

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 9: February 2026

Rise Up Policy Forum

Inaugural Global Gathering held in Lithuania

by Karen Hughes and Sara Wood (Public Health Wales)

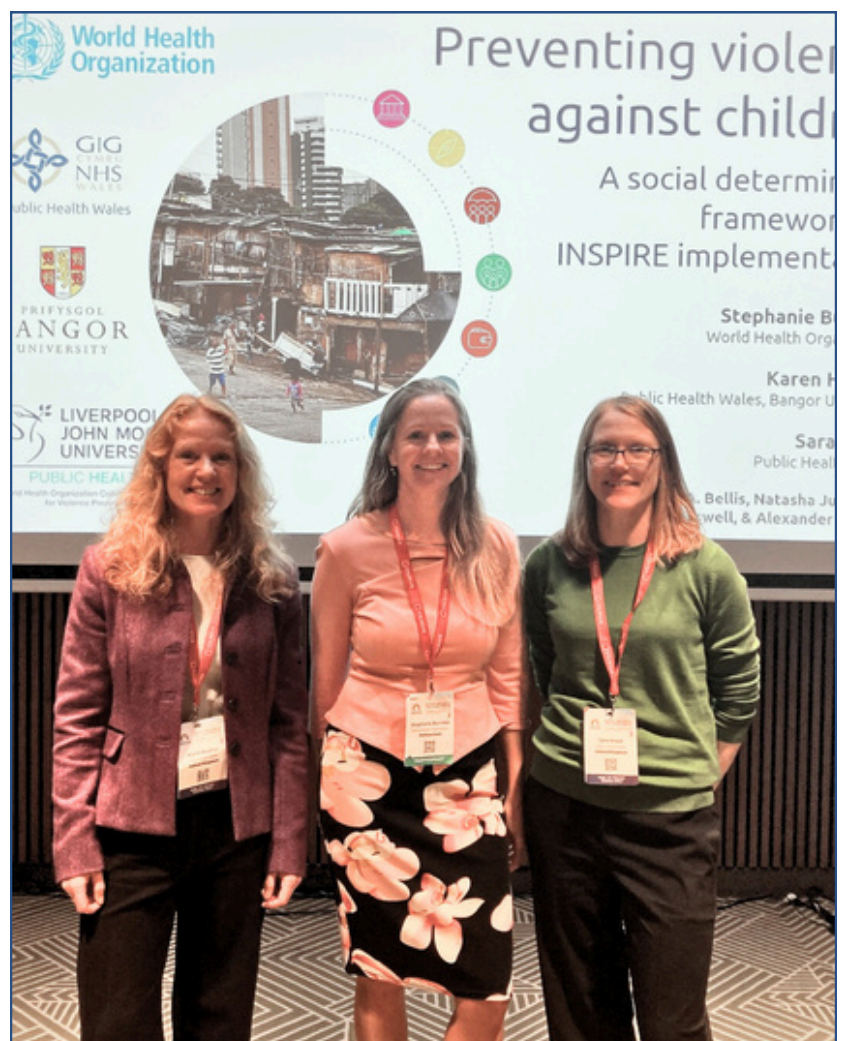
Karen Hughes and Sara Wood co-led a session with Stephanie Burrows from the World Health Organization (WHO) at the inaugural Rise Up Policy Forum that was held as part of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (iSPCAN) 2025 International Congress on Child Protection in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Rise Up Policy Forum is a global initiative to drive progress in advancing child protection through a public health and system strengthening approach. It brings together governments, policymakers, researchers and practitioners to build on momentum from the 2024 Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children.

Our session shared and extended learning from our collaborative report published by WHO: [Preventing violence against children: a social determinants framework for INSPIRE implementation](#).

Drawing on a global systematic review, the session introduced the seven evidence-based INSPIRE strategies and showcased recent policy and legislative approaches in Wales as a practical country-level example of violence prevention. A policy brief will be published following the Forum, and the report was also promoted through a poster presented at the main iSPCAN International Congress.

Together, these approaches highlight how coordinated action across policy, services, and systems can address the root causes of violence and protect children's wellbeing.



