



**Frontline Health Workers Coalition Statement for World Health Assembly
Special Session on COVID-19
May 2020**

The Frontline Health Workers Coalition commends the WHO's efforts to coordinate an equitable global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for all member states to place the safety, support, and wellbeing of frontline health workers at the center of COVID-19 response efforts.

Tragically, [tens of thousands of frontline health workers have become infected with COVID-19 and hundreds have died](#) while responding to this pandemic. There have also been [many troubling reports](#) of harassment and violent attacks on frontline health workers responding to COVID-19 in several countries.

The tireless and heroic efforts of these health workers must be met with immediate emergency funding and long-term, gender-transformative investments through the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and other cooperative mechanisms. This investment will support sustainable frontline health workforce teams who are educated, recruited, trained, paid, equipped, and protected—allowing them to prevent, detect, and respond to COVID-19 and other global health threats. Urgent priority must be placed on supporting low- and middle-income countries, many of which are in preliminary stages of the pandemic.

Simultaneously, the WHO and member states must invest through the Working for Health Multipartner Trust Fund and other cooperative mechanisms to ensure low- and middle-income countries can receive needed assistance in developing and consistently supporting the frontline health workforce teams and systems needed to ensure we never again have a public health crisis of this magnitude.

We urge the WHO to provide rapid and sustained technical assistance to national governments in scale-up and protection of the frontline health workforce in order to meet the demands of this pandemic while continuing to deliver essential health services. We note with concern that many low- and middle-income countries are facing an acute shortage of frontline health workers needed to fight the pandemic and maintain access to essential health services. This shortage is exacerbated by the dire need of quality personal protective equipment, testing, and other critical supplies for frontline health workers, including community health workers.

The Coalition urges the WHO and national governments to prioritize deployment of rapid diagnostic tests, prioritize frontline health workers in testing rollout, and routinely test health workers responding to COVID-19 at no personal cost.

We also urge member states and the WHO, as in the 2014-2015 Ebola crisis, to mandate, collect, and regularly report gender-disaggregated data on COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, deaths, and recoveries of health workers. Accurate data is imperative to uncovering the



mechanisms of infection and in developing strategies to manage the outbreak until a vaccine is developed and equitably distributed.

We urge the WHO to address structural issues affecting gender barriers in the health workforce, among whom 70% are women. We call for support for equitable pay and safe working conditions for frontline health and social service responders as well as protection mechanisms to manage increased harassment or violence against health and humanitarian providers.

Finally, we urge WHO member states, international institutions, and other donors to swiftly unlock new investments and enact policies needed for a comprehensive approach to supporting the frontline health workforce during the pandemic as outlined in the [Frontline Health Workers Coalition's April 2020 policy recommendations](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic cannot end without sustained support to a robust frontline health workforce backed by international cooperation and leadership by the WHO and member states. We urge member states to support WHO's efforts to provide technical assistance for the education, supplies, training, decent work standards, and support systems necessary for frontline health workforce teams to fight the pandemic and deliver essential health services to every community.