

Integrating palliative care and symptom relief into the response to humanitarian emergencies and crises

A WHO guide



World Health
Organization

Integrating palliative care and symptom relief into the response to humanitarian emergencies and crises: a WHO guide
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Foreword

Humanitarian emergencies and crises are large-scale events that may result in the breakdown of health care systems and society, forced displacement, death, and physical, psychological, social and spiritual suffering on a massive scale (Annex 1). Current responses to Humanitarian emergencies and crises rightfully focus on saving lives, but for both ethical and medical reasons, the prevention and relief of pain, as well as other physical and psychological symptoms, social and spiritual distress, also are imperative. Therefore, palliative care, should be integrated into responses to Humanitarian emergencies and crises (Annex 2).

The principles of humanitarianism and impartiality require that all patients receive care and should never be abandoned for any reason, even if they are dying (Annex 3). Thus, there is significant overlap in the principles and mission of palliative care and humanitarianism: relief of suffering; respect for the dignity of all people; support for basic needs; and accompaniment during the most difficult of times (Annex 4).

This manual is part of a series of WHO publications on palliative care. Their objective is not to provide clinical guidelines but rather practical guidance on integrating palliative care and symptom relief into health care systems. The current publication is intended to assist anyone involved with planning, implementing or managing responses to Humanitarian emergencies and crises, as well as palliative care leaders and practitioners interested in participating in responses to Humanitarian emergencies and crises.

With this guide, WHO reiterates its commitment to answering the needs and expectations of all people, especially the most vulnerable.



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Abbreviations and acronyms

CHC	community health centre
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
CHW	community health worker
EMT	emergency medical team
EP Hum	Essential Package of Palliative Care for Humanitarian Emergencies and Crises
ERC	United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator
HICs	high-income countries
IASC	United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (for humanitarian action)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
IOM	United Nations International Organization for Migration
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)
NCDs	noncommunicable diseases
NDMO	National Disaster Management Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OCHA (or UNOCHA)	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PFA	psychological first aid
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SSRI	selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA (or OCHA)	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WHO	World Health Organization

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