Impact of COVID19 on Migrants, Refugees, and other displaced populations

Dr. Carlos Van der Laat
International Organization for Migration – IOM
April 08, 2021
Race, ethnic identity, systemic inequalities

Pre-existing Chronic diseases

Environmental conditions

Socioeconomic status, poverty

Human behavior and personal perception to health

Public policies and “politization” of the context

Human mobility, migration, displacement

Access to health services

Race, ethnic identity, systemic inequalities
“leaving no one behind”

“if someone is left behind, no one will move forward”. 
Health crisis

High mortality rates

- **Unsanitary and crowded conditions**
  - crowded camps, informal settlements, slums, collective shelters, dormitories and immigration detention centres
  - Physical distancing measures are impossible.

- **Disruption of health services**
  - 71% disruption of routine inmunization
  - 66% disruption of health services for NCDs
  - 34 countries - disruption ARV (June 2020)
  - 24 countries - critical low stock ARVs (June 2020)

- **Migrant workers seen as “essential”**
- Not necessarily recognized for their work

- **Poorly managed quarantine measures**
  - lock downs and harsh containment measures
  - limited access to healthcare and basic services
  - poor working conditions
  - exploitative labour systems

- **Lack of income security** - incentive to work while sick - further spread of the virus.

... for migrants, refugees, IDPs?

"Open the economy!!
I’ll send my employee to work!"

A Crisis Within a Crisis: Venezuela and COVID-19

By Cynthia J. Alonso & Orliana Yunes Pring

IOM - UN Migration
The crisis impacts people on the move in the form of three (+1) interlocking crises

Health – Socioeconomic- Protection- Perception

Socio-economic crisis
• Unemployment - US
  • Migrant women 4.3% to 18%
  • Migrant men from 3% to 15.3%
• No job – no visa – no support - stranded
• Remittances ↓ by $109 billion (2020)

Protection crisis
• No Access to communities
• Protection programs suspended
• Funding uncertainty

Perception crisis
• Stigma – Discrimination
• Misinformation, fake news
• Measures based on xenophobia

"Our greatest enemy right now is not the virus itself. It’s fear, rumours and stigma. Our greatest assets are facts, reason and solidarity."

WHO Director General, Opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19, 28 February 2020
Healthcare access

• Increased need to bolster public health services in low-income and humanitarian settings

• FBOs and religious leaders are trusted and provide an interface between grassroots level and the state.

• There are positive approaches relating to all faiths and confessions: humanity, hope, love and acceptance.
Public Health only works when everyone is included.

Thank you!

Dr. Carlos Van der Laat
cvanderlaat@iom.int