

21 April 2026

Awards

1. In February 2026, during its 158th session, the Executive Board adopted a number of decisions awarding prizes to individuals or entities in recognition of their outstanding contributions to public health.¹
2. An award ceremony for the following five prizes is scheduled to take place during the plenary meeting of the Health Assembly on Wednesday, 20 May 2026:
 - the **Sasakawa Health Prize** will be presented to the **Banconi Community Health Association (ASACOBAN) (Mali)**;
 - the **United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize** will be presented to **Dr Worawit Tontiwattanasap (Thailand)**;
 - the State of Kuwait Health Promotion Foundation's **His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for the Promotion of Healthy Ageing** will be presented to **Professor Bruno Vellas (France) and SingHealth (Singapore)**;
 - the **Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health** will be presented to **Professor Mohammad Abul Faiz (Bangladesh)**; and
 - the **Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion** will be presented to **Dr Amr Mohamed Kandeel (Egypt)**.
3. Many of the prizes have been established by, or set up in memory of, an eminent health personality or an individual with an important legacy in the field of health. The call for nominations of candidates for each prize is sent out each year after closure of the Health Assembly, and nominations can be made by national health administrations of a Member State of WHO or by any former recipient of the prizes. The recipients of the prizes are designated by the Executive Board during its first annual session, on the basis of recommendations made by each Foundation's or Prize's selection panel.

¹ See decisions EB158(14), EB158(15), EB158(16), EB158(17) and EB158(18) (2026).

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4. Over the years, the prizes have been awarded to a wide range of recipients: well-known scientists and researchers; other dedicated individuals or entities who have greatly contributed through their work to the advancement of public health; and individuals or entities caring for the health of local communities.
 5. Further information on the prizes and on the 2026 laureates is provided in the Annex to the present document.²

² See also the information on [Public health prizes and awards](#) on the WHO website.

Annex

Prizes awarded in 2026

1. Sasakawa Health Prize

The Sasakawa Health Prize is awarded for outstanding innovative work in health development to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations. Such work includes the promotion of given health programmes or notable advances in primary healthcare.

The 2026 laureate of the prize is the Banconi Community Health Association (ASACOBAs) (Mali).

Based on information submitted by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, Mali, the Banconi Community Health Association (ASACOBAs) – the first of its kind in Mali – was established in 1988 in Banconi, Bamako, in response to the Bamako Initiative, a strategy for enhancing primary healthcare adopted by WHO in 1987. The Association subsequently set up the Banconi Community Health Centre with a view to bringing dispensary and maternity services closer to local communities, and making affordable treatment accessible to underserved populations in the district. It successfully piloted the transfer of responsibility for health promotion and primary healthcare to communities, combining community leadership and empowerment, equitable approaches and social innovation to meet the populations' essential needs. The Banconi Community Health Centre partners with the Ministry of Health and Social Development and with education authorities, communities and technical partners abroad to provide strengthened prevention, diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services. Thanks to academic partnerships, the Centre and four other community health centres across Mali offer community-based internships to medical students. Further, the Bamako Faculty of Medicine has created a specialization in community medicine and resident doctors in that discipline conduct research and training in Banconi. The ASACOBAs model has been widely replicated across Africa, with more than 1950 community health associations now active in Mali alone. The Association intends to use the endowment to: raise community awareness about women's roles in combating gender-based violence; expand cancer screening and home vaccinations for children; stimulate engagement in research; and invest in digitalization.

2. United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize

The United Arab Emirates Health Foundation Prize is awarded for an outstanding contribution to health development to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations.

The 2026 laureate of the prize is Dr Worawit Tontiwattanasap (Thailand).

Based on information submitted by the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, Dr Worawit Tontiwattanasap is the Director of Umphang Hospital in rural Tak province, near the border with Myanmar. Throughout his career he has supported equitable primary healthcare for vulnerable, displaced and cross-border populations. Dr Tontiwattanasap led advocacy efforts that secured Cabinet resolutions in 2010 and 2020 to finance health subsidies for stateless populations and those requiring humanitarian services. He advocated for registration of undocumented populations and established legal clinics to support their access to care. He expanded district

services and cross-border outreach, including through mobile clinics, covering immunization, malaria, tuberculosis and dengue control, antenatal and maternal care, and dialysis. To improve efficiencies, Dr Tontiwattanasap developed a cost-saving formulary, organized medicine donation campaigns and introduced solar energy and zero-food-waste programmes. He has spearheaded the training of auxiliary midwives and community health workers from Thailand and Myanmar, as well as training on legal issues for delivering care to humanitarian populations.

Dr Tontiwattanasap has dedicated his career to transforming health services for rural, stateless, hard-to-reach, refugee and cross-border populations, combining outreach, cost-saving strategies and advocacy for national policy change. He has made substantial achievements in advancing the equitable implementation and integration of primary healthcare into health systems.

3. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for the Promotion of Healthy Ageing

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for the Promotion of Healthy Ageing is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a nongovernmental organization or organizations who have made an outstanding contribution to research, health promotion, policy and/or programmes on healthy ageing.

The 2026 laureates of the prize are Professor Bruno Vellas (France) and SingHealth (Singapore).

Based on information submitted by the Ministry of Health, Families, Autonomy and Persons with Disabilities, France, Professor Bruno Vellas is President of the HealthAge University Hospital Institute, Chair of the Gérontopôle at Toulouse University Hospital, a WHO Collaborating Centre for Frailty, Clinical and Geroscience Research, and Geriatric Training in Toulouse, and a global leader in healthy ageing. He has demonstrated visionary leadership, scientific excellence, policy influence, innovation and strong commitment to training and community engagement. His work has transformed care for older people and advanced the concept of intrinsic capacity nationally and abroad. Professor Vellas helped to integrate the WHO Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) approach into national policy and secured government financing for intrinsic capacity screening, reaching more than 107 700 older people to date. His approach is grounded in community engagement through participatory planning with senior citizen panels, municipal partnerships and co-designed local initiatives. He is the author of more than 850 peer-reviewed publications and has generated robust evidence for prevention-oriented healthy ageing strategies. He has developed inclusion strategies for rural, isolated and low-income older populations, as well as hybrid digital models to overcome digital literacy and connectivity barriers, complemented by artificial intelligence tools. Professor Vellas has pioneered ICOPE-based digital education in more than 40 countries, training nearly 17 000 health and care workers.

Based on information submitted by the Ministry of Health, Singapore, SingHealth is a government-owned healthcare cluster applying a strategic, whole-of-government approach to healthy ageing through long-term planning, strong governance and cross-sectoral policy coherence. Its innovative, community-centred and data-driven strategies have improved healthcare quality, promoted healthy ageing and addressed the needs of an ageing population. As a member of the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, SingHealth leads the Healthier EAST @SG network, a multi-agency initiative to transform the eastern region of Singapore into an inclusive, age-friendly community. Its objectives, embedded across health, housing, urban planning, transport and social policies, are aligned with WHO initiatives such as the ICOPE approach. SingHealth has focused on workforce development and on building institutional capacity across the health, social care and community sectors. Through SingHealth's participatory

action, research, community hubs, volunteer networks, technology-enabled services such as a personal care telephone service and apps, as well as its partnerships with grass-roots organizations, older people can play a leading role in shaping age-friendly environments.

4. Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health

The Dr LEE Jong-wook Memorial Prize for Public Health is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a governmental or nongovernmental organization or organizations who have made an outstanding contribution to public health.

The 2026 laureate of the prize is Professor Mohammad Abul Faiz (Bangladesh).

Based on information provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh, Professor Mohammad Abul Faiz is a retired civil servant who has made highly influential contributions to national and global public health over more than four decades. Early service in rural and remote areas shaped his focus on diseases disproportionately affecting rural, poor and marginalized populations, including forcibly displaced populations. Most notably, he was a leading contributor to the South East Asian Quinine Artesunate Malaria Trial. He also contributed to landmark research on pre-referral rectal artesunate, improving care for patients with severe malaria in remote settings. Professor Faiz led major research on snakebite envenoming in Bangladesh, including Asia's first nationwide community-based incidence study, helping snakebite envenoming to become a recognized neglected tropical disease. His work further spans drug resistance, pandemic preparedness and capacity-building in resource-constrained settings. His continued leadership and scientific contributions well beyond retirement demonstrate outstanding achievement in addressing evolving global health threats. Professor Faiz intends to use the endowment for training and capacity-building, focusing on postgraduate and early-career research related to diseases disproportionately affecting underserved populations.

5. Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion

The Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion is awarded to a person or persons, an institution or institutions, or a governmental or nongovernmental organization or organizations who have made a significant contribution to health promotion.

The 2026 laureate of the award is Dr Amr Mohamed Kandeel (Egypt).

Based on information submitted by the Ministry of Health and Population, Egypt, Dr Amr Mohamed Kandeel is Vice-Minister of Health and Population. His career in preventive health and public health leadership has been marked by significant achievements in disease control, epidemic preparedness, immunization and health system modernization. He has provided transformative leadership in building a resilient, prevention-centred public health system integrating disease control, emergency preparedness, digital innovation and equity. Under his leadership, Egypt achieved WHO certification for the elimination of measles, rubella, malaria and trachoma, and made significant gains in hepatitis B control for children under 15 years of age. Dr Kandeel has sought to integrate health considerations into environmental, animal health, disaster preparedness and development agendas, while emphasizing community engagement as part of national vaccination campaigns, outbreak response and health emergency preparedness. Dr Kandeel's leadership in digitalizing primary care, expanding prevention and screening programmes, coupled with his achievements in preparedness, surveillance, infectious disease elimination and health system strengthening, has advanced a model that extends beyond curative care and provides insights for public health regionally and globally.