

# **World Health Worker Week April 8-12, 2013**

**An engagement toolkit**

They are **caretakers**.

They are **educators**.

They are your  
**neighbors,**  
**friends,** and **family**.

They are on the  
**front lines** every day.

This April, show the world  
just how much  
**health workers count.**







In Malawi, Health Worker Chisomo Boxer travels a total of 22.5 kilometers to reach the villages where he treats 2,216 people.

## On the front lines

Kampung Cirendeng, Indonesia



Midwife Ade Yunarsih starts her visits each day at 6 a.m., averaging 20 to 30 house calls each week and delivering about 10 babies each month.

Xachmochán Village, Guatemala



Felix Aguilar Ramirez starts his day at 8 a.m., and doesn't return home until 9 p.m. Some days there are more people who need help than Felix can attend to. "Here in the community there are a lot of people who value my work. That makes me feel good."

Satiguila Village, Mali



Salif Diarra treats 135 children for diarrhea, respiratory infections, malnutrition, and malaria. "If I had more resources, I would love to have a faster way to reach village enclaves a few kilometers away."

# World Health Worker Week

Despite advances in medicine, many people continue to suffer needlessly from preventable and easily treatable diseases. In many countries, access to health care is limited and people living in rural areas often have the hardest time accessing the most basic health services.

This is where the health workers on the front lines make a difference. According to the Front-line Health Workers Coalition, these health workers — midwives, community health workers, health extension workers, physicians' assistants, peer counselors, clinical officers, nurses, and doctors — are providing health care in many of the hardest to reach areas, often traveling on foot with just a backpack of supplies, providing needed prevention, treatment, and health education to communities.

In April, we're asking you to join the worldwide effort to support, appreciate, and raise aware-

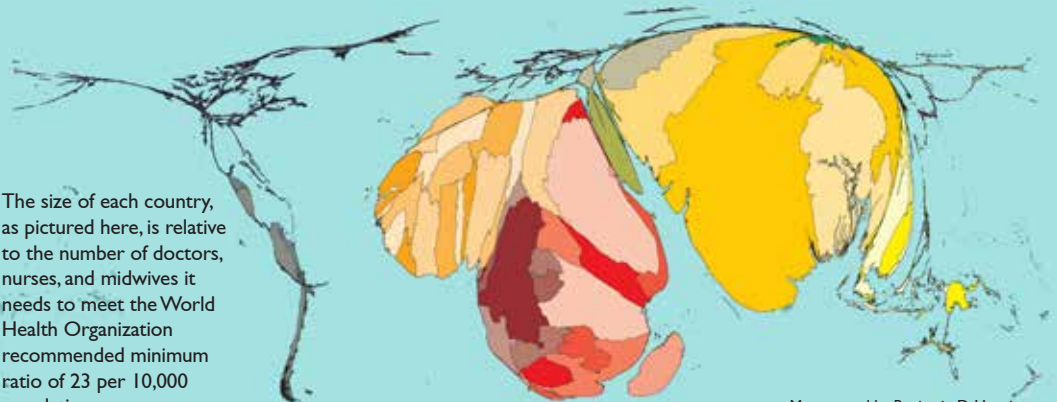
ness of the important role of health workers everywhere.

World Health Worker Week is an opportunity to mobilize communities, partners, and policy makers in support of your community's health workers. It is a time to celebrate the amazing work that they do and it is a time to raise awareness of the challenges that they face every day. Perhaps most importantly, it is an opportunity to fill in the gaps in the health workforce by calling on those in power to ensure that health workers have the training, supplies, and support they need to do their jobs effectively.

This toolkit will provide some ideas that can help your organization and your partners encourage greater appreciation and support of health workers and show your community that **health workers count.**

## GLOBAL INEQUALITIES: HEALTH WORKER SHORTAGE

The size of each country, as pictured here, is relative to the number of doctors, nurses, and midwives it needs to meet the World Health Organization recommended minimum ratio of 23 per 10,000 population.



Map created by Benjamin D. Henning  
www.viewsoftheworld.net

# 57 countries

have severe health worker shortages, according to the World Health Organization. It estimates that more than 4 million more health workers are needed worldwide.

