

# Refugee Statements

## The refugee crisis and the role of the the International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG)

Since the formation in 1951 of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), almost 55 million *persons of concern* have been registered as *displaced* worldwide up to the end of 2014. The numbers have doubled in the last 10 years<sup>[1]</sup>. Large numbers of people have been displaced from countries in Africa, South America, Asia and the Middle East. In 2015, an estimated 850,000 Syrian refugees sought to relocate to Europe.

Faced by the refugee crisis in Europe, Wonca Europe released a statement at its conference in Istanbul in October 2015<sup>[2]</sup>. The IPCRG, as a collaborating organisation with Wonca Europe, lent its support to that statement.

The IPCRG understands the risks to the health of people who are displaced from their homes and their work and often separated from their families. While the risk to public health from refugees moving into new countries is low<sup>[3]</sup>, the impact on the physical<sup>[4]</sup> and mental health<sup>[5]</sup> of refugees is substantial.

*Communicable diseases are the major cause of morbidity among refugees<sup>[6]</sup> ... the majority of these [being] respiratory tract infections, malaria and diarrhoea.* The UNHCR however, warns that *non-communicable diseases ... have increasingly become a public health burden for refugee communities.* The UNHCR recognises the role of primary care in the delivery of cost effective care to people with non-communicable and mental health diseases.

As the global organisation of primary care health professionals with an interest and expertise in respiratory medicine, the IPCRG calls on governments to acknowledge the differing health needs of refugees and to provide adequate support to primary care doctors and nurses to address these needs.

As a proven provider of Teach the Teacher programmes which deliver health education tailored to the needs of individual countries, the International Primary Care Respiratory Group is able and willing to support training for primary care doctors in the management of people with respiratory diseases to alleviate the health impact on displaced persons.

Board of Directors

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[1] <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>. Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

[2] <http://www.woncaeurope.org/content/wonca-europe-2015-istanbul-statement>.

Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015

[3] [Alfredo Morabia](#) and [Georges C. Benjamin](#) **The Refugee Crisis in the Middle East and Public Health**

Am J Public Health. 2015 December; 105(12): 2405–2406.

[4] [Lam E](#), [McCarthy A](#), [Brennan M](#). **Vaccine-preventable diseases in humanitarian emergencies among refugee and internally-displaced populations.** Hum Vaccin Immunother. 2015 Nov 2;11(11):2627-36

[5] [Hirani K](#), [Payne D](#), [Mutch R](#), [Cherian S](#). **Health of adolescent refugees resettling in high-income countries.** Arch Dis Child. 2015 Oct 15

[6] **Refugee public health, including HIV/AIDS.**

Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. Standing Committee 63<sup>rd</sup> meeting 3 June 2015