Migration and Health: The Case of Syrians in Egypt

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What's Migration and What's Health

- What's Migration?
  - Migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location.

- What's Health?
  - The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health in its broader sense in its 1948 constitution as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Migration and Health

- While we all believe that health is a human right we should also recognize that migration became an increasing human act.

- Between right and act come our interventions.

Health as a Human Right

- The right to health includes access to timely, acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality.

- The right to health is assured at the country level and globally:
  - Country Level: The right to health is assured, in a way or another, in all States' constitutions.
  - Globally: The WHO Constitution enshrines the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being.

Migration as a Human Act

- As old as the human being
- Migration in the pre-written history
- Migration in the holly books
- Migration of Europeans to the new world
- Migration of the blacks to America
- Migration of the Europeans to the Third World (the colonization period)
- Contemporary migration to the West
- Contemporary migration to the oil-reach countries

Migration as a Human Act

- Forced migration and internally displacement
- Migration smuggling and trafficking
- Transit migration

Snapshot: International Migrant Stock

Number of international migrants by income group of country or area of destination, 2000 to 2015
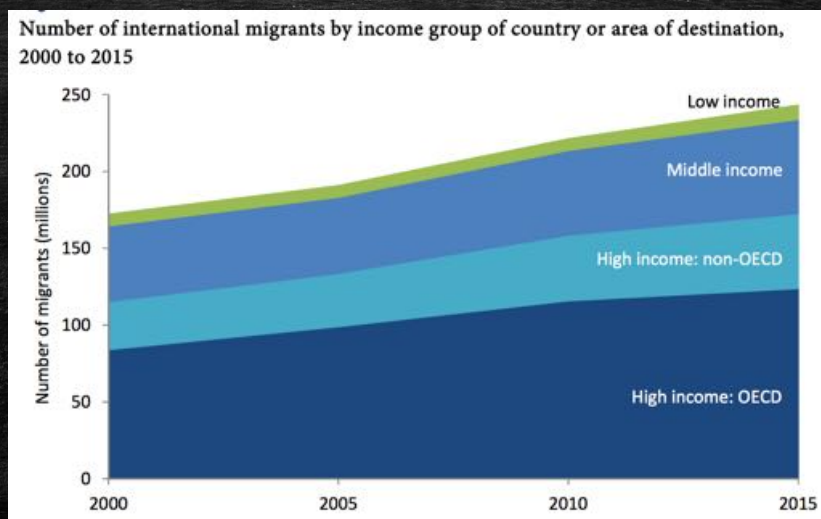
Migration and Health Relationships

What is Carried by Humans into New Regions?

- Pathogens in or on body
- Microbiologic flora
- Vectors on body
- Immunologic sequelae of past infections
- Vulnerability to infections
- Genetic makeup
- Cultural preferences, customs, and behavioral patterns Source: Wilson (1995)

Migration-Related Factors

- Country of birth
- Mode of travel
- Reasons for migration
- Culture
- Education
- Occupation
- Language Proficiency
- Migration status
- Multi-country exposures

Migration and infectious diseases

- Travel is one of the most important factors in the emergence of disease.

- Migration of humans has been the pathway for disseminating infectious diseases throughout recorded history.

- Moreover, migration will continue to shape the emergence, frequency, and spread of infections in geographic areas and populations.

Migration and chronic diseases

- Does migration affect chronic diseases?

- Yes! How?

- Migration from regions with low prevalence of chronic disease to regions of high prevalence of chronic disease decrease the percent of population with chronic disease.

- Wait .... But this will not decrease the number of population with chronic diseases!

- With time, and assuming that migrants will be affected by the new lifestyle in the countries of destination they will be subject to chronic diseases as well.

Migration and chronic diseases

- Likewise, migration from developed countries to developing countries – such as the "retirement migration" from Europe to Morocco and Tunisia will increase the prevalence of chronic diseases in the destination countries.

- This type of migration will increase both the percent and the number of population with chronic diseases.

- Hence, it requires more chronic disease services.

Syrians in Egypt

- An estimated 12 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011.

- According to the UNHCR, 4.8 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq.

- In addition, about 1.2 million have requested asylum to Europe.

- 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria.