# W H W W

**“Every day people can come to my house for care or I will go to their homes if they prefer. My door is open 24 hours a day for the people in this village.”**

— Desita, Midwife in Aceh Province, Indonesia

## Get the conversation started

### Who are your Frontline health workers?

Frontline health workers can be midwives, community health workers, health extension workers, physicians’ assistants, pharmacists, peer counselors, clinical officers, nurses, and doctors who work at the community level. They are usually the first point of care for the members of their community. Often these health workers come from the very communities that they serve.

Health workers both treat and educate their communities. They provide immunizations and treat common infections. They also teach their communities simple ways to prevent the biggest threats to their community’s health: diarrhea, pneumonia, malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis. As the first point of contact, health workers are also able to recognize conditions that require higher levels of care, and can refer their patients to another medical professional.

### How they make a difference.

Health workers don’t have to be highly educated to have a major impact on the health of the community. With the proper training and supervision, they can learn basic skills that save hundreds of lives. According to the Frontline Health Workers Coalition, millions of people in impoverished countries are alive today because a midwife was by their side at birth, or they were vaccinated as infants by a nurse, or because their families learned from a community health worker to adopt healthy behaviors like breastfeeding, hand-washing, birth spacing, and sleeping under a mosquito net.

With no one to provide this basic life-saving care, millions of adults would lose their lives due to childbirth complications, AIDS, and tuberculosis. Children would continue to die of preventable and treatable causes like pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhea. That is why every individual needs to live within reach of a skilled, equipped, and supported health worker.

### What issues do health workers around the world face?

Many of the interventions that have proven most effective in saving lives require health workers to deliver them, but there just aren’t enough health workers to get the job done. Not only is there a global shortage of health workers, but existing health workers often lack support and supervision, or may not have the right training and equipment to provide simple and appropriate lifesaving care.

Many health workers need to travel to a number of villages or communities to care for the local population, sometimes more than 15 kilometers each day. Without suitable transportation, it is difficult for the health worker to reach the communities he or she serves. Some work in dangerous areas, and wages can be very low. As a result, many rural health workers migrate to urban areas where payment and support may be greater and transportation is more convenient. For all of these reasons, it is difficult to attract and retain the skilled health workers that are severely needed in rural communities. World Health Worker Week is an opportunity to highlight these challenges and call for them to be addressed.

### By supporting health workers, you can contribute to a healthier community.

Health is a two-way street. Health workers provide advice and needed care, but community members must act on the advice and follow recommended treatments. Health workers support better health and they deserve to be respected, paid, and supported to successfully carry out their responsibilities. This toolkit can help your organization find a way to celebrate the work of health workers and alert policy-makers and community members to any challenges they face in achieving results.

## REAL Awards

This April the Frontline Health Workers Coalition and Save the Children will present its first-ever REAL Awards, honoring health workers from around the world who go above and beyond the call of duty under extraordinary circumstances. These international health workers, often with limited training and support, are saving lives and building stronger, healthier communities every day. Here are a few honorees. Click on the pictures to read their amazing stories.

### Nursing team



This trio of nurses is known for their commitment, creativity, and local leadership that have inspired all people within their region of Ghana. They perform their jobs admirably in spite of the many challenges they encounter in the rural, poor, and sparsely populated parts of the Upper West Region of Ghana.

### Midwife



Gloria Llegunas (Philippines) works for her local government’s Municipal Health Office as a Rural Health Midwife. Her work often times takes her to far-flung communities where she examines women for cervical cancer. She is so dedicated to her work she almost never has any time off from her duties.

[www.TheRealAwards.com](http://www.TheRealAwards.com)

**The Frontline Health Workers Coalition** is a dynamic and influential coalition working together to urge greater and more strategic U.S. investment in Frontline health workers in the developing world as the most cost-effective way to save lives and foster a healthier, safer, and more prosperous world. The coalition’s vision is that everyone has access to basic preventative and curative health care by skilled, supported, and motivated Frontline health workers. For more information, visit [www.frontlinehealthworkers.org](http://www.frontlinehealthworkers.org).





# Five ways you can honor a health worker

## 1. Share inspiring stories of health workers in your area.

Let your community know just how valuable this person is. Pitch a story about one or more local health workers, or submit a letter to the editor to local media outlets. The media can help get health workers' stories out to a wide audience, including decision-makers and influencers, so that everyone knows about the important role of these community heroes. Also, you can write a letter to the Ministry of Health or other appropriate government agency to remind them of the crucial role health workers play in the lives of their community, and how important it is to provide training and support they need to continue to do their jobs. Sharing the specific story of how a health worker helped a local family can be quite moving and powerful.

