

# Second WHO High-level Interregional Meeting on the Health of Refugees and Migrants

16–17 March 2023 | Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

## Concept Note

### Background

In March 2022, the WHO Regional Office for Europe organized the first High-level Meeting on Health and Migration, held in Istanbul, Türkiye. The meeting was attended by ministers from three WHO regions, as well as representatives of the WHO regional offices for Africa, Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, partner agencies and civil society organizations. The High-level Meeting served as a platform to design the vision for refugee and migrant health in the coming years. The sessions revolved around the political framework and consolidated high-level commitments to action on health and migration. Key priorities for moving forward were identified and laid down in five pillars for action.

- Action pillar 1: ensure refugees and migrants benefit from universal health coverage
- Action pillar 2: implement inclusive health emergency and disaster risk reduction policies and actions
- Action pillar 3: develop inclusive environments that promote social inclusion, health and well-being
- Action pillar 4: strengthen migration health governance and evidence- and data-driven policy-making
- Action pillar 5: explore innovative ways of working and develop partnerships as a vital enabling tool

The endorsement of the outcome document, including the five pillars, demonstrates the tri-regional commitment to strengthen cooperation and promote and mainstream a whole-of-route approach to make health a reality for all.

Strengthening cooperation and promoting a whole-of-route approach is an area that allows the three WHO regions to partner together around all five action pillars. As such, it was decided that this thematic area will guide the second High-level Meeting on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, to be hosted by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean on 16–17 March 2023, in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

### Whole-of-route approach to people on the move

Migration in its many forms – whether for political, economic, environmental, security or social reasons – comes with a unique set of issues. For many people migration is a last resort, while for others it is a chance for a better life; however, whatever the reason, no migration journey is easy and for many people it can take decades. “Finding healthcare while in transit can be extremely challenging, and migrants may be denied care once settled. Although many migrants prosper in their new homes, for others the physical and psychological traumas can be lifelong.”<sup>1</sup> In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, refugees have been stranded in countries that have opened their doors to them initially, as transit countries have done, expecting that they return home or move on to their destination country. Meanwhile, migrants are unable to access the formal labour market and basic quality health services are either not accessible to them or are financially exorbitant.

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<sup>1</sup> Legido-Quigley H, Pocock N, Tan ST, Pajin L, Suphanchaimat R, Wickramage K, et al. Healthcare is not universal if undocumented migrants are excluded. *BMJ*. 2019;366:l4160. doi:10.1136/bmj.l4160.

Member States of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region adopted resolution EM/RC60/R.2 on universal health coverage in 2013,<sup>2</sup> in line with resolutions WHA64.9 and WHA58.33 on sustainable health financing structures and universal coverage, resolution EM/RC57/R.7 on strategic directions to improve health care financing, and resolution EM/RC59/R.3 on health systems strengthening. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 includes target 3.8 to achieve, by 2030, universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all. However, although migration is central to the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as part of “leaving no one behind”, refugees and migrants are currently not benefiting from universal health coverage and continuity of care across the migration route; this is particularly true for undocumented migrants.<sup>3</sup>

The two global compacts on migration and WHO’s global action plan for promoting the health of refugees and migrants provide a broader global policy framework for meeting the health needs of refugees and migrants and contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **Event purpose**

The first High-level Meeting on Health and Migration mapped out strategic priorities for the African, European and Eastern Mediterranean regions in a whole-of-route approach. These priorities are laid down in the five pillars for action for moving forward in refugee and migrant health.

This event will be a day-and-a-half tri-regional high-level meeting, with thematic areas covering the five pillars for action. Particular attention will be placed on ensuring access to health care for refugees and migrants across the migration route to ensure universal health coverage and continuity of care. The meeting will allow participants to take stock and share identified challenges, opportunities, lessons learned and best practices for the implementation of the five pillars since the March 2022 meeting to the day of the event. It will also give the space to explore areas for cross-border and interregional collaboration and hold discussions that are action-oriented and make the five pillars more tangible. The event will promote the establishment of a technical network with experts and representatives from the three regions to steer the implementation of the five pillars. Finally, the event will conclude with an outcome statement endorsed by all participants to strengthen a whole-of-route approach to collaborate for the implementation of the five pillars.

