



12 May 2022 – Every year on 12 May, the world marks International Nurses Day in recognition of the tireless and invaluable contribution of nurses to health care and global health security. Nurses and midwives make up more than half of the health workforce in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region. However, the Region accounts for 17% of the global shortage of 5.9 million nurses according to the report “State of the world’s nursing 2020: investing in education, jobs and leadership”. The Region has the second lowest density of nurses among WHO regions, at 15.6 nurses per 10 000 population, ranging from less than 1 to 81 per 10 000 population.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of ensuring a sufficient number of the health workforce in building resilient health systems. We must address the shortage in the health workforce, especially in nurses and midwives in our Region to raise up to the challenges.

“As we progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) and other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets, including those related to education, gender, and economic growth, within the rapidly changing global health context, it is timely and imperative to invest in the nursing workforce,” reiterated Dr Ahmed Al-Mandahri, WHO’s Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, adding that “We must respect nurses’ rights and well-being to secure global health”.

WHO estimated that an additional 9 million nurses and midwives are needed if the world is to achieve UHC by 2030. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, despite high-level political commitment and continued efforts to strengthen nursing, progress has been slow. In 2019, the Regional Committee adopted a call for action to accelerate the action to strengthen nursing and midwifery. Ever since, some progress has been made; however, countries still need more qualified and competent nurses to effectively address increasing health challenges.

Countries must prioritize investing in nurses based on measurable, transparent and realistic actions to build a highly qualified and resilient nursing workforce that can respond to the changing contexts and needs of the population and ensure health for all by all.

“Our nurses face many challenges, including working under extremely difficult conditions with security concerns, as many countries in our Region are experiencing protracted crises. We must think innovatively and propose concrete actions to address these challenges,” Dr Al-Mandhari stated.

On International Nurses Day, while acknowledging the work of nurses in our Region and beyond, WHO and partners call on all world leaders to invest in nurses in advancing UHC and health security. Nurses deserve our solidarity, support, and recognition.

Source

[The State of the World's Nursing 2020 Report](#)

[The State of the World's Midwifery 2021 Report](#)

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