(l-r) Karen Hughes, Stephanie Burrows and Sara Wood joined forces to present at the Rise Up Policy Forum in Vilnius

WHO Europe Knowledge Exchange on Refugee and Migrant Health

by Jo Hopkins (Public Health Wales)

In September last year, I attended the WHO Europe Knowledge Exchange on Refugee and Migrant Health in Athens. The three-day event was opened by Greek ministers and brought together representatives from across Europe to discuss ideas, solutions, and challenges to meeting the health needs of migrant populations.

The conversations provided opportunities to compare how differing legislation, geography and experiences often came back to the same challenges – and very recognisable issues in Wales. These included tensions between local communities around service access and provision; we all agreed that improved services for migrants should be improved services for all.

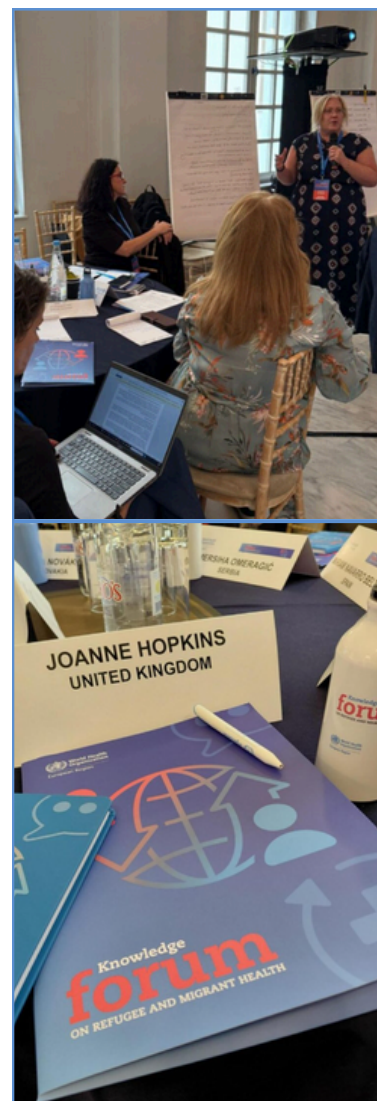
Countries that have many land borders shared experiences of refugee camps, engagement with non-government organisations and innovative crisis responses that even though we don't have camps, would benefit how we support all communities. Mental Health, culturally appropriate services, trauma and non-communicable diseases were major themes.

We also had the privilege of attending a site visit to accommodation that supported young girls who had been victims of exploitation, trafficking, sexual violence and abuse. The centre was an inspiring and thought provoking experience – the young people are able to come and go as they please, and are accepted in the community whilst accessing support and safety via psychological support. The mutually supportive communal living provided real food for thought around how young people are best supported.

It was an important opportunity to share with other nations how our work in Wales is really leading the way in terms of improving access to health care in Wales.

The Welsh government has recently published the accessible communication standards and through working with the ACE Hub Wales we have ensured that a trauma-informed approach has been taken to developing and implementing these standards, and support people from within all our communities to be able to get the help they need.

A highlight of the event was artwork exhibited by local young refugees telling their stories of hope and sanctuary.



Cont'd from page one:

The review identified seven evidence-based strategies to prevent violence against children:

- ▶ **Promote economic security and equality**
(e.g. social protection policies, childcare subsidies, nutrition assistance policies)
- ▶ **Improve access to quality education**
(e.g. financial support for students from low income households, universal provision of early childhood education)
- ▶ **Provide safe environments**
(e.g. urban renewal and regeneration, policy addressing homelessness and housing instability)
- ▶ **Strengthen social and community context**
(e.g. national level parenting programmes, legislation prohibiting violent behaviour)
- ▶ **Reduce exposure to health-harming influences**
(e.g. policies to reduce population access to alcohol, firearm control legislation)
- ▶ **Improve access to quality health care**
(e.g. healthcare coverage and access to treatment, child-focused clinical care for victims of violence)
- ▶ **Governance**
(e.g. data sharing across agencies and partners, training and capacity building for public officials)

From Khartoum to Cardiff

Israa Mohammed and the Sudanese Civil War

Israa Mohammed - advanced epidemiologist at Public Health Wales; chair of Global Health Partnerships Cymru - featured in episode 19 of Hub Cymru Africa's flagship podcast: **Wales, Africa and the World**.

