering Committee

Checklist actions
- Community needs, rural policies and partners
- Existing workers and their scope
- Selection of health workers
- Education and training
- Accreditation and recognition
- Professional support and up-skilling
- Monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholder map

Exemplars from WHO regions

Conclusion
The Rural Pathways Checklist signals a way forward for conceptualising, developing and benchmarking rural pathways to train and support health workers, for the benefit of rural communities around the world.