## 2. Pick a day to encourage the giving of simple gifts.

Just imagine how powerful it would be if all the health workers in your area were thanked with a flower, card, home-made meal, or cup of coffee on a specific day. For that one day, it would truly feel the whole community was showing appre-

ciation for all of their hard work. Talk to partner organizations about identifying an appropriate gesture that would be meaningful to health workers in your community and get the word out. You may even want to ask local businesses if they would like to help support this one-day effort by offering discounts or prizes to health workers.

## 3. Present an award.

Work with partner organizations, supporters, friends, and family to honor a few truly inspiring health workers in your area with an award. Whether it's a simple certificate that they can hang in their home or office, or a more elaborate trophy, either one can be empowering. You can invite a notable person from the Ministry of Health, or other government official, to help in the presentation. This would also be something of interest to the media, so be sure to invite local journalists. Ask the health workers to invite their family and friends, too, so that everyone can join in the celebration.

## 4. Get the community involved.

From infants to elders, everyone de-

pends on the help of health workers. Establish a special day to honor your local health workers with performances and activities celebrating all that they do. You could engage local musical acts, carry out a community walk or race to honor how far health workers travel, create an art exhibit featuring the work of local children, or arrange a local celebrity appearance. You can also make T-shirts and hats to commemorate the day, or create a banner. Social media like [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) can be a great way to get the word. Also, reach out to your community organization or local businesses for help. You don't have to do this alone!

## 5. Educate your community.

One of the best ways to thank health workers is to encourage people to follow their medical advice, and find out how you can help them get the word out to the community. Keeping your community healthy is the perfect way to honor your health worker. Also, let your government officials know about the importance of community health workers. With government support, these health workers can get the provisions they need to address the challenges your community faces.





# Contacting the media

*One of the most effective ways of letting policymakers, influencers, and the community know the importance of health workers is to reach out to local newspapers and radio stations. You can pitch them a story idea or write a letter to the editor. Here are some tips to help you get started:*

## Pitching a feature story

### 1. Reach out to the right person

Contacting the appropriate person is often the key to getting your story idea published. You may want to find out whether your newspaper has a health section or the radio program has a health segment. The editor or producer of this section might be the most interested in running a story about health workers, or interviewing a health worker. If your newspaper or radio station has no health section, try pitching your story to any features editor or producer who focuses on local stories.

### 2. Means of communication

Email is often the easiest way to contact a media organization, and possibly the quickest way to get a response. If you don't get a response, it may be helpful to follow up with a phone call to make sure your inquiry was received.

### 3. What to say

Your pitch should be informative but concise. To make a strong case for your story, highlight any aspect that might be unique. If you are talking about a specific local health worker, what has he or she done that makes him or her extraordinary? Emphasize any information that you think others would enjoy reading about. Also, if you have read articles by the editor you are contacting, try to find patterns in his or her writing so that you can pitch your story in a way that is attractive to that editor. Make sure that you convey a clear call to action if there is anything that you would like the community to do as a result of hearing or reading the story. It could be visiting a website or participating in an event, but they won't know that unless you state it clearly in your article or interview.

### 4. Help them reach you

Whether you are emailing someone or leaving a message, make sure you include your contact information and provide them with a time that you will be available to talk. The editor will likely want to interview any health workers that you are talking about so make sure to contact in advance any people you intend to highlight to let them know that they may be asked for an interview. Once you have spoken to the editor or producer about your story, you will want to help set up any additional interviews that they are interested in.

### 5. Be patient and understanding

Often, stories that are not time-sensitive will be delayed until there is enough time or space to run the story. Be patient. If the editor or producer expressed interest in your story, he or she will get to it as soon as possible. Harassing them will not get your story published quicker. When possible, try to make the story topical and related to a timely event so that it makes it more appealing to the editor, in this case that would be World Health Worker Week in April, or the Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health. Also, editors can't publish every story that is pitched to them. If they are not interested in your story, be understanding. Instead, ask about other ways that you may get your information published, like writing a letter to the editor or buying advertising space.

### 6. Diversify

Just because one media outlet turned down your story idea doesn't mean that others won't love the idea. Reach out to other media outlets or revise your pitch based on what you learned from your previous efforts.

