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Mapping health systems' responsiveness to refugee and migrant health needs



WHO Health and Migration Programme

The WHO Health and Migration Programme brings together WHO's technical departments, regional and country offices, as well as partners, to secure the health rights of refugees and migrants and achieve universal health coverage. To this end, the Programme has five core functions: to provide global leadership, high-level advocacy, coordination and policy on health and migration; to set norms and standards to support decision-making; to monitor trends, strengthen health information systems and promote tools and strategies; to provide specialized technical assistance, response and capacity-building support to address public health challenges associated with human mobility; and to promote global multilateral action and collaboration.



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Foreword

This mapping review has been developed to help countries to build capacities to address the health needs of refugees and migrants, thus promoting universal health coverage. The 2019 WHO Global Action Plan: Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants is aligned with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, WHO's Thirteenth Global Programme of Work and the global compacts on refugees and on safe, orderly and regular migration. It was developed in close collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

However, WHO cannot achieve its goals unless the world addresses the health needs of refugees and migrants, who have the same fundamental human right as others to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Many come from societies affected by war, conflict and economic crisis and lead insecure lives on the fringes of society. They may also face discrimination, poverty and poor housing and may have difficulty in accessing education, employment and health care.

Responding to the needs and vulnerabilities of refugees and migrants requires culturally sensitive and effective care that recognizes and responds to all their needs across the life course, including noncommunicable and

communicable diseases and trauma from injuries and violence. Women should have access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and rights and are at risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, abuse and trafficking. Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable and need special consideration.

There is a need globally for good-quality, robust and resilient health services that are culturally and linguistically sensitive and that can respond to the needs of refugees and migrants. To achieve these goals, national health policies, and supporting legislative and financial frameworks, should promote migrants' right to health, embracing health as an integrating force in society. Services should be responsive to the languages and the unique health problems of refugees and migrants, and these services should be provided by an adaptable, well-trained and culturally competent workforce.

Today our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the consequences of vulnerability, with higher rates of infection and deaths amongst the poor and the disadvantaged, including refugees and migrants, who have also been hit hard by economic lockdowns. The world must also work now to achieve vaccine equity, encompassing refugees and migrants, if the pandemic is to be brought under global control. Our health systems must

be able to respond equitably to the needs of all.

Effective health monitoring and data collection are essential for understanding the health needs of refugees and migrants, including public health implications, and for assessing health system capacity and priority setting to ensure that the care of refugees and migrants is integrated into the overall health system.

This mapping review considers the models of care adopted to support the health needs of refugees and migrants in 18 countries engaged in their local integration or third-country resettlement; it identifies four main models: mainstream, specialized-focus, gateway and limited. It examines the strengths and weaknesses associated with each model. It is hoped that the review will provide an overview of the different settings in which health workers interact with refugees

and migrants and help countries in providing these services in their specific context. It is also hoped that the review will support the development of the global competency standards for health workers providing services to refugees and migrants.

WHO will continue to work with countries to help to build the capacity and resilience of health systems in order to ensure that high-quality people-centred health services are provided for all, including refugees and migrants. It is hoped that this mapping exercise will help to remove the barriers all too often seen for refugees and migrants in accessing quality health services.



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