



An Iraqi girl participating in an IOM Psychosocial Programme in Egypt © IOM 2011( Photo: Ahmed Rady)

## HEALTHY MIGRANTS IN HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: promoting and delivering quality health care for migrants and host communities

Within its Migration Health Division, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) delivers and promotes comprehensive, preventive and curative health programmes which are beneficial, accessible, and equitable for migrants and mobile populations. Bridging the needs of both migrants and IOM's member states, the Migration Health Division contributes towards the physical, mental and social well-being of migrants, enabling them and host communities to achieve social and economic development.

### Global health disparities

Migration is now a global phenomenon with close to one billion people on the move (UNDESA, 2009), and must be recognized as a social determinant of health; mobility not only impacts upon an individual's physical vulnerability, but also on mental and social well-being. Migrants and mobile populations face many obstacles in accessing essential health care services due to a number of factors; these include, irregular immigration status, language barriers, a lack of migrant-inclusive health policies, and inaccessibility of services. Such disparities are impacting upon the well-being of migrants and communities, and undermine the realization of global health goals, such as preventing HIV and containing tuberculosis, malaria and the human influenza pandemic. High morbidity and mortality among migrants, especially in irregular, forced, or exploitative migration situations is also an underestimated critical health concern that deserves international attention.

### Delivering equitable health care for all

Governments and health actors are increasingly recognizing the need for a comprehensive multi-sector approach to migration and health that goes beyond infectious diseases and border control. Migrant inclusive policies that address migration-related health vulnerabilities, non-communicable diseases, mental health, occupational health, environmental health, and access to migrant-friendly health care services must be promoted in order to achieve global development goals and equitable health for all. If we succeed in delivering equitable access for migrants then we will see a reduction in health and social costs, improved social cohesion and, most importantly, healthier migrants in healthier communities.

1. Ensure the right to health for migrants;
2. Avoid disparities in health status and access to health services;
3. Reduce excess mortality and morbidity among migrant populations,
4. Minimize the negative health outcomes of migration.

“Migrants and mobile populations benefit from an improved standard of physical, mental and social well-being, which enables them to substantially contribute towards the social and economic development of their home communities and host societies.”

**IOM Migration Health Division**



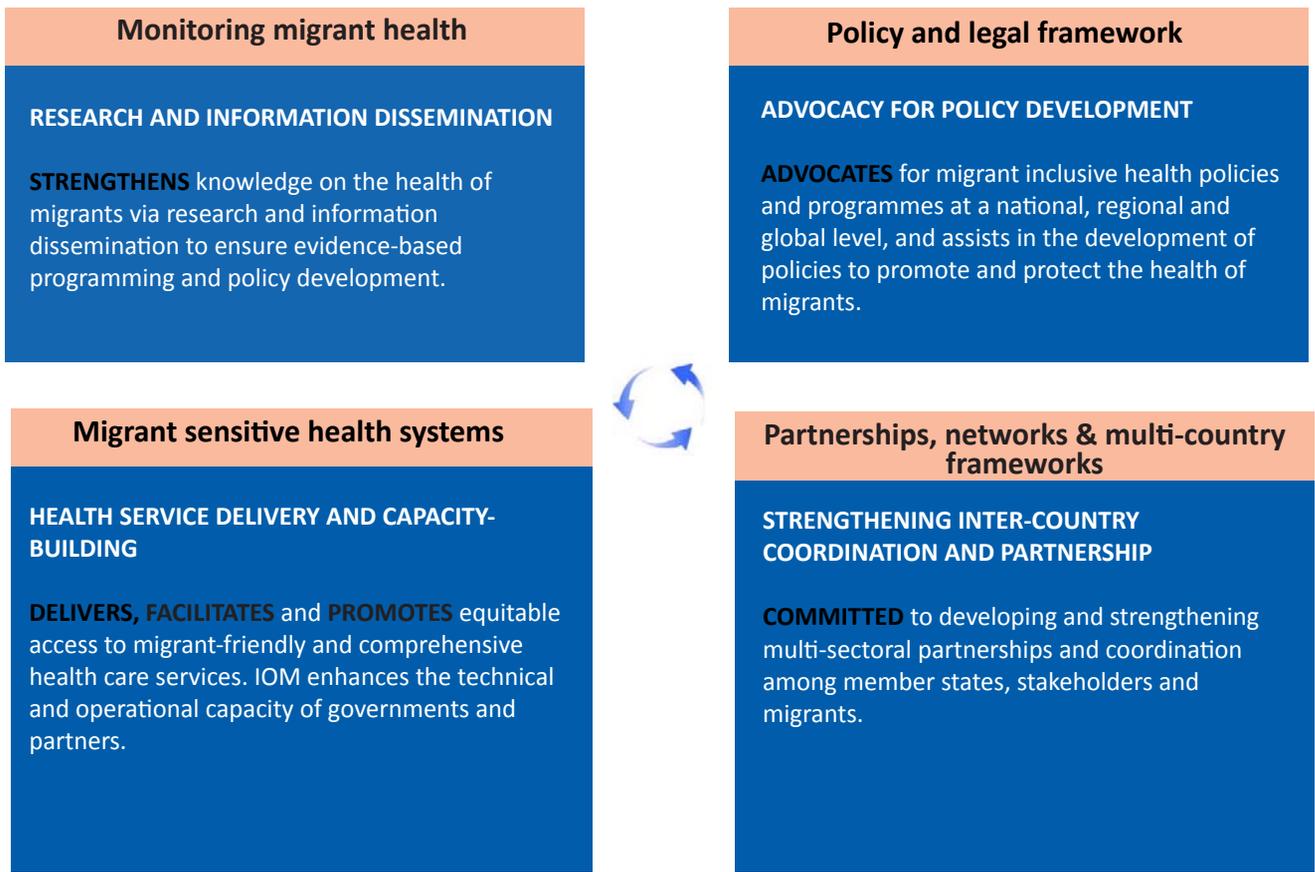
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
 Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
 Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)



