

# Concept Note for the Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants

13-15 June 2023, Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco

The World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Kingdom of Morocco are co-organizing the Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants. The Global Consultation will be hosted by the Kingdom of Morocco from 13 to 15 June 2023 in Rabat.

## Background

The health of refugees and migrants has never been so important, as one in eight of all people across the world are on the move – an estimated 1 billion people. Of this population, one in 10 (an estimated 100 million people by end of May 2022<sup>1</sup>) were forcibly displaced from their homes and communities due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, natural and human-generated disasters and, increasingly, from the consequences of climate change.

The conditions surrounding migration and displacement act as factors of vulnerability and determine specific health needs for refugees, migrants and others who are forcibly displaced. Refugees and migrants have specific health needs due to their underlying health, nutrition and social situations, and their potential exposure to hazards, discrimination and marginalization during their journey or on arrival in new places. They often face inadequate access to health and social services and poor working and living conditions, which all impact their health. These inequalities were greatly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing both health risks and the extent of discrimination, due to fear and misinformation.

Addressing the diverse health needs of these populations and the communities that host them is essential to support their physical, social and mental well-being and is, at the same time, important to strengthen global health security, contribute to social and economic development and benefit communities hosting and receiving refugees and migrants. The WHO World Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants<sup>2</sup> released in July 2022 outlined key challenges currently faced by migrants and refugees, and raised addressing migrants' and refugees' health needs as a global health priority. It also stressed the importance of strengthening and sustaining health systems to ensure that they are responsive to and inclusive of the specific health concerns of migrants and refugees.

The Third Global Consultation on the Health of Refugees and Migrants is building on an ongoing effort since 2008, further to the operationalization of the Sixty-first World Health Assembly resolution on the health of migrants (WHA61.17), which asked Member States to take action on

<sup>1</sup> More than 100 million people are forcibly displaced [website]. In: Refugee data finder. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; 2022 (<https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/100-million-forcibly-displaced.html>, accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>2</sup> World report on the health of refugees and migrants. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/360404>, accessed 24 April 2023).

migrant-sensitive health policies and practices and directed WHO to promote the health of migrants on the international agenda, in collaboration with other relevant organizations.

The First Global Consultation on Migrant Health was convened in 2010 in Madrid, Spain, to explore inclusion of migrants in provision of health care, monitoring frameworks and policies, and to establish cooperation and partnerships across the global system.

Following the United Nations 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, IOM, UNHCR, WHO and other relevant stakeholders have collaborated closely to develop approaches to protect and preserve the health and well-being of refugees and migrants, leaving no one behind, with a focus on reaching *the furthest behind first*, to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>3</sup>

The Second Global Consultation in Sri Lanka in 2017 put forward the Colombo Statement,<sup>4</sup> calling on Member States to mainstream the migration health agenda within key national, regional and international fora, and collaborate towards the negotiation processes of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), both of which were affirmed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018.

The GCR<sup>5</sup> is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities get the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives. The Global Refugee Forum in 2019 resulted in more than 1400 pledges of support, the High-level Officials Meeting in December 2021<sup>6</sup> focused on expanding support through responsibility sharing; advancing the implementation of pledges and initiatives; and identified recommendations for the future. The GCM<sup>7</sup> covers all dimensions of international migration including access of migrants to essential services, demonstrating strong commitment to international cooperation. Progress was discussed at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), the first meeting of which took place in May 2022 with pledges received from Member States and other stakeholders. Both global compacts reference the WHO Framework of Priorities and Guiding Principles to Promote the Health of Refugees and Migrants, agreed upon by Member States at the Seventieth World Health Assembly in 2017.

The WHO Global Action Plan on Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants 2019–2023 (WHO GAP)<sup>8</sup> was noted by Member States at the Seventy-second World Health Assembly and

<sup>3</sup>Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations; 2015 (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>, accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>4</sup>Colombo Statement. High-level meeting of the Global Consultation on Migrant Health, Colombo, 23 February 2017. Geneva: International Organization for Migration; 2017 ([https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our\\_work/DMM/Migration-Health/Colombo%20Statement%2023Feb2017%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DMM/Migration-Health/Colombo%20Statement%2023Feb2017%20FINAL.pdf), accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>5</sup>The global compact on refugees: booklet. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; 2018 (<https://www.unhcr.org/media/37797>, accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>6</sup>Outcomes of the High-level Officials Meeting 2021. Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; 2022 (<https://globalcompactrefugees.org/about-gcr/resources/reports/outcomes-high-level-officials-meeting-2021>, accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>7</sup>Resolution A/RES/73/195: global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. In: Seventy-third General Assembly January 2019. New York: United Nations; 2019 ([https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_73\\_195.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_73_195.pdf), accessed 24 April 2023).

<sup>8</sup>Promoting the health of refugees and migrants: draft global action plan, 2019–2023. Report by the Director-General to the Seventy-second World Health Assembly 2019. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/328690>, accessed 24 April 2023).

its implementation was extended to 2030 by the 152nd Session of the WHO Executive Board. The WHO GAP is aligned to contribute to the WHO Triple Billion Targets<sup>9</sup> (achieving universal health coverage, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations) and outlines six core priorities to promote the health of refugees and migrants.

1. Promote the health of refugees and migrants through a mix of short-term and long-term public health interventions.
2. Promote continuity and quality of essential health care, while developing, reinforcing and implementing occupational health and safety measures.
3. Advocate the mainstreaming of refugee and migrant health into global, regional and country agendas and the promotion of: refugee-sensitive and migrant sensitive health policies and legal and social protection; the health and well-being of refugee and migrant women, children and adolescents; gender equality and empowerment of refugee and migrant women and girls; and partnerships and intersectoral, intercountry and interagency coordination and collaboration mechanisms.
4. Enhance capacity to tackle the social determinants of health and to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including universal health coverage.
5. Strengthen health monitoring and health information systems.
6. Support measures to improve evidence-based health communication and to counter misperceptions about migrant and refugee health.

This Third Global Consultation will build on these previous forums and commitments to scale up action, assess progress, consider emerging and persisting challenges, foster implementation of key priorities and build further political commitment on the way forward. Its purpose is to inform policy decisions, to contribute to relevant international targets, and to promote the implementation of appropriate interventions that improve, protect and preserve health and well-being of all refugees and migrants, as well as host communities.

## Objectives

The Third Global Consultation builds on the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals, GCR, GCM and WHO GAP with the aim of informing upcoming discussions at the 2023 General Assembly High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage and at those related to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response; in Intergovernmental Negotiating Body discussions; and the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. The objectives of the Third Global Consultation are to:

- strengthen coordination and collaboration on refugee and migrant health, and obtain continued and sustained high-level political support to advance global commitments and other policy developments to improve, protect and preserve the health and well-being of refugees, migrants and communities hosting and receiving them;
- reflect on progress to date and good practices in promoting the health and well-being of refugee and migrant populations, highlighting examples of innovative approaches for refugee and migration health; and

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<sup>9</sup> Thirteenth general programme of work, 2019–2023 [website]. In: What we do. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (<https://www.who.int/about/what-we-do/thirteenth-general-programme-of-work-2019---2023>, accessed 24 April 2023).

- identify, discuss and agree on priority actions for implementation at local, national and regional levels, including to create safe, supportive and healthy environments as members of an inclusive society.

## Expected outcomes

- Strengthened coordination and collaboration on refugee and migration health.
- Agree on actions to improve the health of refugees and migrants including achieving universal health coverage; tackling the wider determinants of health; strengthening data and research capacity; and supporting the health of refugees and migrants in emergencies.
- Develop recommendations for action on refugee and migration health to inform upcoming high-level meetings and forums.

## Draft agenda (*tbc*)

**Day 1** will focus on high-level political discussions, including the adoption of the political declaration.

**Days 2 and 3** will focus on the technical aspects of the consultation and will include:

- setting the scope of the consultation;
- a discussion on international migrants, GCM commitments and outcomes of the IMRF;
- a discussion on refugees, GCR commitments and outcomes, and the upcoming Global Refugee Forum;
- a series of cross cutting panels to explore the following themes:
  - protecting health for refugees and migrants in crises and public health emergencies,
  - universal health coverage for all migrants and refugees,
  - tackling the determinants of health, and
  - harnessing the power of science, research, data and innovation; and
- a discussion on the WHO GAP: long-term vision and implementation.

## Participation

We expect around 250 in-person participants as follows.

- High-level officers in the ministries of health, finance, foreign affairs and planning, and other senior officials with responsibility for national and regional refugee and migrant health policies.
- Public health agencies, local governments or other bodies with technical experience and responsibility related to refugee and migrant health.
- Representatives from United Nations Agencies and other international organizations, including the IOM, UNHCR and WHO.
- Non-State actors, including representatives from refugee and migrant communities.
- Key bilateral and multilateral donors.