World Federation of Public Health Associations
Working Group
Public Health in Emergencies and Disasters
Work Plan 2018-2019

Background

Increasing impact and complexity of disasters is evident from the preceding decade during which over 700,000 people lost their lives in disasters, more than 1.4 million were injured, 23 million displaced, and economic losses exceeded US$1.3 trillion.

Disaster risk is already undermining the capacity of many countries to make the capital investments and social expenditures necessary to develop sustainably. At the same time, growing global inequality, increasing hazard exposure, rapid urbanization and the overconsumption of energy and natural capital threaten to drive risk to dangerous and unpredictable levels with systemic global impacts.

Impacts from climate change and extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, floods, cyclones, and wildfires – all types of hazard that can lead to disasters - include alteration of ecosystems, disruption of agriculture and food production and water supply, damage to infrastructure, including health centers and hospitals, and settlements, morbidity and mortality, and consequences for mental health and human well-being, in addition to increasing rates of infectious diseases and vector-borne diseases. The effects can be direct or indirect mediated by other risk drivers such as land use changes.

The growing number and scope of complex emergencies, including civil unrest, conflict and wars, has posed greater challenge to the humanitarian actors including frontline public health workers resulting in more than 33 million internally displaced people (IDPs) at the global level. In the 2007 edition of the World Health Report, WHO reports armed conflict as the 19th leading cause of loss of disability adjusted life years (DALY)\(^1\). Armed conflict has immense impact on a population’s health. Women and children are particularly vulnerable during armed conflict and bear the greatest burden of armed conflict and prolonged social unrest.

\(^1\) Number of potential years of life lost due to premature deaths and disability (WHO 2007)
**Purpose**

The Working Group on Public Health in Disasters and Emergencies will function under the auspices of Governing Council of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA). The aim of the Working Group is to advocate for the integration of public health in risk management of emergencies and disasters (in all phases of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery). It will also advocate for the wellbeing and protection of people and healthcare workers responding to emergencies or disasters.

**Roles and Tasks for the Working Group**

1. Contribute to the creation of evidence-base for public health issues in emergencies and disasters.
2. Advocate for the effective use of public health interventions, including local interventions, in emergencies and disasters.
3. Advocate for integration of public health in the preparedness and response efforts in emergencies and disasters.
4. Advocate for, and support, cross-sectoral and transboundary collaboration for all hazards through compiling and disseminating of best practices, case studies and exchange of knowledge and experiences to enable policy and planning.
5. Support efforts to create awareness about public health issues in emergencies, including through developing concept papers and policy briefs and support members of public health associations in their promotion efforts for public health in emergencies.
6. Contribute to the integration of topics surrounding disasters and emergencies in public health education and training and strengthen capacity building of health workers in disaster risk reduction.
7. Support efforts to generating funds for public health interventions in emergencies.
8. Advocate for the health and protection of population and healthcare workers during emergencies.

\[\text{Number of potential years of life lost due to premature deaths and disability (WHO 2007)}\]
## Priorities for 2018-2019

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<tr>
<th>Priority/outcome</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Means of implementation</th>
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<td><strong>1. Successful integration of public health issues in the preparedness and response efforts in disasters and emergencies and in implementation of the health and disasters related 2030 Agenda, especially through SDG 3 and 11, and within key institutions and entities</strong></td>
<td>- Follow-up with and support to PH Associations and other actors, at the political and technical level, to facilitate coherent engagement with IAEG-SDGs and relevant UN and international agencies&lt;br&gt;- Develop a common narrative on the role of PH Associations on the health in related SDGs and in Disaster Risk Reduction&lt;br&gt;- Active participation in SDGs and DRR forums, activities and work streams&lt;br&gt;- Engagement with the International Humanitarian Partnership and other actors to advocate for health at the heart of emergencies and disasters.&lt;br&gt;- Updated analysis on health in emergencies situation, potential role, strategic orientation&lt;br&gt;- Active engagement in the health emergency programs advisory groups</td>
<td>SDGs and DRR key meetings&lt;br&gt;SDGs and DRR key meetings&lt;br&gt;Emergency programs advisory groups consultations</td>
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<td><strong>2. Compile and disseminate best practices, case studies and exchange of knowledge and experiences in using evidence-based public health interventions in emergencies and disasters to enable policy and planning</strong></td>
<td>- Develop and gain wide agreement for a common narrative linking health and emergencies and disasters&lt;br&gt;- Have key messages reflected in senior health and emergency leaders’ remarks.&lt;br&gt;- Convene meetings for members of the group at key events&lt;br&gt;- Publish four OpEds.&lt;br&gt;- Facilitation of an informal space to accelerate action and encourage partnerships.&lt;br&gt;- Update web-page for the Working Group on WFPHA website with spaces for advocacy, action and accountability and linked to key websites</td>
<td>Consultations and joint working with relevant agencies and the media and journals&lt;br&gt;Publications and statements&lt;br&gt;WFPHA web manager</td>
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<td>Priority/outcome</td>
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| 3. Create awareness about public health issues in emergencies in the face of climate change, urbanization and other risk drivers | - Develop and gain wide agreement for a common narrative on the linkages of health, emergencies and disasters.  
- Have key messages developed and disseminated online and to key actors  
- OpEds  
- Concept papers and policy briefs  
- Support members of PH Associations in their advocacy efforts for public health in emergencies | - Consultations and joint working with relevant agencies and the media  
- Publications and statements                                                                                     |
| 4. Advocate for the health and protection of population and health care workers during emergencies | - Advocate against attacks on health-care facilities and health care workers during armed violence and internal disturbances and conflicts through the wide dissemination of the related Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.  
- Advocate against the misuse of health-care facilities  
- Call for the establishment of neutralized zones to protect the wounded, the sick and civilians from the effects of war, conflict and emergencies. | - Consultations and joint working with relevant agencies such as ICRC, WHO, MSF  
- Publications and statements                                                                                     |
| 5. Promote health care for migrants and host communities                          | - Contribute to strengthen knowledge on the health of migrants via research and information dissemination  
- Advocate for policy development for migrant-inclusive health policies and programs.  
- Promote equitable access to migrant-friendly and comprehensive health care services | - Consultations and joint working with relevant agencies such as IOM and WHO  
- Publications and research                                                                                     |