In 2018, Israa was in Khartoum, studying for her Masters and joining protests that would bring down a dictator. Also that year she won a scholarship at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

She was back home visiting in 2023. A lovely evening spent catching up with siblings, eating ice cream and visiting a restaurant. Waking early, Israa sat now with her Mum, chatting quietly, sipping tea when the bomb went off. Loud, sounding close, nearby streets exploding. The civil war had started.

At her family's urging, Israa would flee by bus to Port Sudan. In the midst of bullets, blood, child soldiers and starvation, the story she tells is one of resilience and hope.

[Listen to the podcast](#) | [Read the blog](#)

Also available on Apple Podcasts, YouTube Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music and Audible by searching Wales, Africa and the World.



[Read the report](#) |

[Listen to Radio 4's Women's Hour](#)

(Melanie Hyde's interview begins at 30:40)

Care, Courage, Change

Melanie Hyde on tackling violence against women and girls (BBC Radio 4)

Melanie Hyde (World Health Organisation) was a recent guest on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* in an episode subtitled 'Covid Inquiry; Poet Andrea Gibson remembered; Supporting survivors of violence'. Interviewed for the latter segment, Melanie discussed a new report co-authored with Mariana Dyakova (Public Health Wales) and others.

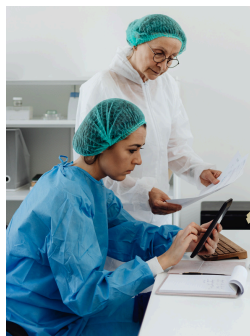
"I think it is really worth listening to!" Mariana recommended.

Their co-written work - ***'Care, Courage, Change: Health-sector leadership in tackling violence against women and girls'*** - highlights the important role that health systems can play in advancing a coordinated, multisectoral response.

The report was formally launched in Madrid at an event hosted by the Spanish government. "It was a very successful meeting," Mariana affirmed, "and I had the opportunity to help moderate a session on *'The health sector as a key player in multisectoral responses: How cross-ministerial frameworks can accelerate progress on the Global Plan of Action.'*"

New Public Health Wales WHO Collaborating Centre Digital Health Equity

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has designated a second Public Health Wales (PHW) directorate as a Collaborating Centre.



Digital Health Equity will be the focus of its research, reviews, papers and recommendations. This has been identified as a key field meaning PHW becomes the fourth WHO Collaborating Centre within Europe currently tasked with investigating the topic.

Read more: [Public Health Wales becomes WHO Collaborating Centre for digital health equity](#)

HIV Care in Mozambique

MSF to local Medics after 11 Years

Over a decade has passed since Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) arrived in Beira to plug an urgent gap in HIV advice, treatment and care. MSF may now withdraw, handing over to local authorities and Mozambique's Ministry of Health.



The service established has grown from a corridor of bare-bones mobile delivery to fully instituted and integrated facilities. MSF has trained and mentored more than 600 medical practitioners in Beira and beyond. They are able to run local clinics and work in the community, in addition to large hub equipped in Beira Central Hospital.

Read more: [MSF interview with Dr Zaid Seni](#) (deputy project co-ordinator).

Traditional Medicines Going Mainstream? WHO Explores Field



The old ways of maintaining health and well-being are being researched by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr Shyama Kuruvilla heads the WHO's new Global Traditional Medicine Centre. It makes good a resolution passed last year tasked with exploring and harnessing the potential benefits of TCIM (traditional, complementary and integrative medicine).

Traditional treatments, methods and medicines under the microscope include herbalism, meditation and acupuncture.

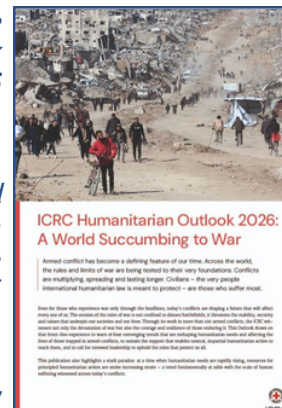
Read more: [‘A potential treasure trove’: World Health Organization to explore benefits of traditional medicines | Global health | The Guardian](#)

Red Cross 2026 Conflict Warning

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a stark warning for global health in 2026 due to armed conflicts.

