



76th World Health Assembly, May 2023

Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) concerning item 15.3
Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI)

Distinguished delegates,

The ICRC welcomes improvements to the Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI). Its greatest contribution could be to mainstream a robust “peace and conflict sensitivity” approach into all WHO’s health programming. This would require equipping staff beyond their technical competencies to be able to analyse the broader contexts in which they work. This would help better understand health needs and what service delivery modalities may be most appropriate.

However, the ICRC remains concerned that the lack of clarity around “peace responsiveness” may have unintended consequences: for the effectiveness of health programmes, and for the safety and protection under IHL of health workers if they are perceived to be going beyond their medical functions. Despite clarification attempts, it is unclear what change in approach is required in practice for health programmes to be “peace responsive”. The value of investing resources to this end is therefore also unclear.

Health programmes can undoubtedly make contributions to improving the prospects for peace, such as strengthening social cohesion. However, it is important not to create an expectation that they provide discernible peace outcomes, beyond such ‘peace dividends’ which may naturally result from achieving their intended health outcomes in an impartial manner.

The ICRC therefore strongly suggests either clarifying the programmatic changes required or focusing on better understanding the extent to which WHO programmes, by being peace and conflict sensitive, *already contribute* to improving the prospects for peace, and seeking to strengthen and mainstream such practices.

Thank you.