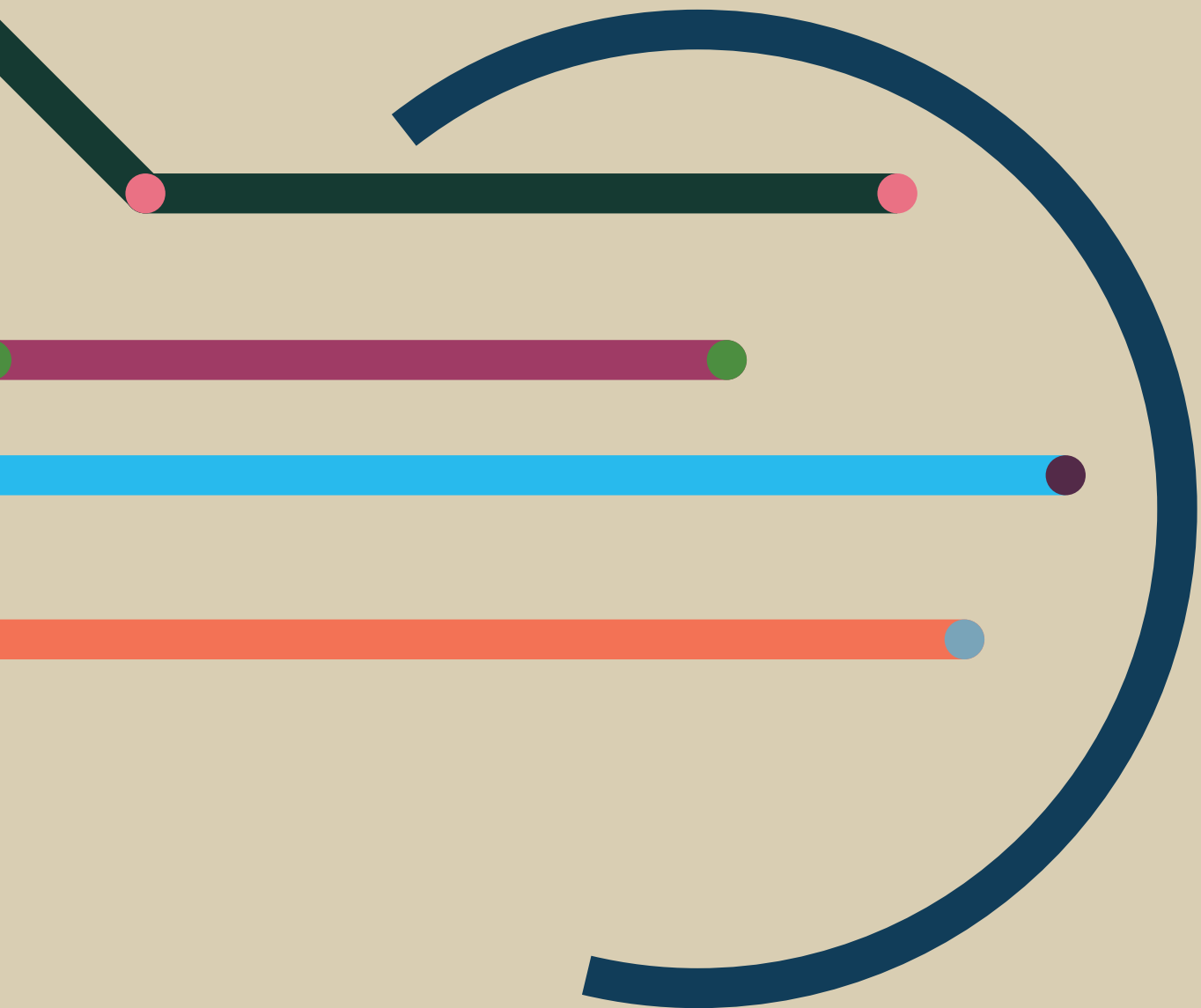




World Health
Organization

Common health needs of refugees and migrants: literature review



WHO Health and Migration Programme

The WHO Health and Migration Programme brings together WHO's technical departments, regional and country offices, as well as partners, to secure the health rights of refugees and migrants and achieve universal health coverage. To this end, the Programme has five core functions: to provide global leadership, high-level advocacy, coordination and policy on health and migration; to set norms and standards to support decision-making; to monitor trends, strengthen health information systems and promote tools and strategies; to provide specialized technical assistance, response and capacity-building support to address public health challenges associated with human mobility; and to promote global multilateral action and collaboration.



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Foreword

Refugees and migrants have the fundamental human right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. Yet they may also have specific health needs and vulnerabilities, including the impact of a hazardous migration journey, and require culturally sensitive and effective care that recognizes and responds to their physical and mental health needs. These needs are often expressed, yet in practice are all too often not met. Many come from societies affected by war, conflict and economic crisis and lead tough and insecure lives on the fringes of society, facing discrimination, poverty and poor housing, education and employment. Refugees and migrants may experience exclusion, stigma and discrimination, as well as serious challenges for obtaining health care, including language and cultural differences and restricted access to health services.

Over recent years, WHO has developed agreed policies and interventions to promote and secure the health rights of refugees and migrants in the context of the human right to health and universal health coverage for all populations, including refugees and migrants. The 2019 WHO Global Action Plan: Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants is aligned with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, WHO's Thirteenth Global Programme of Work and the global compacts on refugees and on

safe, orderly and regular migration. It was developed in close collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

All countries need robust and resilient health services of good quality that can respond to the needs of all in their population, including those who may be vulnerable such as refugees and migrants. National health policies, and supporting legislative and financial frameworks, should promote migrants' right to health, embracing health as an integrating force in society. Strengthening the capacity and reach of health systems is a global priority, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For refugees and migrants, systems must be responsive to their languages and their health problems across the life course, including noncommunicable and communicable diseases, and trauma from injuries and violence. Women and girls are at risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, abuse and trafficking and should have access to sexual and reproductive health-care services and rights. Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable and need special consideration.

This literature review draws on peer-reviewed research to identify key findings on the common health needs of refugees and migrants and the responses relevant to their health

across different contexts and clinical settings. The report looks specifically at the barriers and challenges that may prevent refugees and migrants from accessing health care and is intended to support countries in building health system capacity and resilience to provide quality people-centred health services for all, including for refugees and migrants.

Throughout the review, migration is recognized as a key determinant of health, one that shapes access

to health care and interactions with the health workforce. It is hoped that this review will show the complexity of the health needs of refugees and migrants throughout the life course and help countries to provide health services for them that are safe, effective and culturally sensitive.



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