

Ensuring the integration of refugees and migrants in immunization policies, planning and service delivery globally



Global Evidence Review on Health and Migration (GEHM) series

The GEHM series is an evidence-informed normative product of the WHO Health and Migration Programme to inform policy-makers on migration-related public health priorities. These reviews aim to respond to policy questions identified as priorities by summarizing the best available evidence worldwide and proposing policy considerations. By addressing data gaps on the health status of refugees and migrants, the GEHM series aims to support evidence-informed policy-making and targeted interventions that are impactful and make a difference in the lives of these populations.



World Health
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Contents

Foreword	v
Preface	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Abbreviations and acronyms	xi
Executive summary	xii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Policy questions	10
1.3 Methodology	10
2. Results	12
2.1 Existing policies on integration of refugees and migrants into national vaccination plans, and implementation.....	12
2.2 Barriers for refugees and migrants in accessing immunization services	21
2.3 Good practices in implementing immunization initiatives in refugees and migrants.....	34
2.4 Disruption of immunization services for refugees and migrants due to COVID-19	45
3. Discussion.....	49
3.1 Strengthening the integration of refugees and migrants into immunization policy	49
3.2 Addressing barriers and facilitators to immunization services for refugees and migrants.....	54
3.3 Limitations of this review.....	56
3.4 Policy considerations	56
4. Conclusions.....	59
References.....	60
Annex: Search strategy.....	84

Foreword

Vaccination is arguably the most powerful public health intervention in history. It is also a powerful marker of inequity: those who miss out on vaccines – such as refugees and migrants – also miss out on many other essential health services.

WHO's Immunization Agenda 2030 sets out a clear vision to make vaccines available to all, no matter their legal status or where they live, with a particular focus on marginalized groups and those who are otherwise left behind. That makes equitable vaccination of refugees and migrants a priority for WHO.

In this third Global Evidence Review on Health and Migration, we survey immunization services for refugees and migrants. The findings are troubling, but not surprising: many refugees and migrants cannot access health services, including vaccination, and face discrimination and social exclusion.

Many countries still do not specify a clear policy on refugees' and migrants' entitlement to vaccination, and even when they do, there are often gaps in implementation. As a result, far too many refugee and migrant populations globally are under-immunized, especially those who lack legal status. These inequities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This evidence review identifies context-specific drivers of under-immunization and vaccine hesitancy in refugee and migrant populations, and documents good practices and policy considerations to help to fully integrate refugees and migrants into national immunization plans, regardless of their legal status, age or gender.

In 2019, the World Health Assembly committed to a global action plan promoting the health of refugees and migrants. This follows the Global Compact on Refugees (2018) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018). Yet these global frameworks by themselves are not enough. Too often, many countries do not comply with them, nor follow evidence-based advice.

Supporting all countries to make progress towards universal health coverage has been my top priority as Director-General. Everyone, no matter where they live or their legal status, should enjoy the right to health, and access to quality health services, including immunization.

To meet the health needs of refugee and migrant populations, cooperation and collaboration between countries and sectors is essential. An inclusive approach that respects human rights for all must guide public health policy and practice. The Global Evidence Review on Health and Migration is an important contribution towards accountability to our commitments as a global community.

Health for all means all – including refugees and migrants.



**Dr Tedros Adhanom
Ghebreyesus**

Director-General

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