

Protecting Healthcare Workers is our Priority

On World Patient Safety Day, the Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Transformation and Project HOPE are responding to the call to protect healthcare frontliners amid the ongoing pandemic.

[MANILA, PHILIPPINES, September 17, 2020] - Healthcare workers (HCWs) have been at the forefront of the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) since the start. Despite the risk of being infected while on duty, they remain committed to caring for each patient that comes their way. Recognizing the long-term value of maintaining safe working environments for HCWs, the Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Transformation (ASSIST) and Project HOPE are rolling out a new project—*Saving the Lives of Healthcare Workers*.

“Healthcare workers are both exceptional enablers and exemplars in the fight against any disease,” said ASSIST Managing Director Sreeni Narayanan. “Protecting them should be the single most important priority for any nation and its people.”

The launch of the initiative, which is funded by the Optimus Foundation of the Union Bank of Switzerland, comes in time for World Patient Safety Day. Aptly themed *Health Worker Safety: A Priority for Patient Safety*, this year’s campaign reiterates the World Health Organization’s call to “make healthcare safer for everyone” by investing in HCWs’ protection, especially during this pandemic.

Under the *Saving the Lives of Healthcare Workers* project, select regional and provincial hospitals throughout the country will be equipped with much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE). ASSIST and Project HOPE are aiming to deliver PPE kits to frontliners located in municipalities marked as COVID-19 hotspots.

HCWs will also be provided with COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) training to augment their ongoing efforts to safely screen and treat patients. Partner organizations like the Operating Room Nurses Association of the Philippines and World Surgical Foundation Philippines are assisting in localizing modules for HCWs across different specializations. Additionally, Filipino medical experts have been tapped to lead the training, which will be facilitated online.

“Given the limited resources at hand, our healthcare providers make do with what is available to battle this global pandemic,” said Richard Lirio, Corporate Secretary of the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines. “Our frontliners need to be provided with relevant knowledge and training on IPC, and the necessary tools if success against the virus is to be achieved.”

Originally developed by Project HOPE alongside the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies at the Watson Institute of Brown University, the IPC training covers critical areas of COVID-19 prevention, triage, and treatment, including diagnosis & management and risk communication.

To round out the project, targeted hospitals and health facilities will be receiving technical assistance for improved IPC management through identification of gaps and needs and implementing improved controls, practices, and protocols.

Over 10 partnerships with hospital associations, medical societies & institutions, and local government units have been established for *Saving the Lives of Healthcare Workers*.

“With this project, we are partnering with as many organizations as we can,” shared Francis Macatulad, Director of Projects and Strategy at ASSIST. “We are in this together so we invite everyone to join our advocacy to help end this pandemic.”

For potential partners and more information about the project, contact Francis Macatulad of ASSIST at francismac@assistasia.org.

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About ASSIST

Asia Society for Social Improvement and Sustainable Transformation (ASSIST) was established in 2003 with the aim of addressing sustainability challenges in the Philippines. Driven by passion and purpose for progress and prosperity in the region, ASSIST takes pride in its professional outlook, social responsibility, and process-oriented approach to capacity-building towards social impact.

About Project HOPE

Project HOPE is a global health and humanitarian organization that helps people around the world access the health care they need to reach their full potential. For more than 60 years, they’ve worked to improve the health of women and children, fight infectious disease, combat the rise of non-communicable diseases, and strengthen health care systems to withstand disasters and health crises.

Notes:

- 2020 Theme is “Health Worker Safety: A Priority for Patient Safety”
 - Slogan is “Safe health workers, safe patients”
 - A safe working environment for health workers is a prerequisite for patient safety
- “Health systems can only function with health workers; and a knowledgeable, skilled and motivated health workforce is critical for provision of safe care to patients”
- The Lancet: “Health-care systems globally could be operating at more than maximum capacity for many months. But health-care workers, unlike ventilators or wards, cannot be urgently manufactured or run at 100% occupancy for long periods. It is vital that governments see workers not simply as pawns to be deployed, but as human individuals.”