## Writing letters to the editor

### 1. Reach out to the right person

To ensure that your letter gets published, make sure you're sending it to the correct person. The letters section of the newspaper will provide the appropriate contact information. You can find this information in the newspaper itself, on its website, or by calling the office of the newspaper.

### 2. Ask others to write letters

A letter to the editor authored or signed by a notable person may increase your chances of placement. Letters by important or well-known people aren't just interesting, they help encourage readership. Also ask other members of your community to write letters of support and encouragement. The more letters that get published, the better!

### 3. Keep it short and simple

Editors rarely publish letters longer than 200 words. Longer letters will either be cut down — risking the removal of key elements in your letter without your consent — or won't get published at all.

### 4. Provide your contact information

Newspapers won't publish your personal contact information, but the editor may need to contact you for clarification or verification. Make sure you include both an email address and a phone number with your letter.

### 5. Be patient

Letters that aren't time-sensitive may be held until there is enough space in that section. Letters of thanks and praise for another person will usually get published so highlighting someone in the community who has gone above and beyond the call of duty, like a health worker, might be appealing to the editor. Be patient and keep an eye on the newspaper, as your letter could run at any time.



# Getting social

*Using social media is a great way to reach a larger audience. While Twitter and Facebook are the most commonly used social media, you may use something else, or you may have your own blog. Use social media to celebrate a local health worker or to emphasize the importance of health workers in general.*


## **Keep your accounts updated**


By keeping your Facebook and Twitter profiles active all year long, you will gain a loyal following, and attract new followers. This is also the best way to consistently remind the community about the importance of local health workers. Posting photos adds another level of interaction for your followers.


## **Create a Facebook event**


If you are hosting an event to honor one or more health workers, invite the community! Use your organization's Facebook page to create an event, and invite everyone who "likes" your page. Make the invitation public, and your followers can share the information with others.


## **Sample Tweets/Facebook posts:**


 On April 8 the world begins to celebrate World Health Worker Week. Don't forget to thank a health worker and spread the word!

 Let's remind the world that health workers are vital to our communities!

 Join us in celebrating our local health workers. See the details on our Events page.

 Has a health worker made a difference in your life? Share your story!

 Today we're honoring \_\_\_\_\_ who keeps our community healthy!

 Health Workers Count! This week thank one who has made a difference in your life!



# Staging a successful media event

## What should you think about when planning a media event?

- **What:** Determine the kind of activity or event are you having. Are you making an announcement or honoring the health worker(s) in your community?
- **When:** In many places, the best time to schedule a media event is midday, ideally between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. You might want to ask your partners and media contacts what they would recommend based on experience.
- **Where:** Make sure to pick a location that is convenient for the media — both for transportation and parking. Ideally, the location would add relevancy. For example, holding a news conference at your community's health center would enable the reporter(s) to see health workers in action. If you are thinking about hosting your event outdoors, consider the weather.
- **Who:** Determine what the focus of your event should be: whether it is an activity or a high-profile figure. You can also work with other groups and agencies to demonstrate a communitywide effort. The media always takes an interest in the human side of an issue, so look for someone with a personal story to talk about the issue (i.e., someone with a personal connection to World Health Worker Week.) Consider inviting community leaders, medical professionals, or celebrities to speak at a news conference.

## What should the event look like?

- **Signage:** Use your organization's or coalition's banner as a backdrop to the news conference. Hang posters and banners in the most visible place possible. Cameras will want to get footage of any activity and the banner should be in that shot.
- **Attendance and activity:** Recruit people to get the word out and attract attendees for your event. The more people participating and activity taking place, the more important your event will seem. You'll want to show the media that the community cares about your issue.
- **What is the main message and who should communicate it?**
- **Messages:** Determine the main message of your event. What is the information/statistic/call to action that you want people to take away from your event?
- **Spokespersons:** Assign one or two spokespersons to communicate the message at the event. Make sure that your spokespersons have been briefed beforehand. They should be on hand to respond to the media, convey the message, and describe the activities your group has planned.
- **International media:** If you are reaching out to international media, consider recruiting the participation of spokespersons who speak other languages that are frequently spoken in affected countries.