In the spirit of tri-regional collaboration, the event will bring together representatives of Member States of the WHO African, European and Eastern Mediterranean regions, relevant United Nations organizations and other regional and international development partners.

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<sup>2</sup> WHO Regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean resolution EM/RC60/R.2 on Universal health coverage. Cairo: WHO Regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean; 2013 ([http://applications.emro.who.int/docs/RC60\\_Resolutions\\_2013\\_R2\\_15135\\_EN.pdf?ua=1](http://applications.emro.who.int/docs/RC60_Resolutions_2013_R2_15135_EN.pdf?ua=1)).

<sup>3</sup> Legido-Quigley H, Pocock N, Tan ST, Pajin L, Suphanchaimat R, Wickramage K, et al. Healthcare is not universal if undocumented migrants are excluded. *BMJ*. 2019;366:l4160. doi:10.1136/bmj.l4160.

## Meeting objectives

The meeting will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- to highlight country experiences and share lessons learned and best practices to implement the five pillars for action across the routes of migration, with a focus on the inclusion of refugees and migrants in universal health coverage;
- to identify and promote cross-border, intra- and interregional collaboration for the implementation of the five pillars;
- to promote the establishment of a technical network comprising Member State representatives and experts in refugee and migrant health to steer future interventions related to the five pillars;
- to endorse an outcome statement by all participants supporting a whole-of-route approach to collaborate for the implementation of the five pillars.

## Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the statements/presentations and meeting discussions will align with key insights from the five pillars for action.

- Finding opportunities for cross-border collaboration to conduct health screening at borders and crossing points, and ensuring access to and continuity of care.
- Presenting cost-benefit analyses to highlight how public investments in health can minimize out-of-pocket expenditure and reduce national expenditure.
- Integrating refugees and migrants in emergency preparedness plans, as well as ensuring the active role of refugees and migrants as advisors in disaster preparedness and management.
- Discussing whole-of-government approaches that address the social determinants of health across all levels of society.
- Supporting common strategies to set up shared data collection systems on migrant health and integration of these into national health information systems and across borders.
- Maintaining political leadership and commitment, and building momentum.
- Strengthening partnerships among actors operating at the intersection of migration and health, and mapping out new partnership opportunities.
- Underlining that timely, adequate and sustainable public and private funding is necessary to guarantee refugee and migrant health and well-being.
- Endorse an outcome statement by all participants supporting a whole-of-route approach to collaborate for the implementation of the five pillars

## Meeting structure

The interregional meeting will be structured in four parts.

First, participants will reflect on and share the challenges, lessons learned and best practices in implementing the five pillars for action since the March 2022 High-level Meeting to the day of the event.

Second, discussions will focus on actions for implementation. Participants will reflect on cross-border, intraregional and interregional collaboration to make their joint commitments more tangible.

Third, establishment of a technical network to raise, discuss and find joint solutions to the most pertinent issues and to ensure that interventions align with a whole-of-route approach. WHO will provide expertise and oversight. The technical network will include Member State representatives, health professionals, civil society organizations, academia and other experts in migration health. The technical network will hold regular meetings, both online and in-person.

Fourth, endorsing an outcome statement by all participants.

## Date and venue

16–17 March 2022, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

This will be a hybrid meeting with both online and in-person participation.

The working language will be English.

## Participants

- The meeting will be hosted by the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean in partnership with the WHO Regional Director for Africa and the WHO Regional Director for Europe.
- Delegates will include representatives of the ministries of health and other relevant ministries from at least 10 Member States in the WHO African Region, 10 in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region and 10 in the WHO European Region. The necessary arrangements will be made should more than 10 Member States from a WHO region wish to attend the event.
- In addition, representatives from United Nations agencies, civil society partners, other WHO personnel and relevant migrant health experts will participate.