

# HEALTH AND MIGRATION

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES IN GLOBAL HEALTH

**Dr Santino Severoni**

Director, WHO Health and Migration

24 March 2025

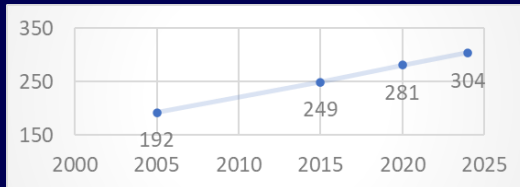
# In their voice: Refugee and Migrant Health



An estimated **1 billion people (or 1 in 8)** globally have migrated or been forcibly displaced

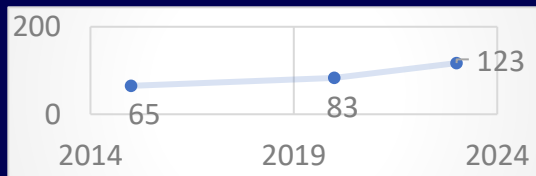
**304 M**

International Migrants  
(UN DESA, 2025)



**123 M**

Forcibly Displaced  
(UNHCR, 2024)



**763 M**

Internal Migrants – 71.1 IDPs  
G.E.M report 2013



# Health and Migration: A global priority?

**There is no public health without addressing refugee & migrant health.**

- Migration & displacement directly impact public & individual health.

**Addressing migrant health is essential to achieving broader health, migration, and development objectives.**

- WHO Triple Billion Targets: Achieving UHC, addressing health emergencies, & promoting healthier populations.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Migration- a key driver of sustainable development, linked to SDG 3, 8, 10, and 13.





# Holistic overview: Determinants of Health



Determinants of health and phases of migration.

Source: Reproduced with permission of the publisher from Dalhgren & Whitehead

**Not inherently less healthy than host population, challenging conditions along migration phases impact their health.**

- **Individual characteristics and behaviours:** Genetics, gender, age, and personal behaviors that influence health outcomes.
- **Social and Economic Environment:** Education, income, social status, employment, culture, social support networks, and access to health services.
- **Physical Environment:** Safe water, clean air, healthy workplaces, housing, food, and nutrition, all of which impact health directly.

**“The experience of displacement and migration is itself a determinant of health.”**

# Global Impacts of Climate Change on Health

**3.6 billion**

Live in areas highly susceptible  
to climate change  
(IPCC 2022)

**143 million**

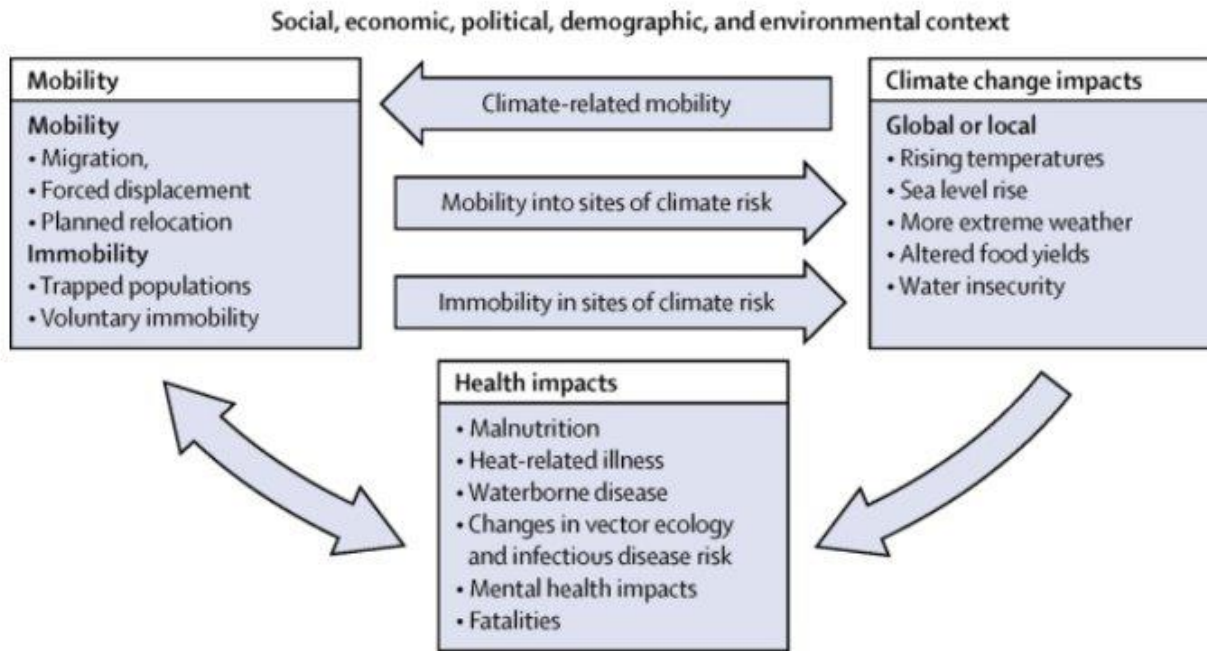
Projected displacement due to climate  
change by 2025 (*UN Intergovernmental  
Panel on Climate Change*)