Published in December 2025, *Humanitarian Outlook 2026: A World Succumbing to War* is a free resource drawing upon data from 100 conflicts to produce five urgent priorities for research and policy.

Read more: [ICRC Publications](#)
- cover text reproduced below



Armed conflict has become a defining feature of our time. Across the world, the rules and limits of war are being tested to their very foundations. Conflicts are multiplying, spreading and lasting longer. Civilians – the very people international humanitarian law is meant to protect – are those who suffer most.

Even for those who experience war only through the headlines, today's conflicts are shaping a future that will affect every one of us. The erosion of the rules of war is not confined to distant battlefields; it threatens the stability, security and values that underpin our societies and our lives. Through its work in more than 100 armed conflicts, the ICRC witnesses not only the devastation of war but also the courage and resilience of those enduring it. This Outlook draws on that front-line experience to warn of four converging trends that are reshaping humanitarian needs and affecting the lives of those trapped in armed conflicts, to sustain the support that enables neutral, impartial humanitarian action to reach them, and to call for renewed leadership to uphold the rules that protect us all.

This publication also highlights a stark paradox: at a time when humanitarian needs are rapidly rising, resources for principled humanitarian action are under increasing strain – a trend fundamentally at odds with the scale of human suffering witnessed across today's conflicts.

FPH Policy in Global Conflict Humanitarian Emergency Response

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) issued a new policy governing how it responds to humanitarian emergencies and conflicts upon the international stage.

Based in London, the FPH is a registered charity, established in 1968 to answer recommendations made by a Royal Commission on Medical Education.

Nearly sixty years later, its diverse membership has passed beyond medicine and borders both. Its founding tenets remain the same though, built around the mantra **Better Health for All - Leaving No-one Behind.**

Read more: [FPH Policy on Responding to International Humanitarian Emergencies and Conflicts](#). (PDF)



Rapid Evidence Review on Urgent Care

The Evidence Service and International Health Insights team at Public Health Wales has published a rapid review to inform the development of urgent care services and ease pressure on A&E departments.

Drawing on international evidence, the review highlights key strategies:

- Task shifting to optimise workforce
- Improved access to diagnostics
- Digital triage and decision support
- Expansion of urgent care centres
- Virtual consultations via phone/video

Findings show that well-designed urgent care can deliver safer, faster, and more effective treatment - ensuring patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Click [here to access](#) the report.



Wales Leads the Way in HIA

It has been a busy time of late on the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) lecture circuit for Professor Liz Green - seen in Eire (left), New Zealand and Australia (below).

Liz was in Cork for an international event entitled *Getting Going with Health Impact Assessment*. Delegates from across Ireland attended with guests from overseas. Liz was one of the speakers presenting on the work of WHIASU in Wales and the new HIA statutory Regulations and HIA in Planning.

Swapping hemispheres, November 17-21 2025 was spent with a global cohort in Wellington, New Zealand. All were attending the 21st International Conference on Urban Health, where Liz was one of the speakers.

The conference was held at Tākina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre. Its theme was Weaving Climate Action, Equity and Wellbeing from the Pacific to the World.

Read more: [International Conference on Urban Health in New Zealand](#).

December 2025, Liz was keynote speaker at a workshop in Sydney. It was organised by two schools within the University of New South Wales (UNSW), namely the Cities Institute and the International Centre for Future Health Systems.

Introduced as 'a driving force in HIA' and 'galvanising for attendees', Liz shared the work done in Wales. Practitioners further benefitted from Liz's knowledge and perspective on HIA regulations.

