What we know about their situation. Migrant health and care workers during the Covid-19 pandemic

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Migrant health and social care workers are playing a critically important role on the front-line of health care during Covid pandemic. Countries badly hit by the pandemic have faced extreme pressure on their health services and many health workers have suffered, sometimes fatally. Many of these countries are reliant on migrant health workers, the majority of whom come from poorer countries with weak health systems.

RICH AND POOR COUNTRIES ARE BATTLING THE PANDEMIC, BUT ON AN UNEQUAL FOOTING

Even before the pandemic, health workers shortages were increasing. The WHO estimated a global shortage of 18 million health workers by 2030, mostly in low-income countries.

More than half of the world’s population lack access to essential health care. The global goal of universal health coverage by 2030 is in jeopardy as health worker shortages worsen.

In Africa, which faces the largest burden of disease in the world, 36 out of the 57 countries listed by the WHO are facing a human resources for health crisis.

High-income countries have nearly 12 TIMES as many people employed in the health sector as low-income ones.

The USA and the UK, have 682 and 664 health workers per 10,000 people, respectively.

In Africa, 57 workers are employed in the health sector per 10,000 of the population.
THEY ARE ESSENTIAL WORKERS ON THE FRONT-LINE…

Across the OECD, 24.2% of doctors and 15.8% of nurses are foreign born (based on 27 countries that rely on migrant health workers to staff their health services).

In the UK and USA, two countries very badly hit by the pandemic, around one-third of doctors and one-fifth of nurses are foreign-born. In Australia and Switzerland, this proportion rises to about 50% for doctors and over 30% for nurses.

…AND THEY ARE FACING THE BIGGEST RISKS

On the front-line of Covid care, migrant health workers, most of whom are women, are disproportionately affected by infection and death from Covid, and many experience exhaustion and stress.

Women make up 70% of health workers and a large majority are on the front-line of care for Covid patients.

An average of 2 in 5 health workers globally are fully vaccinated.

But in Africa only 1 in 10 of health workers has been fully vaccinated.

Many health workers on the front-line are experiencing burn-out and stress, and many say they will leave their jobs as a result.

In October 2021, the WHO reported that as many as 180,000 healthcare workers worldwide have died by Covid-19.

Our calculations show that as many as 20% (36,000) of these deaths are deaths of migrant health workers.

SOURCES:
1. OECD Health Workforce Statistics