



INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY 2024

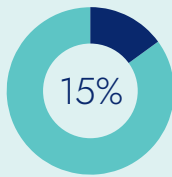
The economic
power of care



**OUR NURSES.
OUR FUTURE.**

International Council of Nurses

KEY INSIGHTS



Poor health costs the global economy 15% of GDP

which is two to five times greater than the expected loss from COVID-19 (Remes, et al., 2020). Estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that inadequate quality of care costs between USD 1.4 and 1.6 trillion each year in lost productivity in low- and middle-income (LMIC) countries alone (WHO, 2020a).



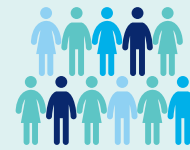
Realizing the potential of nurses working in primary health care (PHC)

to support the delivery of essential Universal Health Coverage (UHC) interventions could contribute to the saving of up to 60 million lives and increase global life expectancy by 3.7 years by 2030 (WHO, 2023a).



The economic return could be between USD 2 and USD 4 for each USD 1 invested in better health.

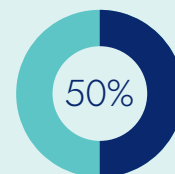
The costs of strengthening health systems can be offset by productivity gains (Remes, et al., 2020). Investment in nursing across the care continuum ensures that people receive the care they need at the right time to achieve their highest attainable standard of health and live productive lives. Delays to health care may lead to lost productivity, more costly care and greater negative impacts on health.



Creating decent jobs in nursing supports the alleviation of poverty and addresses gender equality in the global workforce.

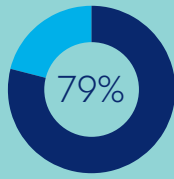
Improving pay, working conditions and career advancement opportunities in nursing can empower women, providing them with decent jobs and lifting them out of poverty. It contributes to closing the stubborn gender pay gap that is holding back global economies. According to the World Bank, in some countries, the potential earning gains for women with tertiary (degree-level) level education, as is required in nursing, is 323.4% (Wodon, et al., 2018).

WHO has called on countries to increase spending on primary health care by at least 1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) in order to close glaring coverage gaps and meet health targets agreed in 2015.



The realization of effective UHC, as indicated by a score of 80 out of 100 globally, is heavily reliant on investing in the nursing workforce.

Currently, there are 29 million nurses around the world, making up 50% of all health care professionals. There is evidence (Haakenstad, et al., 2022) that an additional 30.6 million nurses (70.6 nurses per 10,000 people) are required around the world to achieve effective UHC. To achieve a performance target of 90 out of 100 on the UHC effective coverage index requires 114.5 nurses per 10,000 people, or almost **60 million more nurses** (Haakenstad, et al., 2022).



Prioritizing investments to enable people to work to their full scope of practice, including Advanced Practice Nurses, improves health system efficiency and effectiveness.

Seventy-six percent of doctors and 79% of nurses reported being over-skilled for the roles they were performing in their day-to-day work. Given the cost and length of education programmes for doctors and nurses, this represents a huge waste in human capital (OECD, 2019a). Planning for the future, investing in nurses' work environments, having adequate nurse staffing and allowing nurses the autonomy to work to their full scope of practice will create the most effectively run health systems at the lowest cost, while still delivering the highest quality of care.



Ensuring the safety of nurses should be considered an imperative for sustainable and resilient health systems.

The COVID-19 infection rate among health care workers was up to nine times higher than the general population, costing health systems millions of dollars – up to USD 30,000 per nurse infection (see Chapter 7). Nurses are not expendable: rather they should be seen as the lynchpin of global health systems. Stemming the increase in violence against nurses and other health workers in all settings is also needed to protect this valuable resource and retain the workforce.



Investing in nursing engenders a cascade effect that culminates in the cultivation of healthier societies and economic and social prosperity.

Nursing serves as not only the backbone of health care systems, but also as the cornerstone that sustains the overall functioning of our societies. The Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that, on average, countries need to allocate additional funds equivalent to 1.4% of their GDP for health system improvements, compared to pre-pandemic levels. At least half of this investment should focus on the education, recruitment and enhancement of workforce conditions to address global health challenges (OECD, 2023b). A study by McKinsey (Remes, et al., 2020) (see Chapter 4) found that “better health could add USD 12 trillion to global GDP in 2040, an 8 percent boost that translates into 0.4 percent faster growth every year.” The majority of these gains in economic benefits come from having a larger and healthier workforce.



Investing in safe care saves money.

On average, 1 in 10 hospital stays in high-income countries leads to a safety issue or adverse event. In these countries, the cost of treating harm caused during care is around 13% of total health spending, equating to USD 606 billion annually, or just over 1% of the combined GDP of OECD countries. Strong return on investment strategies in health care focus on preventing infections, blood clots (venous thromboembolism), pressure sores and falls. Improving these issues through safe staffing and the right skill mix of nurses is key. Focusing on these harms offers large financial savings.

For instance, for every USD 1 spent on preventing health care-related infections there can be a return on investment of USD 7 (Slawomirski & Kazinga, 2022).



Nurses contribute to peace.

The precursors to tensions and conflict diminish when people are healthy and well, able to work, and feel that they are living fulfilled lives, engaged in their societies, valued and respected. Nursing contributes to peace by reducing inequalities and promoting human rights and the delivery of social justice (see Chapter 6).

The path to achieving quality UHC and realizing the economic and social benefits that entails, are intricately linked to the empowerment and expansion of the nursing workforce. By prioritizing investments in nursing, societies can make significant strides towards a healthier, more prosperous global community. This IND report provides numerous economic arguments by leading experts that can be summed up in the following four key themes that continue to build on each other:

1. Creating decent jobs to contribute to societal good.
2. Building the workforce to achieve UHC.
3. Optimizing the use of resources to improve health system effectiveness and efficiency.
4. Investing in health for economic and social prosperity.

