



Geneva Health Forum 2008

Strengthening Health Systems and the Global Health Workforce

Access to Health Services in Crisis and Fragile States

Monday, 26 May 2008

16:00-17:30

International Conference Centre Geneva
Room 15

Session outline

When war and armed conflicts break out in Crisis and Fragile States, the impact on the health of populations can be devastating.

Health needs in Crisis and Fragile states are increased and all socio-economic determinants are worsening the health situation making every health problem more acute and potentially the cause of a vicious circle into poverty and distress. Maintaining a performing health system in such conditions is a challenge for all parties involved in the health sector.

Accessing equitable quality health services in such contexts is also a challenge for patients and their relatives. Exclusion may be due to destroyed infrastructures, security concerns, absence of means of transportation, unbearable costs or prices, missing or nonexistent staff, open conflict or even discrimination of any kind.

Violence and war further aggravates the situation, compromising supplies of food, water, drugs, housing, transports, etc. Insecurity renders access to services difficult or impossible. Hundreds of weapons wounded persons need emergency and surgical health care.

In many contexts of war and armed conflict, ensuring health care implies an extraordinary commitment of health professionals and administrative staff, risking their lives in order to assist their people. Support from humanitarian organizations can be essential to maintain a basic activity of health services, but is often limited for security reasons.

Setting up a First Aid service can be a decisive way to open a humanitarian space, making it then possible for humanitarian assistance to establish health services in the conflict zone. Alternatively, when fighting occurs in remote areas, field surgical teams and mobile units are the only solution to deliver urgently needed care to war wounded persons.

In such extreme contexts, the respect of the principles of International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions) is essential in order to ensure access to care and the protection of the medical mission.

After conflict, reconstruction of a health system represents other major challenges. This includes not only major needs in buildings, material, professionals and training, but also addressing the trauma lived by the population during war.

After a short introduction defining Crisis and Fragile States, examples from Iraq, Haiti, Sudan and Kosovo will show what specific and inventive solutions can be found to respond to the needs of the populations affected by conflicts and fragile states.

Speakers invited for this parallel session are:

- Dr. Salam T. Ismael, Founder and Secretary General, Doctors for Iraq Society, Iraq. Possible title for his talk ""
- Dr. Eric Bernes, ICRC, Geneva, Switzerland : *First Aid in situation of urban violence : opening access to health services in Haiti*
- Dr. Marco Baldan, ICRC, Geneva, Switzerland. *Where there is no access to services: Field surgical teams in Darfur.*
- Prof. Alush A. Gashi, MD, PhD, Minister of Health and Member of Parliament, Government of Kosovo, Republic of Kosovo. Possible title for his talk: "Kosovas response towards segregation of minorities in health care and its challenges in peace"

This parallel session will be chaired by

- Dr. Paul Bouvier, Senior Medical Advisor, ICRC, Geneva, Switzerland
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After the presentations, the following themes will be debated by the panel:

- How can health systems in these states be responsive, fair and respond to health needs?
- What support should be offered by international aid?
- What is the major role of health humanitarian assistance during a war situation?
- To whom should the assistance be provided: states, populations, communities, individuals?
- How can communities be involved in strategies to provide health services in conflict?

Resource materials (include links):

ICRC :

- FIRST AID in armed conflicts and other situations of violence. A Manual. ICRC, Geneva, April 2006
<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/p0870?opendocument>
- ICRC in Haiti : <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/haiti>
- ICRC in Sudan : <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/sudan>
- War surgery : <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/war-surgery-interview-080326?opendocument>

Others:

- Enduring effects of war: health in Iraq, Medact 2004
http://www.medact.org/content/wmd_and_conflict/Medact%20Iraq%202004.pdf
- Rehabilitation under fire : health care in Iraq 2003-7
http://www.medact.org/content/wmd_and_conflict/Medact%20Iraq%202004.pdf
- <http://www.chuv.ch/bdfm/cdsp/MemoireGashi.pdf>
- http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG321.pdf

Websites:

Conflict & Health Programme, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Health Policy Unit: <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/hpu/conflict/en/index.php>

Crisis State Research Centre, UK: <http://www.crisisstates.com/index.htm>

Conferences:

Health Service Delivery in Fragile States for \$5 per person per year - Myth or Reality, organized by Merlin, October 2007, UK

Conference presentations are available to download from:

[http://www.merlin.org.uk/About-us/Policy/Policy-conferences/Health-Service-Delivery-in-Fragile-States-for-\\$5-per-person-per-year---Myth-or-Reality.aspx](http://www.merlin.org.uk/About-us/Policy/Policy-conferences/Health-Service-Delivery-in-Fragile-States-for-$5-per-person-per-year---Myth-or-Reality.aspx)

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