Syrians in Egypt

- According to the UNHCR, there were 116,175 registered Syrian refugees in Egypt as of 31 August 2016, or about 40 thousand households .

- In January 2016, Egypt's minister of foreign affairs claimed that the country was hosting 300 thousand Syrians.

- No camps for Syrian refugees or any other nationalities are established in Egypt.

Living Conditions of Syrians in Egypt

- Six factors negatively affect the living conditions of Syrians in Egypt:
  1. High cost of living
  2. Limited work opportunities
  3. Limited education opportunities
  4. Limited health services
  5. Absence of naturalization opportunities
 6. Loss of hope and unclear future

The Health of Syrians in Egypt

- In principle, Syrian refugees have access to Egypt's national health system.

- According to the Egyptian Ministry of Health (MOH) decree 601/ 2012, Syrians were able to access MOH health services.

- However, the Egyptian health system is already overburdened.

Key Health Issues and Needs

- The most common chronic diseases Syrian refugees suffer from are cardiovascular diseases (27.12%), followed by diabetes (12.42%).

- Disability represents 9.15%
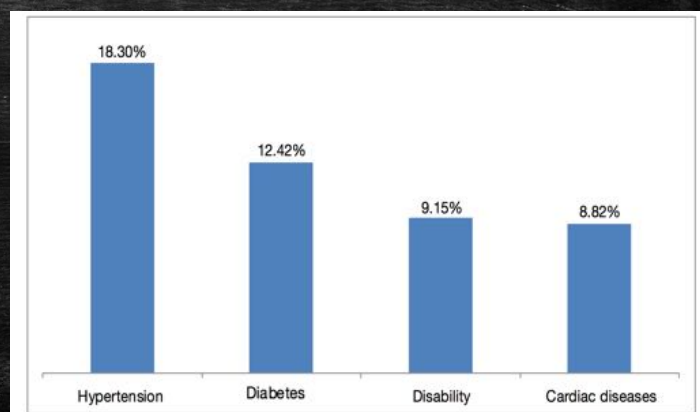
The Health of Syrians in Egypt

- 42% of Syrians in Egypt use public health facilities, 25.5% use private sector facilities, 13.5% depend on charity and friends support and 19% use UNHCR's supported health services.
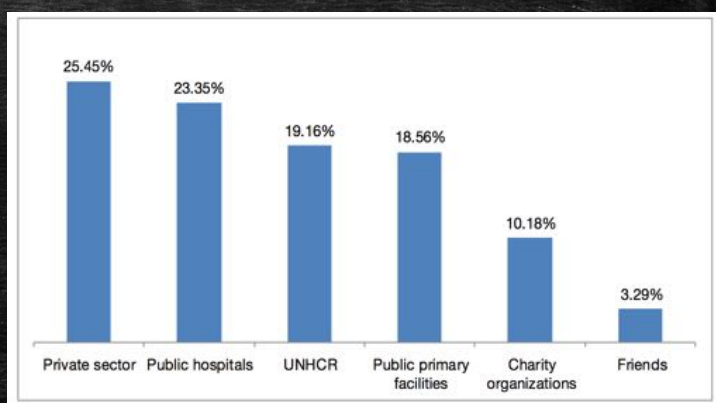
The Health of Syrians in Egypt: Challenges

- The scattering of Syrian refugees in urban Egypt poses operational challenges for the health sector, such as:

- Inequitable distribution of health facilities;

- Lack of integrated and standardized Health Information System (HIS);

- Lack of transparency regarding costs and treatment protocols, especially within the private sector;

- Poor medical record keeping of patient care and referrals.

What Can We Do to Help Migrants?

- The cornerstone in addressing migrants' health issues is to reform health systems in the receiving – and transit - countries to be more tolerant regarding the health needs of migrants.

- Healthy migrants contribute more to host societies.

What Can We Do to Help Migrants?

- Countries should recognize that migrants are "here/there to stay," they are not visitors.

- Even if they are visitors, they are humans that deserve access to health care.

- Health systems should be reconfigured to accept multiculturalism.

- Migrants face a number of special health, health behavior, and access to health care issues

- Addressing such issues is not a luxury; it's of the responsibilities of the host countries.

What Can We Do to Help Migrants?

- Sharing Experiences.
- Sharing burdens!

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