

Forum: Health Committee

Agenda: On measures to ensure the equitable access of adequate health systems in countries impacted by war

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Introduction

Equitable access to adequate health systems is the crucial point of the development of the country, ensuring the fundamental human rights and demands within the country. Tragically, this elemental point has been destructed in various regions due to the constant ongoing conflicts throughout the globe, and this issue has gained increasing global attention because of the expansive devastation of the essential health infrastructure, accompanied by the displacement and lack of medical personnel, which have severely led to the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis in loss of basic human requirement on medical insurance. As the endless conflicts ongoing around the globe are a significant issue, approximately 1.3 billion of the population are living under the harsh conditions of war, with most of them being threatened with the shortage of access to the health system, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Therefore, there is a dire need for effectual and considerate solutions as an outcome of active collaboration between countries to ensure equitable access to health services.

The United Nations has recognized the importance of healthcare in regions experiencing armed conflict, yet enormous challenges remain. The level of devastation led by the armed conflict is significant and gravely impacts many aspects, worsening the life standard of the individual in conflict zones. The influence includes the destruction of the essential health facilities, loss of basic resources, displacement of the people, further shortage in medical supplies and personnel, and both physical and mental damage to people. Most importantly, the individuals are currently suffering from not getting fundamental access to adequate health services to restore them from the trauma. Thus, the resolution on restoring an individual's basic human rights in access to fair healthcare services is crucial to be developed collaboratively through UN member states, expecting a strategic plan that is considerate and viable to all nations, exploring an innovative solutions that can pave the way towards a foreseeable future with equitable access to an adequate health system in war-torn countries.

Key Terms

Equitable Access- Equitable access refers to fair and sufficient access to the resources. Under the concept of access towards health systems, this requires inclusivity that ensures every individual has equal

opportunity in approach to medical services, regardless of their backgrounds, including nationalities, social classes, financial situations, and any other circumstances.

Healthcare- Healthcare is a fundamental human service in the state of improving health conditions through different devices, products, and services. This process ensures the management of both physical and mental health, specifically via prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

War and Armed Conflicts- It is a situation of hostilities where there is a conflict between different parties, including types of violence such as civil wars and international wars. These conflicts can significantly disrupt the proper functions of societal services, with healthcare being one of the most impacted. International humanitarian law is applied to these conflicts.

Humanitarian Crisis- A humanitarian crisis is a series of events or a situation that threatens the health, security, safety, and well-being of a large group of people. Scarcity of access to health services in conflict zones is a humanitarian crisis that is severely menacing the health and well-being of the community.

Humanitarian Assistance- Humanitarian assistance is an aid that is developed with the intention to save lives, alleviate suffering, and protect human dignity. It is provided after or during armed conflicts, natural disasters, or other crises.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL)- It is a set of public international law that aims to limit the impact and consequences of armed conflicts, protect the individuals who are not directly participating in the hostilities, and impose limits on the warfare methods.

Post-Conflict Reconstruction- Post-conflict reconstruction is a process of transition from conflict to peace that involves the rebuilding of the destroyed infrastructures, aiming for the holistic recovery of the country state after the war, focusing on the restoration of diverse essential services, including the health system.

Military Strategy- Military strategy refers to the specific plan designed and implemented by the military organization in a country to pursue their goal in military use. Military strategy is often planned deliberately to lead to the destruction of the health infrastructure during the armed conflict.

General Overview

War and armed conflict lead to the destruction of hospitals, clinics, and other medical facilities. While this is an inevitable part as a consequence of the war, sometimes it is caused and targeted intentionally as a part of military strategy. War-torn countries are often left with the situation of destroyed health infrastructure, which is a notable concern since it can be strained by the further influx of the victims, displacement, and the demand for emergent medical services. Therefore, it is essential to have a prompt measure to restore the local health system. However, the endless conflicts and cruel military

strategies reinforce this challenge in restoring and providing healthcare systems, disturbing the revival of the infrastructure as well as the access towards the health system.

In addition to the devastation of the health systems in war-torn areas, war also significantly disrupts the availability of the medical resources and personnel. Health system workers are possibly killed, displaced, or damaged to be unable to work as a result of the ongoing violence. These lead to the rapid decrease in workable personnel in healthcare, and the loss of medical personnel and resources eventually contributes to the inadequate access to the health system for populations.

