**Background note for the keynote speech**

**Event Title:** *Moving Futures: Migration, Labor, and the Health of a Changing Planet*  
**Speaker:** Dr. Santino Severoni, Health and Migration, World Health Organization

**Occupational Health Landscape for Migrant Workers**

According to the [***WHO World Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants* (2022)**](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240054462)**,** migrant workers are disproportionately employed in hazardous “3D jobs”—dirty, dangerous, and demanding—often outside formal occupational safety systems. Data across WHO regions show male migrant workers face higher risks of injury in physically demanding sectors, while female migrants face elevated exploitation and care burdens.

Despite elevated health risks, migrant workers consistently face systemic and structural barriers to accessing occupational health and other essential services. Health insurance is often non-portable and tied to a single employer or legal status, while access to social protection remains limited—especially for irregular, seasonal, and low-skilled migrants.

Available evidence confirms that migrants often work in informal sectors, which typically fall outside the scope of occupational health laws.

**WHO Commitments**

WHO’s work in the area of health and migration is guided by the [***Global Action Plan on Promoting the Health of Refugees and Migrants (2019–2030).***](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240093928) Under Priority Area 2, the Global Action Plan focuses on preventing occupational and work-related diseases and injuries among refugee and migrant workers and their families. To support implementation of the Global Action Plan, WHO has developed a monitoring framework through a consultative process. A global survey conducted between November 2024 and February 2025 gathered responses from 93 countries. One key question in the survey focused on whether refugees and migrants are included in national occupational health and safety legislation, policies, or strategies.

Additionally, the [***Global Research Agenda on Health, Migration and Displacement (2023)***](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240082397) identifies seasonal migrant workers as a critically underserved subgroup.

**Promising Practices**

Promoting the health of migrant workers requires not only policy reform but also scalable models of implementation. WHO supports the identification and dissemination of such practices through dedicated knowledge-sharing platforms and capacity-building efforts.

A positive example of institutional innovation in promoting migrant workers’ health can be found in the Philippines, which has established bilateral migrant health protocols alongside a comprehensive system of pre-departure medical and legal orientation for outbound workers. These practices have been documented in a [video reportage](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ5cPPdfyyM) for the fourth WHO ***Global School on Refugee and Migrant Health***.

In addition, [***WHO’s Global Dashboard on Refugee and Migrant Health***](https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/reports/474af16a-4051-454c-af59-5115cf8d39fb/ReportSection?ctid=f610c0b7-bd24-4b39-810b-3dc280afb590&experience=power-bi&bookmarkGuid=c43e3ea7-69c4-4dc4-b179-e5e61bf13777) offers a broader lens on promising practices worldwide. The Dashboard compiles 140 case studies from 63 Member States, gathered between 2022 and 2023, with concrete examples for migrant labourers from Italy and Mozambique.