**1.2 billion**

Displaced by climate change  
globally by 2050  
(*Institute for Economics & Peace*)

The impacts of climate  
change on displacement  
are projected to intensify.

# The Climate Change- Migration- Health Nexus



- Migration can improve health outcomes or increase exposure to health risks.
- Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, driving displacement and migration.
- Common health risks include: infectious diseases, mental health challenges, and chronic conditions.
- Strengthening climate-resilient, migrant-inclusive health systems is essential for equity and well-being.

Source: Celia McMichael, Lancet 2020

# Health and Migration Policy Landscape: Redefining the Narrative



**2008**  
WHA

Resolution on the  
Health of Migrants



**2016**

UNGA Summit for  
Refugees and  
Migrants  
(NY Declaration)



**2017**

WHA

WHO Global  
Framework and  
Resolution 70.15



**2018**

WHO alignment with  
Global Compact for  
Migration and Global  
Compact on Refugees



**2019**

WHA

WHO Global Action  
Plan «Promoting the  
health of refugees  
and migrants»



**2023**

WHA

Extension of Global  
Action Plan from  
2023 to 2030



**2024**

Health and migration  
prioritized in the new  
WHO global health  
strategy

From a side-effect  
of migration



To an  
important  
political topic

# Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants: Core Functions and Action Plan



Global leadership in health and migration policy, advocacy and diplomacy



Setting norms and standards and promoting research



Monitoring trends, documenting progress and developing tools



Technical assistance to countries and partners



Multilateral, interregional collaboration and strategic partnerships

**WHO Health and Migration's five core functions.**



**1** Promote the health of refugees and migrants through a mix of short-term and long-term public health interventions.



**3** Advocate the mainstreaming of refugee and migrant health into global, regional and country agendas and the promotion of: refugee-sensitive and migrant-sensitive health policies and legal and social protection; the health and well-being of refugee and migrant women, children and adolescents; gender equality and empowerment of refugee and migrant women and girls; and partnerships and intersectoral, intercountry and interagency coordination and collaboration mechanisms.



**5** Strengthen health monitoring and health information systems.



**2** Promote continuity and quality of essential health care, while developing, reinforcing and implementing occupational health and safety measures.



**4** Enhance capacity to tackle the social determinants of health and to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including universal health coverage.

