Refugees and HIV

Rajeev Bais MD, MPH
The Carolina Survivor Clinic
Division of Infectious Diseases
The University of South Carolina School of Medicine
Disclosure

• I have nothing to disclose
Objectives

- Recognize the difference between a refugee, asylum seeker and internally displaced person
- Discuss the gravity of the refugee situation in the world today
- Discuss refugee vulnerability to HIV
- Identify what limits the optimization of care of HIV+ refugees in the US
Who is a Refugee?

• A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence.

• A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

• Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.

• War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.
What is an Asylum Seeker?

• When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance.

• An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.
What is an Internally Displaced Person?

• An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border.

• Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid.

• As the nature of war has changed in the last few decades, with more and more internal conflicts replacing wars among countries, the number of IDPs has increased significantly.
International Refugee Law

• The **1951 Geneva Convention** for Refugees is the main international instrument of refugee law.

• The Convention clearly spells out who a refugee is and the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights he or she should receive from the countries who have signed the document.

• The Convention also defines a refugee’s obligations to host governments and certain categories or people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status.

• The Convention was limited to protecting mainly European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but another document, the **1967 Protocol**, expanded the scope of the Convention as the problem of displacement spread around the world.
Refugee Facts

- **65.5 Million People** were living displaced in 2016
  - 22.5 Million Refugees (SYRIA, AFGHANISTAN, SOMALIA)
  - 2.8 Million Asylum Seekers
  - 40.3 Million Displaced (COLUMBIA, SYRIA, IRAQ)
- 1 in every 113 people on the planet
- 1 person every 3 seconds
- 51% of refugees are **CHILDREN** (almost 100,000 were alone)
Refugee Facts

• Protracted Exile, Extreme Poverty, Hopelessness
• >3,500 deaths in the Mediterranean in 2015
• 17 years - 26 years
• <1%
• Fear and Suspiscion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>12,587</td>
<td>15 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>12,347</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>9,880</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Somalia</td>
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<td>Bhutan</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2,737</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>2,543</td>
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<td>Eritrea</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>7,995</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants.

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The Democratic Republic of Congo

- War and conflict since 1996
- Over 7 million killed
- Mass displacement, especially in Eastern part of DRC
- Rape as a weapon of war, HIV cheaper than bullets
- HIV prevalence rates in Eastern DRC (1.9%) is significantly higher than the rest of the country (1.3%)
Population: 79,723,000
Number of IDPs: 2,230,000
New Displacements (2016): 922,000
Refugees: 517,000
Rape

- 433,785 in one year period/48/12%
- weapon of war
- fistula
- infections
- pregnancy
- under-reported
Refugees and HIV

- Rape as a weapon of war
- Limited protection of women and children
- Forced migration and vulnerability during travels
- Reliance on rationed food, money, clothes, and housing
- Poor education of children
- Often go from an area of low-HIV prevalence to high-HIV prevalence
- Lack of testing and treatment options
- Balance between self-care and the care of family
- The cost of treatment (transportation, stigma, ‘compliance’
Limitations to Care in the US

- Poverty
- Lack of English Language Skills
- Interpreters
- Cultural Differences
- Lack of Education
- Lack of Transportation
- Stigma in the Community
HIV Prevalence Rate, by Country

Figure 6. Status dropout rates of 16- to 24-year-olds, by selected Asian subgroups: 2014
Take-Home Points

• Refugees overseas are vulnerable to the acquisition of HIV due to war, migration and poverty

• Due to the effects of poverty and decreased human agency, refugees are vulnerable to poor-treatment outcomes

• Structural changes and more intensive social interventions need to be made in order to provide optimal HIV care to HIV+ refugees in the US and to decrease the risk of future infection for those who are HIV-
Questions?

- Rajeev.Bais@uscmed.sc.edu