

Foreword

Reproductive health is a human right, and like all other human rights, it applies to refugees, internally displaced persons and others living in humanitarian settings. To realize this right, affected populations must have access to comprehensive reproductive health information and services so they are free to make informed choices about their health and well-being.

The provision of comprehensive and high-quality reproductive health services requires a multisectoral integrated approach. Personnel from sectors such as protection, health, nutrition, education and community service all have an important role in planning and delivering reproductive health services. Needs are best met through involving affected communities in every phase of action: from assessing needs to designing programmes, to launching and maintaining programmes and evaluating their impact.

The *Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings* is the result of a collaborative and consultative process engaging over 100 members from United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations that make up the Inter-agency Working Group (IAWG) on Reproductive Health in Crises.

The updated information in this Field Manual is based on normative technical guidance of the World Health Organization. It also reflects the good practices documented in crisis settings around the world since the initial field-test version of the Field Manual was released in 1996, followed by the 1999 version, *Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations: An Inter-agency Field Manual*. This latest edition reflects the wide application of the Field Manual's principles and technical content beyond refugee situations, extending its use into diverse crises, including conflict zones and natural disasters.

Since 1999, the humanitarian community has further developed standards and guidelines for areas related to reproductive health, including gender, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS in humanitarian settings. The 2004 revised *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* incorporates the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health—Chapter 2 of this Field Manual—as a minimum standard of care in disaster response. New tools and guidelines developed through the humanitarian reform process and the cluster system continue to recognize the authoritative guidance of the Field Manual for reproductive health interventions in humanitarian settings.

The global political community has also made progress, especially in addressing the gravity of sexual violence in armed conflict. The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 on Women, Peace and Security affirm the unique needs, perspectives and contributions of women and girls in conflict settings. For the first time in history, reproductive health has been recognized at the Security Council level, with Resolution 1889 explicitly referencing the need to ensure women and girls' access to reproductive health services and reproductive rights to achieve better socioeconomic conditions in post-conflict situations.

Unfortunately large populations are still forced to spend decades away from their homes in refugee camps, internally displaced person settlements or urban settings unfamiliar to them, due to ongoing conflict or as a result of a natural disaster. The average length of displacement for refugees is 17 years. Many persons affected by these chronic emergencies are highly vulnerable to life-threatening reproductive ill-health, posing serious challenges to efforts to achieve global benchmarks, including the Millennium Development Goals. This revised Field Manual aims to improve the health and well-being of affected populations from relief through the transition to development, while fostering preparedness and high quality services that ensure the maximum participation of affected communities.

More than 15 years have passed since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development recognized reproductive health as a human right, and over 10 years have been spent in the practical application of the 1999 Field Manual. As members of the humanitarian community, we have a collective responsibility to uphold and realize the right to reproductive health for all women, men and adolescents in humanitarian settings.

Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises