We need to invest more in the nursing workforce. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic echoes this call. Today, nurses among other medical professionals are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. Months before the new coronavirus was first identified in December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) had declared 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife: “The world needs 9 million more nurses and midwives if it is to achieve universal health coverage by 2030”. While there is an increased demand for nurses, fewer people are choosing nursing as a profession.

In Lebanon, the healthcare market needs at least 14 thousand nurses as per the Ministry of Health and an optimal number of 24 thousand according to the Order of Nurses, while in reality only 8,000 nurses are providing direct patient care.

In October 2017, an amendment to Lebanon’s labor law eased the restrictions for Palestinians in a number of professions, including nursing. For Palestinians in Lebanon, joining the nursing journey does not only strengthen health systems in Lebanon, it also constitutes an opportunity to secure their right to education, access to quality and reliable work, and better integration in their communities.

Since 2017, the UNDP project in Palestinian Gatherings has been supporting Palestinian young women and young men with nursing scholarships. It has also supported emergency medical response in Ain El Helwe Camp Adjacent Areas, by supporting a six-month training for 32 medical and nursing staff in the Human Call Hospital and the provision of vital equipment.

With long advanced trainings proving to be the best tool to enhance skills and employability among Palestinian refugees, UNDP seeks to continue mobilizing funds for nursing scholarships to Palestinian youth. Funding a nursing student for one academic year costs 1,300 USD on average, including tuition fees, transportation, and learning material.

In the context of responding to emerging health needs following COVID-19 outbreak, UNDP is extending its distribution of hygiene kits to 7,000 PRS and vulnerable PRL families in Palestinian Gatherings in Lebanon. Protection measures has been developed to guide local partners’ distribution of kits through door-to-door visits or organized distribution sites. The kits distribution will constitute an opportunity to raise awareness on the healthy and responsible use of hygiene and PPE items.