

People with Disabilities as Refugees and Asylum Seekers



Council of Europe, October 2016



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

Voices of refugees and IDPs with disabilities

“They underestimate us. They put us apart”

(Woman with a disability in Chad)

“Our capacity is so big, but they don’t know about that”

(Woman with a disability in Iraq)

“When you have a disability other people want to be far from you”

(Adolescent girl with a disability in Chad)

“I want to be a leader in this sense... the idea is for each [person with a disability] to be very active”

(Young woman with a disability in Ukraine)

“We feel like guests here now, there is no more welcome from the community”

(Man with a disability in Ukraine)

- By end 2015, 65.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide (21.3 million of these were refugees).
- In 2015, an equivalent of 24 people were displaced every minute
- Developing regions host 86% of the world's refugees.
- 41% of refugees are in a protracted situation
- 107,100 refugees were admitted for resettlement in 2015
- Estimated almost 9.8 million persons with disabilities displaced worldwide (based on WHO 15% estimate)

Refugees and asylum seekers in Europe

1,015,078

arrivals by sea in 2015

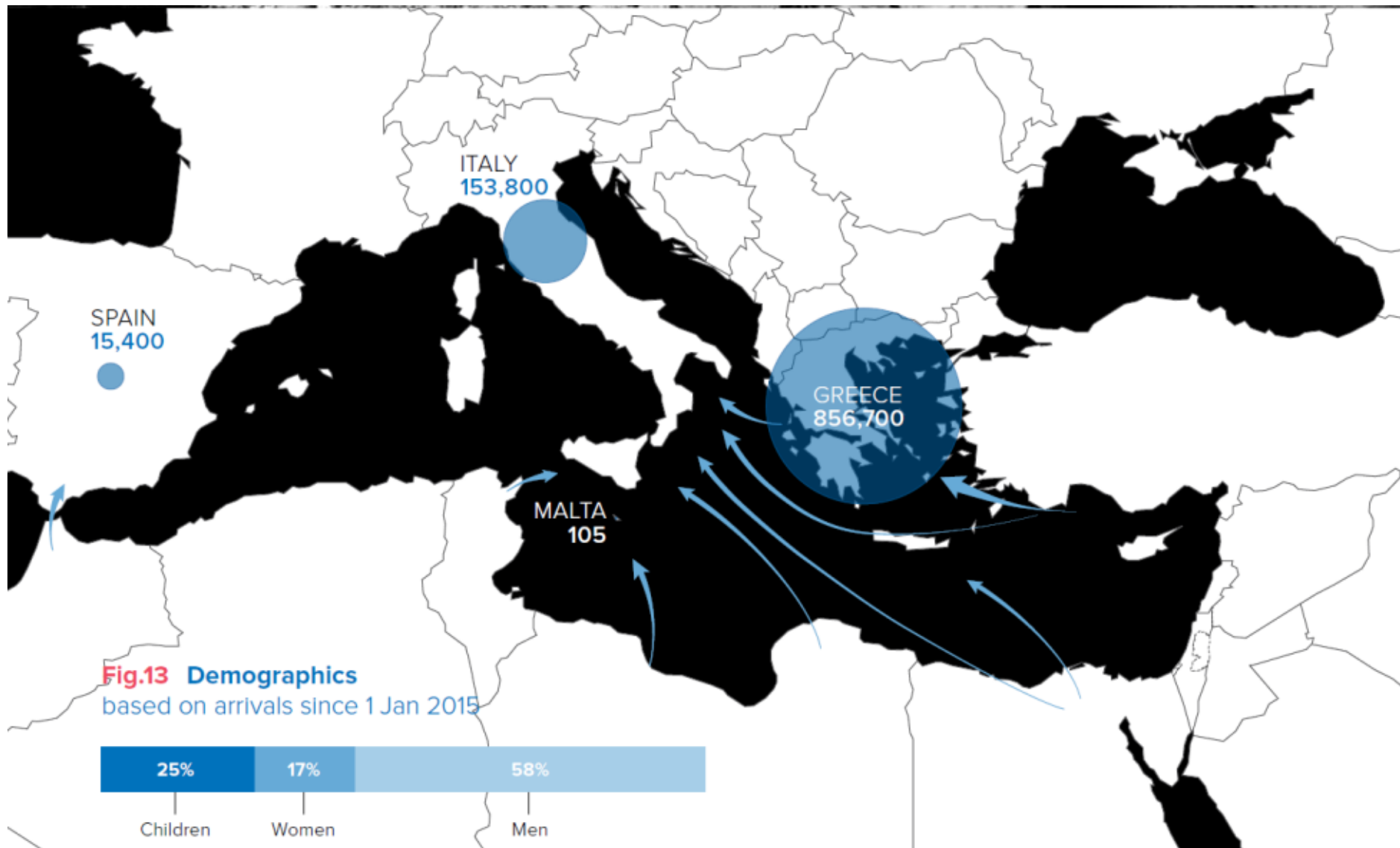
3,771

dead/missing at sea in 2015

84%

of arrivals come from the world's
top 10 refugee producing countries

* Sea arrivals to Greece and Italy.
Sea and Land arrivals to Spain



Executive Committee Conclusion:

- Recognizes that specific needs of persons with disabilities are often overlooked
- Stresses access to services and participation in programming

Age, Gender and Diversity Policy

- Aims to ensure that all persons enjoy their rights on an equal footing
- Recognizes the importance of individual differences in determining opportunities, capacities, needs and vulnerability
- Emphasizes participation of all persons in decisions that affect their lives