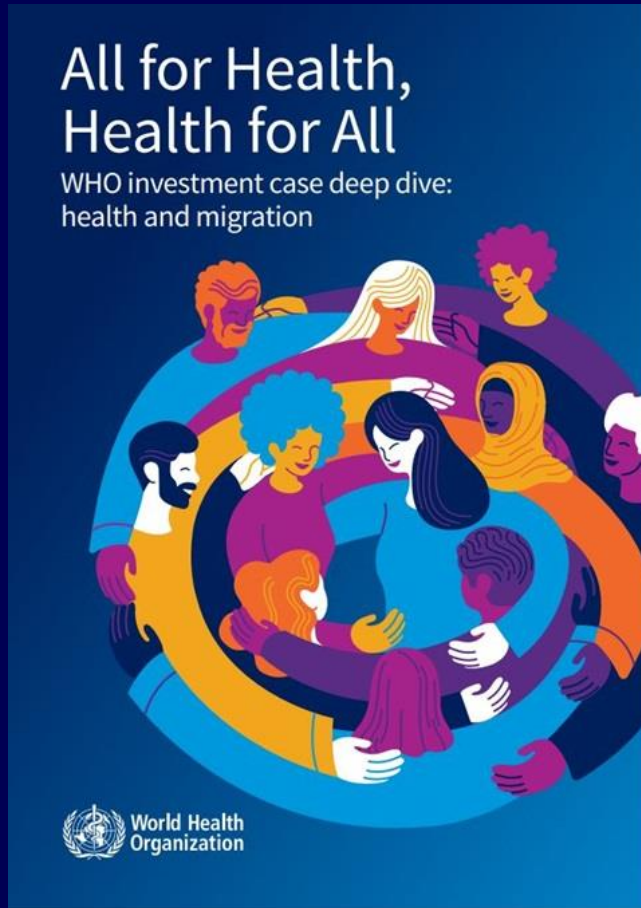


**6** Support measures to improve evidence-based health communication and to counter misperceptions about migrant and refugee health.

**WHO Global Action Plan on Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants 2019-2030**



# Global leadership in health and migration policy, advocacy and diplomacy



## GPW14 and Policy Progress

- **First-ever inclusion** of health and migration in WHO global strategy.
- Recognition of the **impact of global trends** like migration and displacement on people's health and well-being.
- **109 countries** prioritized health and migration in **Programme Budget 2026-2027** prioritization exercise, aligning with the MS participating in the GAP monitoring framework **survey**.
  - PB prioritization and survey **guide WHO country assistance**.
- Investment case and deep dive on health and migration **support resource mobilization**.
- **Regional frameworks/guidelines** in place in AMRO, EMRO and EURO.
- **Global Consultation on Health of Refugees and Migrants:** Organized with IOM and UNHCR, held in Spain (2010), Sri Lanka (2017), and Morocco (2023) with 50 Member States, leading to the **Rabat Declaration** on Health and Migration.

# WHO Global Research Agenda on health, migration and displacement (GRA)

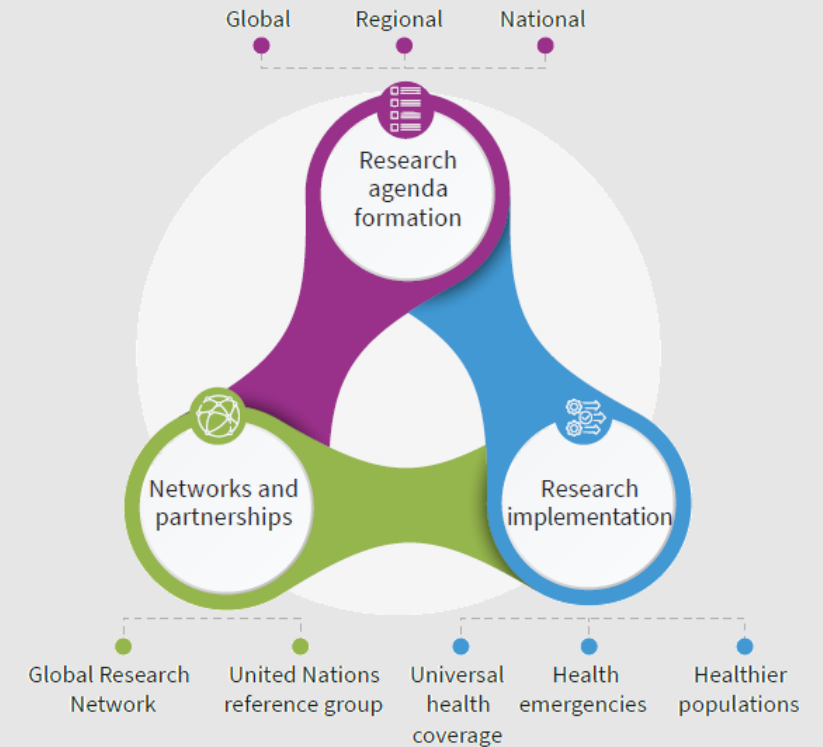
Strengthening research and translating research priorities into equitable policy and practices.

Developed through global expert consultations with over 180 policymakers, researchers & civil society.

## Five Global Research Priorities

Strengthening health system; data monitoring; social determinants; service access; and disease prevention for migrants & refugees.

