

International Planned Parenthood Federation - East & South East Asia and Oceania Region (IPPF - ESEAOR)

World Refugee Day Press Release

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Every Refugee has the Right to Reproductive Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 18—At this moment, more than 65 million refugees, asylum seekers, stateless and internally displaced persons have been uprooted from their homes due to conflict, persecution and natural disaster. Approximately three-quarters of them are women, youth and children. In displaced and refugee settings, simple tasks such as fetching firewood or going to the latrine can place women and girls at increased risk of sexual violence. Loss of basic health services in refugee settings exposes women and girls to greater risk of pregnancy related death, ill health, unwanted pregnancy and HIV transmission. Sexual and reproductive health problems persist to be the leading cause of women’s ill health and death worldwide. Despite this, these needs are routinely ignored in displaced settings.

“Although progress has been made in advancing reproductive health in conflict and disasters, displaced women and girls continue to be raped, contract HIV and die in childbirth,” said Dr Anna Whelan, IPPF-ESEAOR’s Regional Director. “This is simply unacceptable.”

This Sunday June 20th, IPPF-ESEAOR is celebrating World Refugee Day by acknowledging the rights of all refugees and internally displaced people to access sexual and reproductive health services. International law emphasizes the link between the universal right to health and providing access to reproductive health care to all people, regardless of citizenship- including the Geneva Conventions, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) specifically includes the right of victims of sexual violence, in displaced settings, to access adequate services. The weak implementation of these rights continues to cost lives and cause ill health.

IPPF-ESEAOR and its partners work to address the sexual and reproductive health rights of refugees and displaced people, in Malaysia, throughout the region and globally. Since 2009, IPPF’s member association, the Federation of Reproductive Health Associations Malaysia (FRHAM), with funding from the Japanese Government, has been working closely with Burmese refugees and community health workers, to deliver relevant and culturally sensitive outreach services. Through the AusAID funded SPRINT Initiative, an inter-agency collaboration with IPPF, UNFPA, UNHCR, the University of New South Wales and the Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, over 3,900 people in 68 countries have been trained on how to address sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian emergencies. It has helped respond to devastating natural disasters in Indonesia, Philippines and Myanmar. IPPF is proud to work with its partners to help realize the sexual and reproductive health rights of refugees and displaced people around the world.

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