Aligning Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health and Well-being in Humanitarian and Fragile Settings

A CALL TO ACTION

The World Health Organization has set a goal for the world of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC). To what extent that goal, which builds on the otherwise inalienable right to health, is likely to be achieved will depend on the extent to which countries are willing to recognize the needs of millions of women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings.

We, as key actors in the development and humanitarian sectors and as members and allies of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), fully support achieving targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, UHC and the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health and Well-being 2016-2030 (The Global Strategy). We commit to prioritizing and advocating for women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health and well-being in humanitarian and fragile settings.

We affirm that the Global Strategy focuses on safeguarding women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings and upholding their human rights to the highest attainable standard of health, even in the most difficult circumstances.

We affirm that the Global Strategy calls for coordinated, complementary and concrete actions within humanitarian, fragile and development sectors to achieve meaningful and sustainable progress for women, children and adolescents, including addressing gaps in the transition from humanitarian settings to sustainable development.

We affirm that today there are more than two billion people living in settings characterised by acute and protracted emergencies, conflict and fragility, where the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents is severely challenged, and any pre-existing vulnerabilities are exacerbated.

We affirm that today there are more people on the move than at any other time in history and that of the 69 million people displaced by humanitarian crises, at least half of all refugees are children under the age of 18 who are particularly exposed to physical and psychosocial vulnerability.

We affirm that while there has been a massive humanitarian response to this situation and to the needs of vulnerable populations everywhere, gaps still remain in the way in which the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents has been taken up.

We affirm that research, new knowledge and evidence in the field of women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health in humanitarian and fragile situations still need to be given more emphasis, especially in areas that have not been focused on to-date, such as newborn health, early childhood development, and adolescents’ health.
We affirm that while there has been a significant production of guidance materials, and other tools for use in humanitarian and fragile situations, the diffusion and applicability of these need to be assessed.

We affirm that despite the many technically sound interventions that have been developed to respond to the health needs of women, children and adolescents, a life course approach has often been missing, as has attention to the humanitarian-development nexus and the implications of this for achieving UHC.

We affirm that women, children and adolescents constitute the future and the security of communities, societies, and indeed of global health and security. To neglect them is to neglect not only their human and health rights, but the health and socio-political security of the societies they live in, those they move through and those they eventually resettle in.

We are committed to addressing this global challenge, and to harnessing the wealth of knowledge and skills that exist in order to create accelerated evidence-based health development interventions geared to promoting and protecting the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings.

We support PMNCH’s initiative to enhance coordination and alignment of knowledge, policies and actions to advance women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health and well-being in humanitarian and fragile settings, taking a life-course approach to reach every woman, every child, everywhere.

We commit to working together on:

- engaging with the PMNCH Platform for better alignment of women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health and well-being in humanitarian and fragile settings;

- aligning knowledge, policies and action around the life-course of women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings;

- ensuring that humanitarian and health policy makers are aware of the special needs of women, children and adolescents and make these a priority;

- ensuring greater and better aligned political, financial and resource commitment to work on the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings;

- strengthening country leadership, health systems, community engagement and the capacity of all stakeholders, including at local level, for sustainable impact on health and well-being of women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings;

- facilitating innovation and digital technology in all work for women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings.
We, the signatories of this call to action, affirm our commitment to ensuring the highest attainable standard of health for women, children and adolescents in humanitarian and fragile settings and those on the move.

Process and timeline

- The call to action will be spotlighted at key events throughout 2019, starting by a soft launch at a High-Level Briefing on Aligning Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health and Well-being in Humanitarian and Fragile Settings, Geneva, 21 May 2019.

- May-June will be a period for further iterations and refinement of the call to action as guided by partners.

Organisational signatories are being accepted now on a rolling basis. To ensure you are a part of this initiative, please complete this Sign-on Form; we ask that you indicate your organisation’s constituency and where it is based geographically. Please send any questions to hfspmnch@gmail.com.

May, 2019