## GRA Implementation workstreams



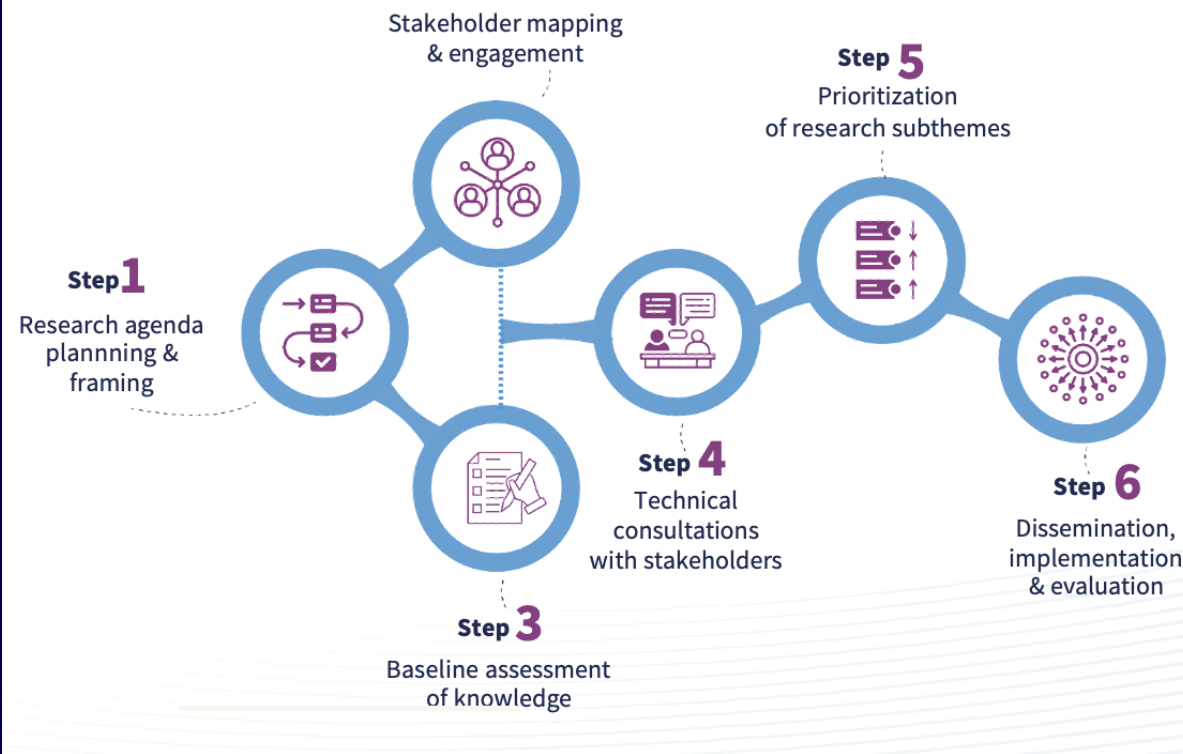
## Toolkit & Implementation Guide

Turn research into inclusive, data-driven health strategies for migrants and refugees.

# Global Research Agenda Implementation

## Addressing global evidence gaps on health, migration, and displacement for policy action

- **Operational research** on: I) immunization; II) health financing (Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa).
- National (South Africa, Kenya) and regional (WPRO, EURO) research **agendas guiding policy action**.
- **New tools**, including a funding landscape and dashboard, to support evidence-based policymaking.
- **Global Research Network** on health, migration, and displacement launching in 2025 to enhance policy impact.
- **Global engagement webinar series** reached over 700 participants.

