Consultation on sexual and reproductive health in protracted crises and recovery

Press Release

A key forum aimed at finding ways to meet the long neglected sexual and reproductive health needs of people affected by protracted crises, such as conflicts, will be held 28-30 September in Granada, Spain.

The World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are organizing the event, "Consultation on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Protracted Crises and Recovery," in association with the Andalusian School of Public Health.

"Today, there are still barriers to the full and effective implementation of sexual and reproductive health services during protracted crises and in the recovery phase that follows," according to Dr Daniel Lopez Acunã, Director of Recovery and Transition Programmes, WHO's Health Action in Crises Cluster. "This results in lower coverage of family planning, much higher rates of maternal mortality, ranging from 660 to 1800 deaths for every 100 000 live births, and in a decreased ability to prevent and manage gender-based violence."

Approximately 50 participants will attend the consultation, many of whom are directly involved in providing health services in countries either in or recovering from protracted crises. They will include health officials from affected countries, such as Sudan, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Nepal and the occupied Palestinian Territories. Representatives from UN organizations active in health recovery will also participate, as well as humanitarian partners from the Health Cluster who are providing health services in crisis situations, academic experts and donors.

The consultation will review past experiences and lessons already learned, plus identify ways to include sexual and reproductive health services as central part of the humanitarian and recovery health interventions.

Consensus will be sought on what services are needed in crisis situations and how best to make them sustainable as part of comprehensive national reproductive health services.

"We are observing a shift in pattern in emergencies from the acute and sudden onset to a more complex situation of recurrent and protracted crises. Humanitarian response that follows also needs to shift its focus increasingly on achieving longer term objectives that allow for more sustainable action. Reproductive health programming post crises should aim to ultimately support the achievement Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG 5). The way to address reproductive health needs in protracted crises and
recovery phases is to ensure all stakeholders work together to re-establish a functional health system," says Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Chief of the Humanitarian Response Branch of UNFPA. "Full establishment of comprehensive health services from primary health care up to tertiary level care can only be achieved by providing financial resources, strengthening health systems, and developing human resource that will address the sexual and reproductive health needs of the affected population" she added.

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There will be an encounter with the press prior to the opening session at 8.45 at the Andalusian School of Public Health.