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## 2020: Year of the Nurse and the Midwife



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This New Year is significant for World Health as the World Health Organization (WHO) designated the year 2020 as the 'Year of the Nurse and the Midwife' in honour of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale.

World Health Organization (WHO) is the collaborating partner in the three-year ['Nursing Now!' Campaign](#) (2018–2020). This campaign aims to improve health globally by raising the status and profile of nursing, demonstrating what more can be achieved by a strengthened nursing profession, and enabling nurses to maximise their contribution to achieving [Universal Health Coverage](#).

WHO is leading the development of the first-ever [State of the World's Nursing report](#), which will be launched in 2020. This report will describe the nursing workforce in WHO Member States providing an assessment of 'fitness for purpose.' Also, it is expected to support country-level dissemination and policy dialogue around the State of the World's Nursing report. Strengthening nursing will have the additional benefits of promoting gender equality (Sustainable Development Goal 5 ([SDG5](#)), contributing to economic development ([SDG8](#)) and supporting [other SDGs](#).

Key findings of WHO identified a major threat related to global health workforce: the estimated shortage of health workers, particularly nurses and midwives, exceeds 50%, with largest needs coming from South East Asia and Africa. With all Member States aiming to reach SDGs on health and wellbeing, additional 9 million nurses and midwives will be needed by the year 2030.

Nurses and midwives play a vital role in providing health services and are key contributors to the achievement of Universal Health Coverage. They devote their lives to caring and often stand as the first and only point of care in their communities. Nurses play a critical role in health promotion, disease prevention, emergency care and primary and community care delivery. Midwives are unique professionals who provide specialist nursing care and stand at the forefront of providing primary care for women and their babies. They play an important role to a pregnant woman and the baby during antenatal, intranatal and postnatal periods. Their various roles as caregivers, coordinators, leader communicators, managers, family planners, educators, counsellors, record keepers and supervisors are appreciable.

It is very essential to acknowledge, appreciate and address their contribution in challenging global health and nursing care. WHO have designated 43 academic centres as [Collaborating Centres for Nursing and Midwifery](#). These academic centres are affiliated to the Global Network of WHO and set out four broad themes to guide the contributions of the nursing and midwifery workforce to improve global health. These themes are:

- Ensuring an educated, competent and motivated workforce within effective and responsive health systems at all levels and in different settings
- Optimising policy development, effective leadership, management and governance
- Maximising the capacities and potential of nurses and midwives through professional collaborative partnerships, education and continuing professional development; and
- Mobilising political will to invest in building effective evidence-based nursing and midwifery workforce development.

According to International Council of Nurses, it is unique time for the nursing profession. The global spotlight currently shining on the nursing profession offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address some of the key issues threatening its future. The 20 million nurses around the world will be thrilled to see their profession recognised in this way. Designation of 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife will provide us with a new, 2020 vision of what nursing is in the modern era, and how nurses can light the way to Universal Health Coverage and healthcare for all.

Investing in nurses and midwives is good value for money. [UN report says](#) that investments in education and job creation in the health and social sectors result in a triple return of improved health outcomes, global health security and inclusive economic growth.

Year of 2020 is all set for Nursing and Midwifery, and will raise the profile of nursing, investing in recruitment and retention, removing the barriers to the development of advanced nursing roles that are proving highly effective at expanding global healthcare coverage.

Let us join WHO and partners, including the International Confederation of Midwives ( [ICM](#)), International Council of Nurses ( [ICN](#)), Nursing Now! and the United Nations Population Fund ( [UNFPA](#)) in a year-long effort to celebrate the work of nurses and midwives, highlight the challenging conditions they often face, and advocate for increased investments in the nursing and midwifery workforce.

***“Patients’ smiles make nurses the happiest people in the world.”***

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