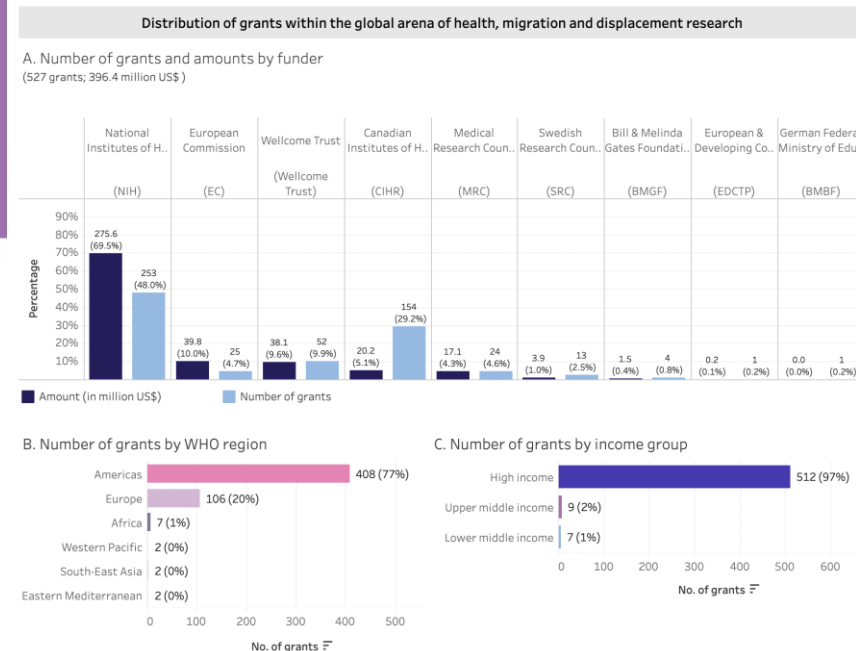


# Towards Equity in Refugee and Migrant Health Research Funding

## 2016-2020 Funding analysis

- Analysis of 9 major global funders.
- **97% of grants** directed to the Americas & Europe (89% from US, Canada, UK).
- **Most limited funding for Inclusive UHC & Primary Health Care**
- **Less than 20% of grants** were awarded for **5+ years**.

*Dashboard hosted by the WHO Global Observatory on Health Research and Development*





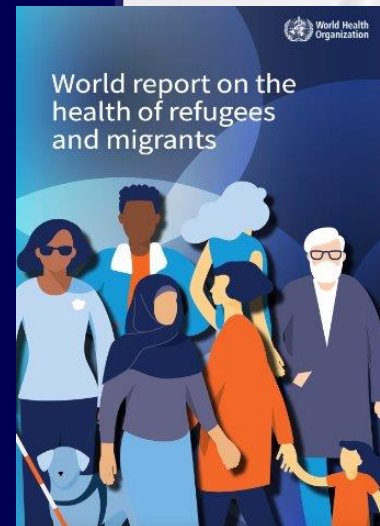
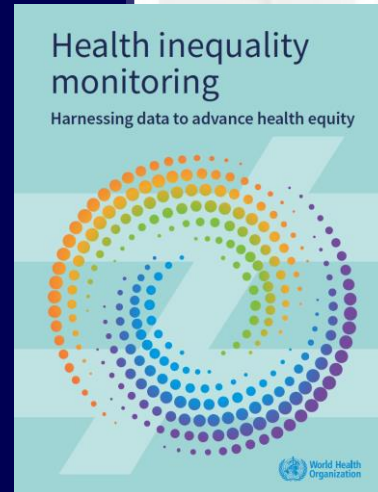
# Data: Monitoring Refugee and Migrant Health

## Representative, standardized Refugee & Migrant Health Data:

Importance- Informs policies, tracks progress & improves health access.

Current Gaps – Poor quality, lack of disaggregation, inconsistent collection, and limited comparability across countries and time.

Way Forward – Strengthen data collection, standardize methods & improve representation.



“More and better-quality data are urgently needed **to monitor the health of refugees and migrants** if many health and health-related SDGs and targets are to be met.”

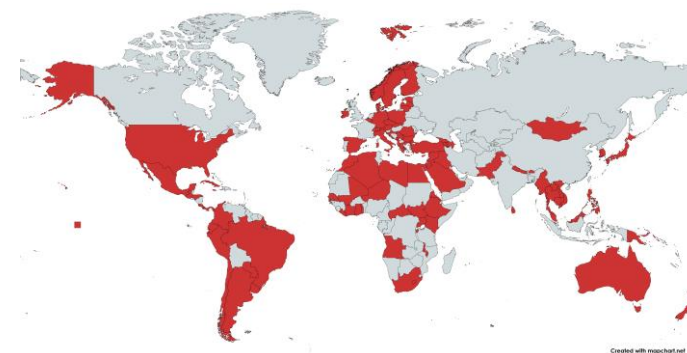
# Monitoring trends, documenting progress and developing tools

## GAP Monitoring Framework

- First baseline GAP Survey with 98 Member States' input.
- Results yielding 2<sup>nd</sup> World Report on the health of refugees and migrants.

### Main preliminary finding

82% of participating countries reporting positively on equal access to emergency health services.



## Health and Migration – Baseline Indicator

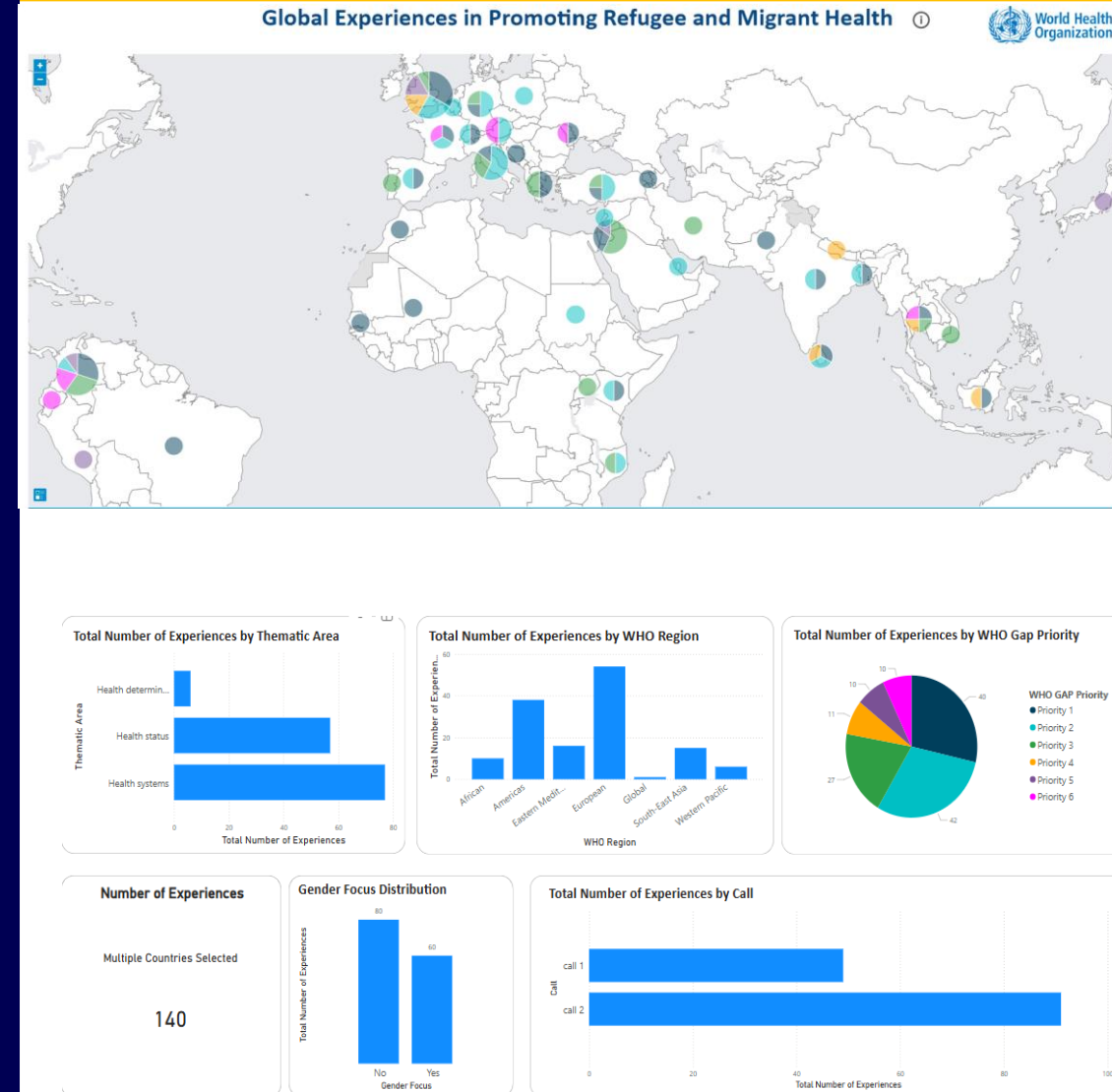
"Equal access to emergency and/or essential health services to refugees and migrants as compared to host population"