Read more: [Lessons from Wales, for improving Australians' health and wellbeing – Croakey Health Media](#)



Public Health Wales' International Health Forum

Global Challenges and Resilience

November 12th 2025

The Forum was held virtually by the International Health Coordination Centre (IHCC) on 12th November 2025, bringing together a diverse audience. Attendees ranged from healthcare professionals and policymakers to academics and non-governmental organisations, all united to share learnings and best practice from international health activities, research, and opportunities that can help strengthen skills and systems across Wales and internationally.

*This bi-annual forum promotes shared learning, showcasing Wales' contributions to global health, and reinforces Wales' role as a globally responsible nation committed to improving health and well-being for all. It is a key activity of Public Health Wales' International Health Strategy, an enabler of Public Health Wales' Long-Term Strategy. **Four compelling presentations shaped the event.***



Andrew Rogers (University of Manchester) offered a pragmatic perspective on health promotion through his talk All Who Wander Are Not Lost.

Drawing on experiences from Bosnia to Barbados, he emphasised asset-based approaches: identifying existing strengths to offset deficits in fragile health systems.



Dr Ahmed Alshantti (University Hospital of Wales) delivered a stark account of Gaza's health crisis under siege. With Gaza's 2.5 million residents enduring relentless bombardment, healthcare infrastructure is devastated: 821 attacks on facilities, 34 hospitals damaged, and only 35% of primary care centres functional. Water and sanitation systems have collapsed, and disease outbreaks, including measles and polio, are resurging. Amid this, vaccination campaigns have reached 640,000 children, a testament to resilience. His appeal was clear: equity, protection for health workers, and urgent rebuilding.



From Wales, **Daniel Rixon and Cameron Muir (Public Health Wales)** showcased their work with the International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI), a global network of 115 public health institutes. Their project, Building Bridges to Resilience, explores how health promotion can be embedded in emergency preparedness. Preliminary findings promise guidance for integrating these principles worldwide, strengthening Wales' role in international health collaboration.



Finally, **Malek Mhd Al Dali (Bangor University)** reflected on Syria's 12-year civil war and its catastrophic impact on public health.

Beyond destroyed infrastructure and medicine shortages, his research highlighted mental health as a critical priority for recovery, amid widespread trauma and displacement.

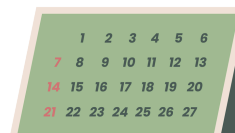
This Forum's shared truth: conflict and crisis devastate health systems; collaboration and innovation boost resilience.

All are welcome. The next International Health Forum is scheduled for **20th May 2026**.

For updates, contact [Laura Holt](#) or [Jo Harrington](#) at Public Health Wales.



Upcoming Events and Conferences



Global Health Partnerships Cymru Annual Lecture: Crisis in Global Health Aid

Online
February 3rd 2026
14:00

[Click for more
information](#)

Hub Cymru Africa: Fundraising for Health in Challenging Times

Online (Zoom)
February 11th 2026
11:00-12:30

[Click for more
information](#)

An International Day of Women Celebration Wales, Africa and Women (plus remembering Claire O'Shea, Hub Cymru Africa)

Temple of Peace, Cathays, Cardiff
March 11th 2026
19:00-22:00

[Click for more
information](#)

UK Global Health Summit 2026: Shaping Tomorrow's Health, Together

Royal College of Physicians London
March 16th - 18th 2026
Full days

[Click for more
information](#)

World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)
Global Public Health Week 2026:
Peace for Health, Health for Peace

WFPHA website and worldwide
April 6th - 10th 2026
Programme of events from 9am daily

[Click for more
information](#)



**70th ANNUAL
HEALTH RESEARCH
CONFERENCE**

"INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH" GUYANA

Arthur Chung Conference Centre
April 22-24, 2026



2nd International Meeting of Arts:
Social and Arts Prescribing in HealthCare

Olympus Riviera, Greece
April 22nd - 26th 2026
Programme of events from 9am daily

[Click for more
information](#)

Public Health Wales:
International Health Forum

Microsoft Teams On-line Webinar
May 20th 2026
13:00 - 14:30 GMT

[Click for Event
Registration](#)



Get in touch

If you have any stories or international projects
you wish to be featured in our upcoming
newsletters, please email:
Laura.holt@wales.nhs.uk
Joanne.Harrington2@wales.nhs.uk