IOM rapid response team in Chemoset Primary School in the Rift Valley, Kenya © IOM 2009 (Photo: P. Rotich)

### IOM's APPROACH TO HEALTH

In recent years there has been significant progress in advancing the migration health agenda. The 61st World Health Assembly Resolution *Health of Migrants 61.17*, adopted in May 2008, calls upon governments to promote the health of migrants through policies and programmes. Guided by the World Health Assembly Resolution, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization and the Government of Spain organized a Global Consultation on the Health of Migrants in March 2010. Four key priorities materialized from the consultation (see table below) which umbrellas IOM's global approach to migration and health:



Action points from the Global Consultation on the Health of Migrants, 2010  
 IOM's approach to migration health

## MIGRATION HEALTH DIVISION PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

IOM's Migration Health Division (MHD) conducts activities in the following three areas:

### 1. Migration Health Assessments and Travel Health Assistance

IOM carries out health assessments for various categories of migrants, including resettling refugees, labour migrants and displaced persons, either before departure or upon arrival. This reduces and manages the potential public health impact of human mobility on migrants, receiving countries and communities.

IOM offers pre-departure services, including treatment for endemic conditions such as malaria and diagnostic treatment for tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections. IOM also immunizes migrants against vaccine preventable diseases and offers an array of specialized counselling.

➔ **In 2010, IOM conducted over 280,000 health assessment in over 50 countries**



A Bhutanese refugee undergoing a health assessment in Damak, Nepal.

### 2. Health Promotion and Assistance for Migrants

IOM promotes the health of migrants and communities through advocating for migrant-inclusive health policies, delivering technical assistance and enhancing the capacity of governments and partners to provide migrant-friendly services.



Pandemic Preparedness for Migrants and Host Communities hand washing campaign in Cambodia

IOM's programmes include addressing HIV, cholera, tuberculosis, malaria, noncommunicable diseases, environmental health and the human influenza pandemic, in addition to assisting governments in managing the migration of health workers.

➔ **212 projects were carried out worldwide in 2010**

### 3. Migration Health Assistance for Crisis-Affected Populations

Health is an integrated component of IOM's overall humanitarian response, particularly in natural disasters where IOM is a Coordination Camp Management Cluster lead. IOM assists crisis-affected populations, governments and host communities to strengthen and re-establish primary health care systems.

IOM delivers health care and psychosocial support for displaced persons, facilitates medical referrals and arranges medical evacuations for individuals who cannot be cared for locally. IOM assists in rebuilding community-based services and strengthens crisis-affected health care systems.

➔ **In 2010, IOM delivered services to crisis-affected populations in a number of countries, including Haiti, Kenya, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Zimbabwe**

"The wealth of poor people lies in their capacities and their assets. Of these, health is the most important. If health is an asset and ill-health a liability, protecting and promoting health care is central to the entire process of poverty reduction and human development."

Zambia's Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper, 2002

## CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

MHD also accounts for three cross cross-cutting issues:

### 1. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

IOM enhances the capacity of psychosocial services for vulnerable migrants, including asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking, participants in voluntary return programmes and unaccompanied minors.

IOM is a member of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Mental Health and Psychosocial Response in Emergency, and has, since 1998, provided psychosocial support to crisis affected populations in emergency and post-emergency situations. Furthermore, IOM has developed guidelines and training tools to better meet the psychosocial needs of crisis-affected communities, mobile groups and host communities.



IOM health team assists earthquake affected persons in Haiti

### 2. Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases

Mobility can play a major role in the transmission of emerging and re-emerging diseases. A lack of accessible health care and vaccinations for migrants is aggravating newly emerging diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome, avian influenza and H1N1. We are also seeing a spike in previously controlled diseases such as cholera, malaria and tuberculosis.



IOM supports the STOP TB Programme in Thailand

IOM works in close partnership with migrant communities, member states and partners to provide technical support and to enhance behavioural change activities utilizing migrant community workers.

### 3. HIV and Population Mobility

IOM addresses the HIV risks and vulnerabilities of irregular migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees, families and partners of migrants, mobile populations, victims of sexual and gender-based violence and trafficked persons during all phases of the migration process.

IOM delivers direct services, including anti-retroviral therapy and voluntary HIV testing and counselling. IOM also works closely with policy-makers, carries out ground-breaking research and advocates for cross-border cooperation to promote evidence-informed policies to address HIV and mobility.

**Migration Health Division**  
International Organization for Migration, Geneva

17 route des Morillons • CH-1211 Geneva 19 • Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 717 9111 • Fax: +41 22 798 6150 • E-mail: mhddpt@iom.int

Website: <http://www.iom.int>