# Monitoring trends, documenting progress and developing tools

## Dashboard on global experiences in promoting refugee and migrant health

- **Annual contributions** from Member States.
- Since 2022, **140 promising practices** from **63 Member States** showcasing progress.
- Launched an **interactive dashboard** in Dec 2024.
- **Live platform**- an updated repository of best practices.
- Provides stakeholders with **data-driven insights**.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Open Call: to be launched in April 2025.**



# Multi-lateral, inter-regional collaboration and strategic partnerships

Foster **PARTNERSHIPS** with relevant UN agencies, WHO Regions, technical domains, civil society organizations, and donors to **PROMOTE COLLABORATION** across borders, countries, and regions hosting refugees and migrants.

Further develop the **Technical Expert Network (TEN)** and facilitate **EXCHANGES** to address common challenges, enabling joint planning, implementation, and cross-regional dialogue and collaboration.



## UN Network on MIGRATION

- Member of the Executive Committee
- Co-lead WS 3 – Preparing for future health emergencies by mainstreaming public health considerations into migration policies and services, at national and local levels
- MPTF - funding instrument for collaboration with national partners for implementation of GCM



## IOM and UNHCR

- Memorandum of Understanding
- Group of Friends on Health (Global Refugee Forum)



## INTER-COUNTRY / INTER-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

- Collaborate with all WHO Regions
- Forge cross-cutting partnerships with WHO technical domains aligned with the Triple Billion Targets





# Theory of Change: technical assistance to countries

Transformative changes in the way countries understand and deal with refugee and migrant health issues

Awareness building – active involvement of refugees, migrants and displaced people in decision-making



Public health  
needs  
Evidence to  
inform policy  
and action



Political  
engagement and  
commitment  
Policy dialogues  
Diplomacy



Addressing the social  
determinants of  
migration  
Inclusive platforms  
Cultural competence



Policy adaptation  
and integration  
Whole of  
government  
Whole of society



Capacity to  
deliver impact  
Governance  
Accountability  
Battle  
disinformation

Continuously adapting to emerging priorities, public health threats, new knowledge, needs, and sociopolitical contexts

# Technical assistance to countries and partners

## Refugee and Migrant Health System Reviews

Placing refugee and migrant health at the core of multi-sectoral-national policies.

- Evidence-based baseline for tailored country support.
- Policy change and result-oriented actions for health system strengthening in: Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Jordan, Thailand, Uganda, South Africa.



## Competency Standards

Benchmark for the health workforce in providing culturally-sensitive, quality care to refugees and migrants.

- **90 policy makers and 355 health workers** trained (Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal).
- **30 health mediators** trained (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania).
- **27 policy makers** oriented (Egypt, Estonia, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Uganda).
- E-learning course launched: enrollments from **113** countries and over **49,000** platform visits.

# Technical assistance to countries and partners

## Refugee and Migrant Health Toolkit



Essential Knowledge

Module 1

Module 2

Module 3

Module 4

Module 5

Module 6

# Technical assistance to countries and partners

## Global school on refugee and migrant health

Brings together experts and stakeholders. Inspires innovation and partnerships.

Over 12,000 participants from 160+ countries trained through OpenWHO/ WHO Academy courses.



(c) WHO



Keynote  
speeches



Live panel  
discussion



Video  
reportages



Q&A  
sessions

## The fifth Global School at a glance



**+3600**  
PARTICIPANTS



**100**  
IN-PERSON  
PARTICIPANTS



**22**  
SPEAKERS



**5**  
DAY EVENT



**+7500**  
VIEWERS OF OUR  
LIVE SESSIONS



**+500**  
QUESTIONS  
SUBMITTED BY PAR-  
TICIPANTS



**970**  
CERTIFIED  
PARTICIPANTS



**4**  
NATIONAL  
SIDE-EVENTS





# **GLOBAL SCHOOL ON REFUGEE AND MIGRANT HEALTH:**

EXCHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND LEVERAGING EXPERIENCES

# Thank you



Visit our webpage for  
more resources!

## **Dr Santino Severoni**

Director, WHO Health and Migration

Division of Universal Health Coverage and  
Healthier Populations

severonis@who.int; healthmigration@who.int



**World Health  
Organization**