Major countries affected by war

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the least developed and most war affected countries in the world, suffering from the devastation and inaccessibility to the healthcare system. Its political instability and constant conflicts have led to a fragile situation with extensive violence, displacement, and hardship in the country's development. Due to the ongoing conflicts, many health infrastructures are either destroyed or underdeveloped in Afghanistan. And still the majority of the citizens face difficulty in access to basic medical services due to insecurity. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report assessing the Afghanistan health systems, it has been estimated that about 8 million population in Afghanistan lost access towards essential health assistance.

Yemen

Yemen has experienced severe conflict since 2014, and this prolonged conflict has turned into the result of one of the worst humanitarian crises throughout the globe. Under this grievous humanitarian crisis, 21.6 million Yemenis has been recorded with a need for humanitarian assistance. World Health Organization (WHO) has examined that 46% of health infrastructure in Yemen is completely non-functional or partially functional due to the lack of medical personnel, supplies, electricity, and funds.

Myanmar

Myanmar is a country that has faced a prolonged history of political instability and various conflicts. Despite the consistent efforts and remarkable progress made throughout the years, still millions of people are facing limitation in access towards healthcare services, medicines and vaccines. While Myanmar being the country with strong contrast in infrastructures and basic services between rural and centralized areas, the health disparities exist, with rural areas facing more serious and multiple issues in lacking medical care, inadequate funds, and insufficient human resources, leading to high maternal and child mortality rate, high prevalence of different diseases, and insufficient measures and treatments upon them.

Syria

Syria is a country that has suffered from the conflict for years. The Syrian Civil War began in 2011 and has been recognized as one of the worst conflicts in recent history. And yet the devastation has not been restored. On 16 March 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recorded that 15 million population in Syria—65% of the entire population need healthcare assistance. The destruction of the health infrastructure has led to significant threats to human rights in receiving healthcare; still, only 65% of the hospital has been verified as fully operational today.

Sudan

Sudan had been involved with a series of conflicts over the decades, contributes to its fragile and concerned state with a complicated humanitarian situation. In September 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) has verified that 108 attacks on the health system are identified in Sudan. Over 75 involved damage in health facilities, and 45 on impact to health personnels. WHO has estimated that around 70% to 80% of health facilities in areas that are worst affected by the conflicts and 45% of health facilities in other areas are currently either barely functional or completely closed, resulting in millions of people going through one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent world history, and an enormous decrease in rates of survival with the devastation of health system.

Major parties involved

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization is a specialized agency in the United Nations, specifically responsible for public health. WHO works internationally in collaboration between nations and people to promote general health and serve the vulnerable. WHO has worked actively in addressing healthcare demands in different regions, including providing support to the countries impacted by war, such as Yemen, Syria, and Sudan, to successfully rebuild their healthcare systems.

United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a United Nations agency constructed to focus on aiding and protecting refugees, forcibly displaced individuals, and stateless people. UNHCR has actively offered support to displaced people caused by war and armed conflicts through providing medical care, sanitation, and resources in refugee camps.

UNICEF

UNICEF is an agency in United Nation that is particularly responsible for providing supports for the children worldwide. UNICEF has supported war-torn countries by providing healthcare systems, medications, and vaccination services for the children in the conflict zone, focusing on the health and well-being of the children.

Measure and Method in access to healthcare

Infant/ Maternal Mortality Rate

The rate of access to healthcare can be anticipated through the country's infant and maternal mortality rate. While childbirth is a common and essential factor in human activity, its process can directly reflect a country's current state, especially the infant and maternal mortality rates, which are considered as the aspects that can tell the health system of a country.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy refers to the number of years a person expects to live, and the value does not stay constant but varies, strongly impacted by the country's healthcare system. Therefore, since life expectancy significantly depends on the quality of the health system, its value can clearly reflect the country's health infrastructure.

WHO Health System Performance Assessment

Health system performance assessment is an innovative framework made by the World Health Organization (WHO) based on the health system function. This assessment can be used to examine the health system function of a country, including the considerations of health infrastructure, government involvement, resource generation, performance in healthcare, goals, and service delivery.

OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview

The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) is a critical report coordinated by OCHA that brings together all humanitarian needs of the crisis-affected area. It is a production to assess the severity of the humanitarian crisis in particular areas, which helps in further analysis and strategic response planning with shared key information about the humanitarian crisis. The Humanitarian Needs Overview identifies the vulnerable groups and analyzes their pressing needs, including the basic life resources, food, shelter, protection, and healthcare services.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1948	Health has been recognized as a fundamental human right in 1948 by the World Health Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, followed by many international human rights treaties. Since then, health has been emphasized as an essential demand to meet throughout the globe.

