

Beat: Health

Five points WHO would like to see reflected at the World Humanitarian Summit

Summit in Istanbul in May 2016

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In May 2016, the global community will converge on Istanbul, Turkey, for the World Humanitarian Summit ““ the culmination of a worldwide consultation process involving eight regions and more than 23 000 contributing parties. It will bring together the greatest ideas and best practices from around the world and set the agenda for humanitarian action for years to come.

As part of the consultation process, the World Health Organization has submitted a position paper arguing for the centrality of health in humanitarian action. Here are the five key messages from the document :

1 - The health and well-being of affected populations is the ultimate goal of humanitarian action

Regardless of the type of event ““ natural disaster, conflict or disease outbreak ““ there are always risks to health. United Nations surveys reveal that health is consistently among the top three priorities for crisis-affected populations.

2 - The risks to health posed by humanitarian emergencies are at all-time highs ““ and worsening

Past decades have witnessed major events that pose huge risks to health, including sudden onset natural disasters (eg. the Haiti earthquake), conflicts (eg. Syria), and disease outbreaks (eg. Ebola in West Africa). There are currently 80 million crisis-affected people in need of assistance worldwide.

3 - Protracted conflict situations are among the greatest threats to health and health workers globally

It is estimated that 60% of preventable maternal deaths and 53% of under-five deaths take place in settings of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. Attacks against health are another disturbing feature of today’s conflicts. A WHO report found that 603 health workers died from violent attacks during humanitarian emergencies in 2014.

4 - Crises caused by disease outbreaks require the health and humanitarian communities to work together

The Ebola crisis in West Africa was a “defining moment for the health of the global community“^[2]. It showed that a strong WHO response capacity is required. But WHO cannot manage such crises alone - the health and humanitarian communities must work more closely together.

5 - Managing health risks is essential: preparedness pays at all levels ““ country regional and global

By managing risks to health, people are better able to recover and sustain effective livelihoods in the aftermath of a disaster. The Sendai Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), adopted by 187 countries, puts health at the centre of global policy and action to reduce the risks associated with disasters.

Source :World Health Organization

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