Approaches to achieve economic and social prosperity

1. JOB CREATION

Stimulate investments in creating decent nursing jobs.



Take urgent action to stimulate growth in the nursing workforce and address the systemic issues that result in significant health labour market failures. This includes the allocation of resources and funding for the development of quality nursing positions. Such action emphasizes the importance of creating nursing roles that offer fair wages, safe working conditions, opportunities for professional growth, and respect within the health care sector. The goal is to attract and retain skilled nurses by ensuring that their jobs are both rewarding and sustainable, ultimately improving health care outcomes and enhancing the overall health care system.

2. OPTIMIZE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Invest in the right number of nurses, with the right skills, in the right places.



Ensure adequate staffing levels to meet health care demands, equip nurses with the necessary skills and competencies for high-quality care, and deploy nurses effectively across various health care settings to maximize their impact on patient care and health systems. This approach aims to enhance the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of health care services.

3. HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY AND ORGANIZATION

Empower the provision of high-quality, affordable, integrated, people-centred care across the care continuum, paying special attention to underserved areas.



Transform current health care systems with a focus across the entire continuum of care, rather than just hospitals, with a focus on boosting primary health care to achieve UHC. This includes harnessing the role of nurses in health promotion and preventive measures and the delivery of comprehensive, high-quality care that is affordable and accessible outside of hospital settings, particularly in primary and ambulatory care. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that care is integrated and patient-focused, with special consideration for reaching underserved communities. The goal is to create a more efficient, equitable health care system that better meets the needs of the population while reducing reliance on hospital care.

4. EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT



Expand and enhance high-quality education and continuous professional development opportunities to ensure that nurses possess the competencies required to meet the evolving health needs of communities, enabling them to work to their full potential.

Invest in nursing education to improve and increase access to quality education and ongoing learning for nurses. The goal is to equip nurses with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes to effectively address the current and future health challenges faced by populations, ensuring they can utilize their full scope of practice and education.

5. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Implement strategies dedicated to ensuring and enhancing the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of nurses.

Ensure the health and well-being of nurses by actively developing and enforcing policies, practices, and a supportive work environment that promotes their overall health. This includes mental health support, stress management, physical safety and emotional wellness programmes. The aim is to create a health care environment where nurses can thrive professionally and personally, thereby optimizing patient care and enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of health services.

6. RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT



Equipping nurses with the right resources necessary to meet the demands of their roles.

Support nurses with the right resources and equipment by allocating the necessary physical and technological assets that enable nurses to deliver optimal health care services. This includes everything from protective clothing and medical devices to efficient patient record management systems. The goal is to empower nurses to work more effectively and reduce the risk of errors and occupational hazards to provide better care to patients. This approach benefits patient health and contributes to the job satisfaction and professional development of nurses.

7. CRISES AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS




Ensuring the safety and security of nurses in all settings including those operating in crisis and humanitarian aid settings.


Implement robust measures to protect nurses from physical harm, psychological stress, and occupational hazards prevalent in high-pressure working environments, including those affected by conflicts, natural disasters or pandemics. By prioritizing the protection of nurses in such challenging conditions, health care systems can maintain the continuity of care and support, and the resilience and well-being of these essential health care providers.

Poor health and inadequate health systems are extremely costly:


THE ENORMOUS COST




4.5 billion people
do not have access to essential health services



60 million lives
are lost because of poor health and lack of access to high quality health care



15% reduction of GDP
i.e. between 2 and 5 times the cost of the COVID-19 pandemic




Lost productivity of \$1.4 and \$1.6 trillion
each year in low- and middle-income countries

Investing in nursing is an important strategy to support:


INVEST TO SAVE

Realization of effective UHC
Access to safe, affordable, quality health care



Nurses make up nearly 50% of the health care workforce. Every \$1 invested in better health brings a return of between \$2 and \$4.
Stronger health systems equal better health, and healthier populations bring significant returns on investment.


Increased global life expectancy
by 3.7 years




Investment in the health workforce in low- and middle-income countries guarantees a massive **return on investment at a ratio of 1:10.**

The benefits of investing in nursing and nurses:


HIGH RETURNS




Improves health and quality of life




Boosts economic growth by enhancing workforce productivity



Strengthens health care systems which is critical for ensuring preparedness and effective response during public health emergencies



Helps alleviate poverty and improve gender equality



Contributes to social cohesion, peace and prosperity

This report sets forth actionable recommendations that will recalibrate the mindset on the value of nursing, strengthen health systems, and ultimately result in greater economic and social prosperity. It builds on ICN's Charter for Change that advocates for the implementation of 10 policy actions that governments and employers must take to create and sustain health care systems that are safe, affordable, accessible, responsive and resilient, and that shift the focus from nurses being invisible to invaluable.



ICN's call to action for global health leaders and policymakers

- **Empower nurses:** Support comprehensive policies that allow nurses to practice to the full extent of their education and training. Encourage further development of leadership roles and participation in policy development.
- **Invest in education and workforce development:** Increase funding for nursing education and create more opportunities for career advancement within the nursing profession.
- **Enhance working conditions:** Implement measures to improve the work environment for nurses, including adequate staffing levels, access to resources, safe work environments and support for mental health and well-being.
- **Acknowledge and compensate fairly:** Ensure that nurses receive competitive wages that reflect their skills, responsibilities and the critical nature of their work.
- **Promote nursing's role in society:** Highlight the contributions of nurses to health and well-being through public awareness campaigns and inclusion in decision-making processes.