Public health area
Main issues of concern

Communicable diseases

People living in conflict areas and facing disruptions in safe water and sanitation services are at risk of waterborne diseases.

Vaccine shortages, low vaccination rates and disruption to the cold chain can also lead to increased cases of diseases such as polio. Children who have been displaced or have been previously un-vaccinated or under-vaccinated are especially at risk.

Gender

Women and adolescent girls, especially those in fragile or hostile settings, face gender-based marginalization, including sexual violence. These can increase during emergencies, resulting in early pregnancies that further threaten girls' lives.

Migrant health

Displaced populations fleeing conflict usually require emergency and trauma health care, while others with chronic health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and mental health conditions also require health services.

Noncommunicable diseases

Patients already suffering from chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, kidney disorders, diabetes and cancers prior to an emergency may have severe exacerbations due to the inability to access medications or facilities for treatment.

Persons with disabilities

Persons living with disabilities are they less likely to receive the aid they need during a humanitarian crisis and may face challenges in accessing healthcare, particularly mental health services.

Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health

In crisis settings women and girls often lack access to basic health services, such as family planning, prenatal and postnatal care, and protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, and adolescents need access to education and health care services, including contraception.

Mental health

Programmes for the proper rehabilitation of patients suffering from mental health disorders should be initiated as early as possible to prevent further setbacks caused by displacement due to the stress of rebuilding and resettling in an area that is known to be disaster or war prone.

Nutrition

Acute disasters, whether major with long-term impact or temporary, may highlight or worsen a pre-existing malnutrition crisis. Action should be taken to prevent and treat malnutrition, especially among vulnerable populations such as pregnant women, infants and children, and individuals with disabilities, and individuals with chronic illnesses (e.g. patients suffering from tuberculosis).

Trauma and surgical care

Increased numbers of injured patients can face challenges finding trauma care and surgical services as a result of shortages in qualified health staff, medicines, and medical supplies. The availability of referral services may also be limited.

Water Sanitation and Health

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Disrupted water and sanitation systems limit the supply of safe water for populations and health facilities.