

WHO statement on the occasion of the IOM 60th Anniversary.

Migrant health: our joint responsibility

The health needs and implications of today's estimated 214 Million international migrants and 740 Million internal migrants, many of whom have limited or no access to health services must be a priority to health systems in every country.

WHO and its Member States have increasingly recognized the need to change the traditional ways to address migrant health that have focussed on border control and the protection of national public health systems from the spread of infectious diseases, towards more inclusive approaches that emphasize health inequities, migrants' rights to health, social health determinants, and the need to protect migrants' health.

The WHO Resolution on 'the health of migrants' which was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2008, is a testimony of the appeal of Member States for coordinated migrant sensitive health policies and practices and for a commitment from WHO to promote migrant health in collaboration with other relevant organizations, very specially with IOM.

Guided by the action points of the Resolution, WHO, in collaboration with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Ministry of Health and Social Policy of the Government of Spain, organized the Global Consultation on Migrant Health in Madrid in March 2010. This multi stakeholder event allowed us to take stock of major developments since the Resolution and reach consensus on priorities and related actions to be taken.

The health of migrants in an irregular situation is particularly at risk. Many of these migrants lack access to health services and financial protection in health for themselves and their family members, they cannot exercise their right to health, and many do not seek care in fear of being reported to authorities. Expanding social protection in health to migrants is therefore a critical priority in the years ahead

We applaud the tremendous accomplishments of IOM over its 60 years of existence and admire the dedication of its staff, many of whom promote, protect and improve the health of migrants and their communities. We are pleased to see that the longstanding collaboration between IOM and WHO has increased awareness on the importance of migrant health and has allowed us to jointly work on programmes and develop an agenda to better address the needs of our Member States and moreover, migrants.