1949

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 have been adopted by all nations worldwide, and it has laid the foundation for the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), establishing specific rules to protect and provide support for wounded groups due to armed conflicts. Applicable for population including safeguard combatants, wounded military group, prisoners of war, civilians, military chaplains, and medical personnel.

1991

The United Nations Security Council has established resolution 688, regarding the health issue caused by war. This includes provisions for ensuring adequate access to humanitarian aid, involving medical assistance to the regions with armed conflicts.

2015

United Nations has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, in goal 3. This goal targets the guarantee of healthcare system, which directly reflects healthcare access in vulnerable regions, including armed-conflict regions.

2016

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) 2016 took place in Istanbul has focused on development of the humanitarian aid system, including the health services.

2017

The World Health Organization (WHO) published the Health and Humanitarian Crises Initiative to guarantee health systems are operational in regions experiencing war and conflict.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has consistently focused on resolving the issue on the intersection of war and healthcare systems over the years through multiple involvement and resolutions, specifically in terms of humanitarian law and health assistance.

- WHO Framework for health workforce development: Framework finalized in 2017, which provides strategic guidance for countries encountering challenges on health system and workforce development.
- Geneva Convention 1949: Established series of rules to protect and provide general support for wounded due to armed conflicts.
- SDG 3 Global Action Plan 2019: Global action plan for ensuring and protecting healthy life and well-being for all.
- World Health Assembly Resolution WHA69.24: Emphasizing the urgent need for enhanced health systems in war-torn countries. This resolution urges UN member states to adopt the framework on integrated health services and calls on all countries to strengthen the existing health system in the country, ensuring populations affected by armed conflict receive adequate health systems.
- UN Security Council Resolution 2286: Strongly condemns overall attacks on medical facilities, personnel, and patients in conflict zones. This resolution reminds and reaffirms the duty of every party to respect the medical neutrality of health systems in conflict zones and urges member states to protect medical infrastructures.
- UN Security Council Resolution 2436: Addresses the importance of enhancing protection of civilians in war, including ensuring access to the healthcare system. This resolution reaffirms the responsibility of all parties in conflict to allow and ensure the delivery of the humanitarian assistance, including medical aid.
- UN Security Council Resolution 1998: Urges protection of children in areas of armed conflict and emphasizes the need for ensuring children's access to the basic care services, including healthcare. This resolution calls for all parties in war and conflict to stress the protection of medical facilities.
- UN Human Rights Council Resolution 35/21: Focused on improving the ensurement of the access towards healthcare services in conflict zones and protect people's basic human right in receiving adequate healthcare, regardless of the region including war-torn areas.

Possible Solutions

Sustainable funding

Funding is undoubtedly the imperative factor in terms of addressing the issue of inadequate access to the health system in conflict zones, standing as the most important and essential need in various possible solutions, including but not limited to the delivery of

humanitarian aid and investment in health infrastructure. Therefore, securing sustainable funding is critical in assisting in ensuring proper operation of health systems in conflict areas. To sustain this, UN member states should call for donor countries to provide regular assistance; however, the countries at war themselves should consistently investigate self-sufficient health systems.

Investment in the healthcare system

While funding is the most essential part to be involved in possible solutions, the wise decision in navigation of the funding is also a critical aspect to be considered. Thus, in order to ensure equitable access to health systems, funding must be prioritized into the investment of the health infrastructure. Investment in health infrastructure, including healthcare facilities, medical supplies, and personnel, is the foundation in the process to improve the harsh situation in conflict zones and secure people's access to the health system.

Enhancement in access to humanitarian aid

While war-torn countries need assistance, access to humanitarian aid must be prioritized to ensure individuals' access to the healthcare system. With the guarantee of the accessibility to healthcare in conflict areas, the fundamental rights in demand to health services will be assured and further improve the quality of life of the vulnerable groups in conflict zones. The development of the holistic system of humanitarian assistance should be aware and taken into action. Partnerships between the international organizations, governments, and UN can also promote the enhancement of collaborative efforts, coming up with the innovative and inclusive solutions to be applied fairly and effectively to provide support for the conflict zones.

Strengthening related policies and international legal frameworks

Reinforcing the legal framework is one of the most effectual ways to assure the promotion is proceeding in a correct direction and all parties are practically following the promised rules to work collaboratively for the enhancement of the healthcare services in armed conflict. Strengthening the policies and legal frameworks contributes to the clearer understanding of each country's role in resolution while also helping in monitoring the actions of the governments, which further leads to the success of the resolution and the hopeful future of individuals in conflict zones.

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