## Inviting celebrities and influencers to your event

*"Celebrities and influencers" can be government representatives or health officials, business or academic leaders, athletes, musicians, artists, or anyone else whom the community likes and respects. Try to come up with a list of notable people who have ties to your community and may be well-known by policymakers or the media. Getting acknowledgement from a respected countryman is a great way to show a community health worker that he or she is valued and respected, and it can help with media pick-up. Here are some things to remember:*

### Make connections

There might be someone in your village or community who has a connection to a certain celebrity. This can be a great way to get started. Don't be afraid to use any connections or ask partners.

make a personal appearance, indicate other ways the he or she might contribute to the event — either by writing a special note to the health worker or by donating something to the event itself.

### Be friendly and professional

Provide a brief but detailed overview of your effort or activity. Give as many specific details about the event as possible, and indicate that you would appreciate any level of participation from the celebrity. If you are requesting a personal appearance, make it clear just what his or her role would be.

### Increase your odds

Don't hesitate to contact more than one celebrity. The more you contact, the better the chances are that one or more can attend.

### Be flexible

There might be a certain day that works best for him or her. Also, if the celebrity cannot

### Don't get frustrated

If someone can't or won't participate but takes the time to respond to your request, be sure to send a thank-you note. Keep your relationship in good standing — he or she may be interested in participating next time, especially if your first event is a success.

## Templates and other resources

One of the best ways to get your event off the ground is to ask for support from partner NGOs, community and faith-based groups, local businesses, and even local media companies. Like-minded organizations might be willing to help with the planning and execution of the event itself, while area businesses might be able to contribute funding, materials, refreshments, necessary event items or other resources.

Letters seeking assistance should be friendly yet professional. Be sure to include event specifics and high-

light ways their participation can be a positive experience for them.

Feel free to use our templates to get you started, and keep your event on track with our planning checklist:

- Event planning checklist
- Sample letter to government official/policymaker
- Sample letter to local partners/sponsors
- Photo consent form





# Beyond April

*In April we hope to highlight the good work our health workers do every day, but let's not stop there. We want our world leaders to remember the difference that community health workers make every day, but also to remember that government help and support can greatly strengthen your community's health force.*

*Through advocacy work with our members at events, popular mobilization, and media, we want everyone to see and hear about health workers everywhere and recognize their crucial role in achieving universal health coverage. In turn, we will compel people to take action.*

## Rising to the challenge

The Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health (10-13 November 2013 Recife, Brazil) convened by the Global Health Workforce Alliance, provides a target date to mobilize action on health work force strengthening to achieve the health Millennium Development Goals. The Global Health Workforce Alliance and partners such as HWAI and the Frontline Health Workers Coalition are working to consolidate progress and commitments made to date and to use the forum as a moment to push for new actionable commitments by governments, the private sector, and other groups to invest in closing the health workforce gap and to better support existing health workers.

High level public, civil society, and private sector representation at the forum will provide an opportunity to harness the health workforce strengthening efforts of different initiatives and sectors towards the larger goal of universal health coverage (UHC) to reduce preventable deaths and disabilities.






To this end, the Global Health Workforce Alliance and several of its members and partners are catalyzing local, national, and global campaigns actions under the umbrella message that **HEALTH WORKERS COUNT!** This global coordinated movement will provide messaging frameworks and tools (like this tool kit) to help organizations and advocates to bring the issues that challenge health workers and health systems to light.

The shared recognition that moving toward UHC depends upon everyone having access to a skilled, motivated, supplied, and supported health worker within a robust health system will be the foundation of the movement which links to the Third Global Forum theme.

*"It is essential that countries wanting to improve access to health care meet the challenge posed by shortages in the health workforce. Renewed approaches to the health workforce crisis will therefore be critical for moving towards universal coverage."*

**— World Health Organization  
Executive Board report, 2013**

### **By working closely with members and strategic partners, the movement will seek to:**

-  Mobilize and encourage decision-makers, development partners, donors, civil society, key stakeholders, including the private sector to strengthen financial and technical support for health workers as part of efforts to move towards UHC.
-  Inspire new and actionable HRH commitments for lasting impact at the Third Global Forum on HRH.
-  Increase local, national, and global recognition of the life-saving role of health workers and the need to invest to maintain an active and engaged health workforce.
-  Celebrate health workers as heroes and honor outstanding national health systems that have a highly satisfied and engaged health workforce.
-  Ensure appropriate attention to human resources for health within the post 2015 debate.

*We encourage all of you to stay connected and up-to-date with the latest forum news at:*  
**[www.who.int/workforcealliance](http://www.who.int/workforcealliance)**



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