

Next Steps

This work is intended to be a launching point for those who conduct and fund SRH research in humanitarian settings. It is our hope that these questions and concept notes will help to focus the field on key issues and help generate additional ideas for addressing these topics across humanitarian settings and populations globally. No one research question or project can provide definitive answers, but working towards common goals and across different humanitarian settings, the SRH field can advance more effective programming for those we serve.

Participants identified the following concrete next steps to ensure that the ideas and products generated during the workshop would prove useful to the wider SRH community working in humanitarian settings:

- Distribute the results of this workshop widely within the SRH field, particularly taking advantage of upcoming conferences and events. It is the group's hope that the research questions and concept notes will be used and built upon by any organization that wishes to do so.
- Share the results of this workshop with donors so that they are aware of the work that has been produced, with the hope that it will help spur funding for SRH research in humanitarian settings.
- Ensure that the ranking exercise results and the refined research questions are included in an ongoing effort by the World Health Organization to identify priorities on sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (SRMNCAH).
- Seek opportunities to develop partnerships or consortia of IAWG members to move the identified priority research questions forward. IAWG sub-working groups will increase communication among members and groups to help identify and collaborate on impactful research opportunities, as well as track research projects of interest.

In the interests of transparency, if you or your organization uses the concept notes from this workshop, please let the organizers know by emailing Michelle Hynes (mhynes@cdc.gov) and Sara Casey (sec42@columbia.edu). Please also reach out if you have questions about the concept notes. Each has a point of contact that you can be put in touch with.

The full report of the workshop can be found at www.iawg.net.

Workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health Research Priorities in Humanitarian Settings

Summary



¹ OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2018: <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO2018.PDF>

² UNFPA Humanitarian Action 2018 Overview: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_HumanitAction_2018_Jan_31_ONLINE.pdf

³ Singh NS, Aryasinghe S, Smith J, et al. A long way to go: a systematic review to assess the utilisation of sexual and reproductive health services during humanitarian crises. *BMJ Glob Health* 2018;3. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2017-000682

⁴ Singh NS, Smith J, Aryasinghe S, Khosla R, Say L, et al. Evaluating the effectiveness of sexual and reproductive health services during humanitarian crises: A systematic review. *PLOS ONE* 2018;13(7). <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0199300>

⁵ Blanchet K, Ramesh A, Frison S, et al. Evidence on public health interventions in humanitarian crises. *The Lancet* 2017;390(10109) doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30768-1

Background

In 2018, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 136 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection, largely due to conflict.¹ The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that of this population in need, 34 million are women of reproductive age and 5 million are pregnant.² In humanitarian settings, women and girls face increased challenges in accessing good quality, and oftentimes life-saving, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care.

Unfortunately, several systematic reviews completed in the past two years conclude that the evidence base for public health interventions in humanitarian settings remains limited.^{3,4,5} These reviews highlight that while there is increasing recognition that rigorous, timely, and high quality research is needed, this has not led to a corresponding increase in the body of good quality evidence. This is particularly the case when looking at the effectiveness of SRH interventions.

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises (IAWG) has held several research meetings since its first in 1998. Building upon the documented need for further SRH researaxch in humanitarian settings and IAWG’s successful track record of utilizing research meetings to help steer their work, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) hosted a workshop on SRH research priorities on September 10-12, 2018 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The workshop received additional financial support from Elrha’s Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Programme.

Ranking of Research Questions

In advance of the workshop, an IAWG task team created an initial list of potential research questions from existing reviews and solicited additional questions from IAWG sub-working groups. The questions focused on implementation and impact research that would directly benefit SRH programming. IAWG steering committee and sub-working group members were asked to rank a consolidated list of 84 questions on the following five criteria: answerability, effectiveness, feasibility, impact, and need. Forty-two members of IAWG completed the ranking exercise.

Workshop

Thirty-six participants attended the workshop, representing 26 non-governmental, government, UN, research and donor organizations.

Refined research questions

The top 30 ranked questions were distributed among seven groups, some of which included multiple topic areas. Each group was asked to review the research questions within the group’s topic area(s), consider the ranking exercise results, and choose two questions to refine. Groups were encouraged to revise the questions as necessary, which could include merging questions or drafting new questions. They were not limited to the wording or language provided in the ranking exercise. Groups had the opportunity to receive and incorporate feedback from all participants.

Draft concept notes

1. How can we expand the availability, provider knowledge and capacity, and mechanisms of distribution of EC in humanitarian settings?
2. How does capacity development of key stakeholders (decision makers, program managers, service providers, CBOs) on the MISP for disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, including contingency planning, lead to improvements in implementation of MISP?
3. How can we can improve SRH/GBV interventions by better understanding and responding to the needs of populations placed at increased risks in humanitarian settings?
4. What interventions are effective to prevent mistreatment and promote respectful care during pregnancy and childbirth in humanitarian settings?
5. How can we strengthen evidence-based decision-making through ongoing data utilization to inform SRHR programs in humanitarian settings during the preparedness, acute, protracted, and transition periods?
6. What is the impact of cash transfer (CT) programs on intimate partner violence (IPV) through women’s health and wellbeing, economic security, and intra-household conflict in the post-acute phase of an emergency?
7. What are the most effective and efficient strategies for integrating LARC in contraceptive services during initial emergency response, for populations on the move, and in protracted crisis settings where infrastructure, capacity and awareness of methods are all limited?
8. What are the strategies to move from MISP to comprehensive SRH programming in post-crisis settings?
9. What are feasible and effective approaches to increasing access to SAC in legally restrictive humanitarian settings and how can we replicate these approaches?
10. What are feasible and effective strategies for facilitating uptake (as a matter of policy) and implementation (as a matter of service delivery) of the global guidelines regarding SAC and PAC as outlined in the MISP chapter of the 2018 IAFM?

Concept Notes

Ten research questions were developed into concept notes, to be used by anyone working on SRH research in humanitarian settings. The concept notes suggest potential approaches to move these research questions forward but should be adapted as necessary to specific contexts and populations. The workshop participants recognized that researchers and organizations have their own areas of expertise and preferred methodologies and may use the concept notes only as guidance or a starting point. It is important to keep in mind that these ten concept notes represent key priority areas identified through the ranking exercise and this workshop; however, these are not the only ten research questions that the workshop participants, or IAWG, believe need to be addressed. The concept notes can be accessed at: www.iawg.net