PROMOTING AND DELIVERING QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR MIGRANTS AND HOST COMMUNITIES

Within its Migration Health Division (MHD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) delivers and promotes comprehensive, preventive and curative health programmes which are beneficial, accessible, and equitable for migrants and mobile populations. Bridging the needs of both migrants and IOM’s member states, MHD contributes towards the physical, mental and social well-being of migrants, enabling them and host communities to achieve social and economic development.

GLOBAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

Migration is now a global phenomenon with close to 244 million international migrants (UNDESA, 2014) and an estimated 740 million internal migrants (IOM, 2015), and must be recognized as a social determinant of health; mobility not only impacts upon an individual’s physical vulnerability, but also on mental and social well-being. Migrants and mobile populations face many obstacles in accessing essential health care services due to a number of factors including irregular immigration status, language barriers, a lack of migrant-inclusive health policies and inaccessibility of services. Such disparities impact the well-being of migrants and host communities and undermine the realization of global health goals, such as preventing HIV and containing tuberculosis, malaria and the human influenza pandemic. High morbidity and mortality among migrants, especially in irregular, forced, or exploitative migration situations is also an underestimated critical health concern that deserves international attention.

DELIVERING EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

Governments and health actors are increasingly recognizing the need for a comprehensive multi-sector approach to migration and health that goes beyond infectious diseases and border control. Migrant-inclusive policies that address migration-related health vulnerabilities, non-communicable diseases, mental health, occupational health, environmental health, and access to migrant-sensitive health care services must be promoted in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage. Delivering equitable access for migrants will reduce health and social costs, improve social cohesion and, most importantly, will contribute to healthier migrants in healthier communities.

OUR MISSION

1. Ensure the right to health for migrants
2. Avoid disparities in health status and access to health services
3. Reduce excess mortality and morbidity among migrant populations
4. Minimize the negative health outcomes of migrants
In recent years there has been significant progress in advancing the migration health agenda. The 61st World Health Assembly Resolution Health of Migrants 61.17, adopted in May 2008, calls upon governments to promote the health of migrants through policies and programmes. Guided by the World Health Assembly Resolution, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization and the Government of Spain organized a Global Consultation on the Health of Migrants in March 2010. Four key priorities materialized from the consultation (see table below) which umbrellas IOM’s global approach to migration and health:

**IOM’s Approach to Health**

In recent years there has been significant progress in advancing the migration health agenda. The 61st World Health Assembly Resolution Health of Migrants 61.17, adopted in May 2008, calls upon governments to promote the health of migrants through policies and programmes. Guided by the World Health Assembly Resolution, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization and the Government of Spain organized a Global Consultation on the Health of Migrants in March 2010. Four key priorities materialized from the consultation (see table below) which umbrellas IOM’s global approach to migration and health:

- **Monitoring Migrant Health**
  - Research and Information Dissemination
    - Strengthens knowledge on the health of migrants via research and information dissemination to ensure evidence-based programming and policy development.

- **Policy and Legal Framework**
  - Advocacy for Policy Development
    - Advocates for migrant inclusive health policies and programmes at a national, regional and global level, and assists in the development of policies to promote and protect the health of migrants.

- **Migrant Sensitive Health Systems**
  - Health Service Delivery and Capacity-Building
    - Delivers, facilitates and promotes equitable access to migrant-friendly and comprehensive health care services. IOM enhances the technical and operational capacity of governments and partners.

- **Partnerships, Networks & Multi-Country Frameworks**
  - Strengthening Inter-Country Coordination and Partnership
    - Committed to developing and strengthening multi-sectoral partnerships and coordination among member states, stakeholders and migrants.

**Advancing the Unfinished Agenda**

During the 106th Session of the IOM Council in 2015, Member States supported Document C/106/INF/15, Advancing the unfinished agenda of migrant health for the benefit of all, which described the work and achievements of the Organization in migrant health and reiterated the need for strong leadership across sectors and across borders. It furthermore recalled the linkages between migration and population mobility and global health and development goals, as well as human and health security. In supporting the Document, Member States encouraged IOM to enhance the health of migrants through the advancement of the agenda.
Migration Health Assessments and Travel Health Assistance

IOM carries out health assessments for various categories of migrants, including resettling refugees, labour migrants and displaced persons, either before departure or upon arrival. This reduces and manages the potential public health impact of human mobility on migrants, receiving countries and communities.

IOM offers pre-departure travel health services, including presumptive treatment for endemic conditions like malaria, and diagnostics and treatment for tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections. IOM also immunizes migrants against vaccine preventable diseases and offers an array of specialized counseling services.

In 2017, IOM conducted more than 347,000 health assessments among migrants, covering both immigrants (70.7%) and refugees (29.3%) in more than 60 countries.

Health Promotion and Assistance for Migrants

IOM promotes the health of migrants and communities by advocating for migrant-inclusive health policies, delivering technical assistance and enhancing the capacity of governments and partners to provide migrant-friendly services.

IOM’s health promotion activities include prevention and control of diseases (e.g. HIV/AIDS, cholera, tuberculosis, malaria, non-communicable diseases), address health system challenges for migrants and assist governments in managing the migration of health workers.

In 2019, IOM continues to implement programs worldwide, developing collaborative strategies with relevant sectors such as health, welfare, labor, youth, social affairs and migration to strengthen migrant-sensitive health systems.

Migration Health Assistance for Crisis-Affected Populations

Health is an integrated component of IOM’s overall humanitarian response, particularly in natural disasters where IOM is a Camp Coordination and Management Cluster lead. IOM assists crisis-affected populations, governments and host communities to strengthen and re-establish primary health care systems.

IOM delivers health care and psychosocial support for displaced persons, facilitates medical referrals and arranges medical evacuations for individuals who cannot be cared for locally. IOM assists in rebuilding community-based services and strengthens crisis-affected health care systems.

In 2017, IOM implemented 85 emergency health projects throughout 32 countries; 47% in Africa, 26% in the Middle East and North Africa, 19% in Asia, 5% in Europe, and 3% in the Americas.
Each of the three major IOM Migration Health programmatic areas comprises specific thematic areas summarized in the table below. Thematic areas are reflective of specific migration typologies, as well as specialized services offered by the Organization. In implementing migration health programmes and activities, IOM aims at: providing evidence and information dissemination, advocating for migrant-inclusive policy development, strengthening migrant-sensitive health systems and enhancing inter-country coordination and partnership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CROSS-CUTTING THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health, Psychosocial Response &amp; Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights, including the right to health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria, Cholera, Re/Emerging Diseases &amp; mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration &amp; Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Border &amp; Mobility Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant Family, Women &amp; Children Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration, Social Determinants of Health (SDH) &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a reflection of its holistic approach to health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”, IOM’s Migration Health Division has identified key cross-cutting public health themes, which are a major focus in all three programmatic areas. For instance, Mental Health/ Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication interventions are a critical component of the programme for crisis-affected migrants, but also of increasing importance to the programme for Refugee Resettlement projects. In all its programmes and cross-cutting themes, IOM serves several migrant sub-populations, such as regular and irregular migrants, internally-displaced persons, refugees, asylum-seekers and victims of trafficking, with a focus on vulnerable and ‘at risk’ groups.

IOM works in partnership with multiple stakeholders in international health and migration sectors. At the national level, IOM engages closely with relevant government ministries, especially ministries of health and immigration, and non-governmental organizations, as well as with private sector entities, such as employment agencies. At the regional and global levels, key partners include relevant UN agencies (especially WHO, UNAIDS, ILO) and civil society partners (including migrants’ associations and academia).