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# Identifying Needs for Strengthening Health Professionals' Regulation in Ethiopia

by: Samuel Mengistu, Manuel Sibhatu, Tegbar Yigzaw, Damtew Woldemariam, Daniel Dejene, Firew Ayalew, and Sharon Kibwana  
affiliate: Jhpiego, Ethiopia

## Main Messages

- Laws governing the enforcement of health professional relicensure are loose.
- It is common for health professionals to practice beyond their scope.
- A significant proportion of health professionals (40.8%) are not undertaking continuing professional development (CPD).

## Background

- Health professionals' regulation is the key to ensuring fitness to practice and protecting public safety.
- Identifying need and gaps in health professionals' regulation helps to inform capacity-building interventions
- The HRH project undertook a situational analysis study of key regulatory instruments—registration, licensure, scope of practice, and CPD systems—in the Ethiopian public health system.

## Methods

- A national, cross-sectional study was conducted in March 2015.
- 554 health professionals, 23 professional associations (PAs), and 35 universities and hospitals were selected to be in-service training (IST) centers. Health leaders were also included in the study.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of health professionals**

Variables	No. (%)
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	291 (52.5%)
Female	263 (47.5%)
<b>Age</b>	
20–29	383 (69.1%)
30–39	120 (21.7%)
40 and above	51 (9.2%)
<b>Facility level</b>	
Hospital	154 (27.8%)
Health center	400 (72.2%)
<b>Work experience (in years)</b>	
<2	108 (19.5%)
2 to less than 4	125 (22.6%)
4 to less than 7	160 (28.9%)
7 and above	161 (29.1%)

## Results

### CPD

- 59.2% participated in CPD activities.
- Most (93%) PAs and IST centers reported conducting CPD/IST.
- Partners/nongovernmental organizations took the lead in financing CPD (Figure 1).

### Potential CPD Providers

- PAs
- Government (federal and regional)
- Nongovernmental organizations
- IST centers
- Private training institutions
- Universities and teaching institutions

### Need-Based CPD

- A significant number of respondents (96%) participated in arranged CPD.
- A small fraction (2%) of health professionals participated in self-identified CPD.
- About 97% of the respondents said that their CPD courses aligned with their individual learning needs.

### Practicing Beyond Scope

- About 22% of respondents said they had practiced beyond their scope.
- 44% of respondents reported that they encountered other professionals practicing beyond their scope of practice.
- Reported reasons for practice beyond perceived scope of practice included limited awareness, unavailability of scope-of-practice directive, and lack of clearly demarcated job descriptions that inform scope of practice.

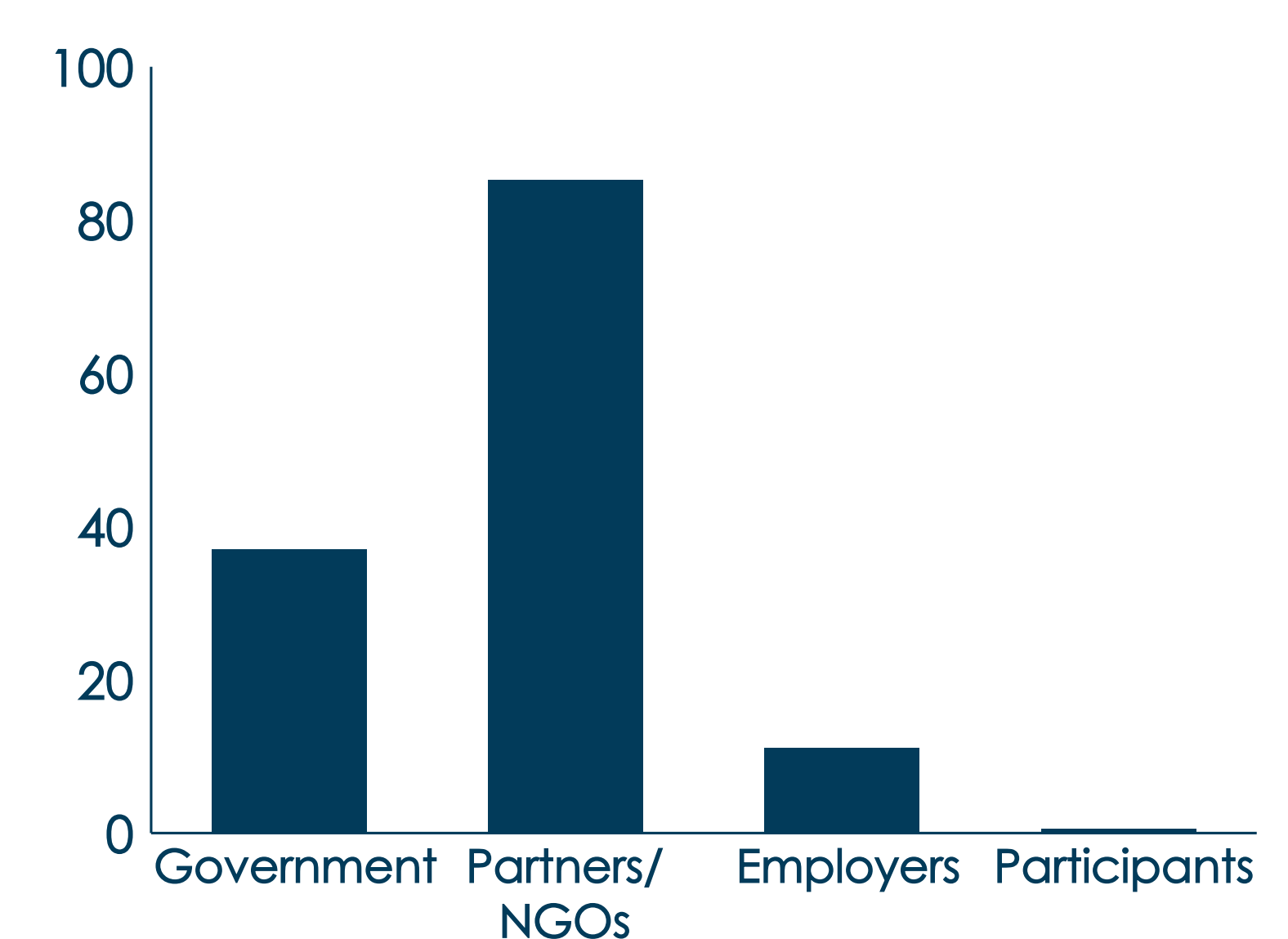
### Relicensure

- Close to 68% of respondents reported that they were registered by a regulatory body.
- 73% did not currently have a renewed professional license.
- Challenges related with registration and licensure as described by key informants representing regulatory bodies included fraudulent academic credentials, lack of an automated database for registration and licensure, and unavailability of adequate and skilled human resources.

## Regulatory Policies

- 48% of health professionals are aware of scope of practice directive.
- 88% of those who were aware of the directive read the draft document.
- Half the respondents (54.9%) said they have read the ethical code of conduct.

**Figure 1. How continuing professional development is financed**



## Current Interventions

- Development of CPD directive
- Identification of CPD providers
- Drafting of scope-of-practice directive
- Strengthening/establishment of federal and regional ethics and competence review committee
- Completing institutional regulation audit
- Establishment of database servers for registration and licensure
- Advocating for CPD at different forums
- Strengthening PAs and IST centers as CPD providers

## Conclusion

- Policy frameworks on health professionals' regulation are not strengthened.
- Regulatory bodies need to emphasize the importance of health professionals' regulation and ensure its implementation.
- Health professionals are required to fulfill registration requirements, be aware of their scope, and participate in need-based CPD.