World Health Assembly (WHA)

Ensuring proper care for victims of physical and mental health issues induced by armed conflicts

Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2024

"Out of this world"

Forum:	World Health Assembly (WHA)
Issue:	Ensuring proper care for victims of physical and mental health issues induced by armed conflict
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

Ensuring proper treatment for those suffering from physical and psychological trauma caused by armed conflicts is an important matter that demands immediate attention from the global community. Whether internal or between states, armed conflicts frequently cause conscripts and civilians to suffer from severe physical and psychological trauma. The World Health Assembly understands that in order to support victims of violence and conflict, it is necessary to address these issues and offer comprehensive healthcare measures. Helping victims and fostering healing and recovery is the responsibility of various nations, international organisations like the World Health Organization (WHO), and non-governmental organisations. The ongoing conflicts in areas like Yemen, the Ukraine, and parts of Africa highlight the importance of this topic, as the physical damage of health systems and the psychological toll on individuals continue to rise.

Definition of Key Terms

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

A mental health condition that can develop after an individual has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. It is characterised by a range of symptoms that can significantly impair the individual's ability to function in daily life.

Mental Health:

A state of well-being where individuals can cope with normal stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community.

Trauma-Informed Care:

A method of therapy that acknowledges the effects of trauma on people. In order to provide trauma-informed care, a person must be able to identify, comprehend, and react to the impacts of all forms of trauma.

General Overview

Medical Conditions

Since violence in armed conflicts frequently results in direct physical damage, afflicted people have higher rates of disability and mortality. Trauma injuries, amputations, and infections as a result of the breakdown of healthcare systems are common physical health conditions that are noticed. Displacement and inadequate sanitation contribute to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, measles, and malaria. Also, armed conflict can exacerbate existing health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, and respiratory illnesses, due to disrupted healthcare services.

Mental Health Issues

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are among the illnesses that are caused by trauma associated with conflicts and have a substantial impact on mental health. Many non-governmental organisations have reported that around one in five individuals who have been exposed to conflict may have active mental health conditions. The stigma associated with mental health in many cultures makes it difficult for people to get treatment, which worsens these problems.

Healthcare System Challenges

The devastation of healthcare facilities brought about by armed war increases the cost of treating mental and physical health conditions. In conflict zones, healthcare facilities are frequently destroyed or inaccessible, limiting care for victims. Treatment of injured and psychologically impacted populations suffer from a lack of medical personnel, medication, and basic supplies.

Major Parties Involved

WHO (World Health Organization)

A specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Various NGOs, such as Doctors Without Borders, International Rescue Committee, and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), provide crucial medical assistance and mental health support in conflict zones, often filling gaps left by local and national health systems.

Mental Health Organizations

Specialised sets that promote and treat mental health issues, like the World Federation for Mental Health and regional mental health non-governmental organisations, strive to increase public knowledge of the negative effects of conflict on mental health and to provide impacted communities with better access to psychological support.

Timeline of Events

1949 **-** Adoption of the Geneva Conventions, which sets standards for the protection of victims of armed conflict.

1996 **-** The WHO publishes "The World Health Report," emphasising the health impacts of conflict.

2000 - The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, recognizing the specific impact of conflict on women's health.

2017 - The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 72/130, highlighting the need for health system strengthening in conflict-affected areas.

Present - Ongoing conflicts in countries such as Ukraine, Yemen, and South Sudan, leading to a high number of casualties and displaced persons

Possible Solutions

Strengthening Health Systems

Establishing and training local healthcare teams can enhance accessibility and encourage community involvement in mental health care. Investing in training and education for healthcare providers in conflict zones to enhance the long-term sustainability of health services.

International Collaboration for Health Infrastructure

Encouraging partnerships among countries, NGOs, and international health organisations to develop a robust strategy for rebuilding healthcare facilities affected by conflict. Organisations like Doctors Without Borders, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) play vital roles in providing immediate care, although they often lack the sustainable funding necessary for long-term solutions.

Funding and International Advocacy

Urge member nations to use appropriate international financial instruments to enhance support for healthcare in areas affected by conflicts. Increase public knowledge of the health effects of conflict in order to build community and political support for victim-focused health initiatives.

Conclusion

Not only is it a humanitarian duty to attend to the health requirements of armed conflict victims, but it is also a vital first step toward the reconstruction of violent societies. The international community can support resilience, rehabilitation, and recovery for these vulnerable groups by guaranteeing appropriate care for mental and physical health conditions. Prioritising this issue and pushing for coordinated efforts and long-term solutions that combine short-term requirements with long-term health system strengthening are imperative for the World Health Assembly.

Sources

1. World Health Organization. (2020). "Health in Times of War." Retrieved from [https:// www.who.int]
2. International Medical Corps. (2021). "Addressing Physical and Mental Health Needs in Conflict Zones." Retrieved from [https://www.internationalmedicalcorps.org]