WHA72: PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS: DRAFT GLOBAL ACTION PLAN, 2019–2023

ITEM 12.4

IntraHealth International believes everyone—especially refugees and migrants—deserves access to the health services they need to thrive. We commend the WHO for prioritizing the health of refugees and migrants in its universal health coverage goals and for preparing the new Draft Global Action Plan on this issue.

We are thankful the WHO recognizes that attacks on health care during conflict disrupt health services for refugees and migrants. These attacks are continuing around the world with impunity. According to a just-released report from the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, for which IntraHealth shares the secretariat, in 2018 there were at least 973 attacks on health in 23 countries around the world—a rise from the 701 reported attacks in 2017. At least 167 health workers died and 173 health facilities were damaged or destroyed in 2018. These attacks cause immediate suffering and deprive millions of people of access to essential health services, jeopardizing progress toward universal health coverage.

In 2018, the WHO launched its Surveillance System for Attacks on Healthcare to document attacks in nine countries in conflict. The WHO should continue to develop this system, expand it to include more countries, and engage in outreach to new potential partners, including NGOs, to ensure the system captures all attacks. The WHO should also provide information to describe the basic facts of each incident—withholding information as needed for security reasons—and take steps to enable identification of the perpetrators where known.

In May 2016, the UN Security Council passed resolution 2286, which set out a roadmap to protect health in conflict and hold perpetrators accountable, but not nearly enough has been done to enforce and implement it. Member States must take greater action to ensure health workers are safe to provide essential health services to the 258 million migrants and 25 million refugees around the world.

CONTACT

Vince Blaser
Senior Advocacy and Policy Advisor
vblaser@intrahealth.org