Need to Know Guidance

- Non- discrimination and participation as keys to protection

Strengthening protection of persons with disabilities in forced displacement

- Consultation with refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs with disabilities to better understand protection concerns and ideas for change
- Participatory planning process jointly with refugees/ asylum seekers and IDPs with disabilities, host community organizations of persons with disabilities, UNHCR and partners, government representatives



Equality and non- discrimination

- Compounding barriers to accessing work
 - Loss of livelihood assets on displacement. Or limited work experience in country of origin due to significant barriers for persons with disabilities.
 - Discrimination on the basis of disability and refugee/ asylum seeker status
- Compounding barriers to accessing education
 - Limited availability of inclusive education in countries of origin, gaps in education due to conflict and displacement, and challenges adapting to a new curriculum and language



Awareness raising

- Disability- related stigma, compounded by rise in xenophobia and racism
- Importance of building links between displaced and host community persons with disabilities



Accessibility

- Accessibility of reception facilities, asylum procedures, and local service systems
- Challenges around identification of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities, and availability of data



Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

- Compounding risks for refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities due to a loss of community support networks
- Exploitation, violence and abuse less likely to be reported due to a lack of familiarity with legal rights and service systems, lack of access to information and unclear legal status
- Heightened risk of exploitation, violence and abuse en route to safety



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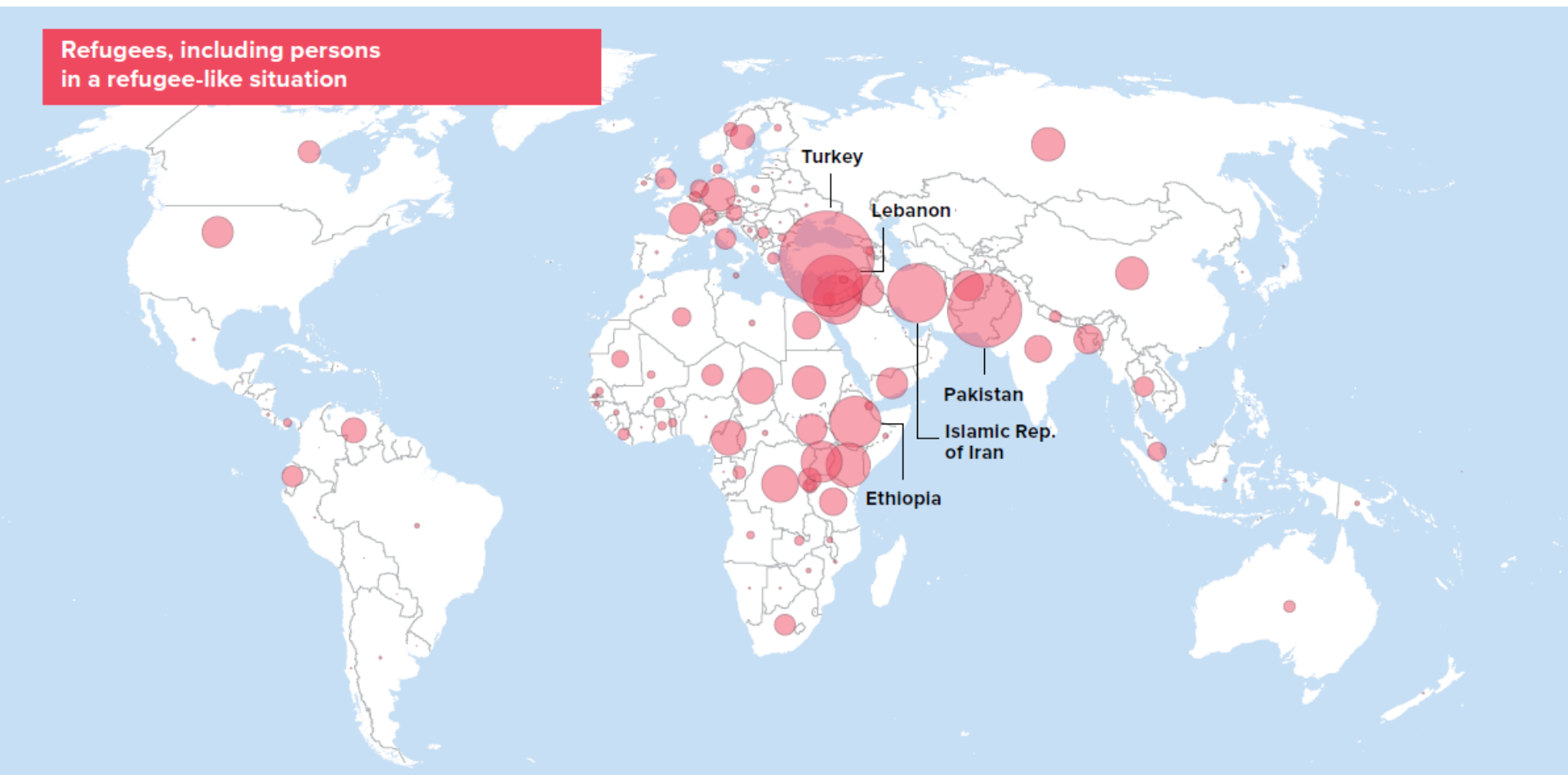
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Who is a refugee? Who is an asylum seeker?

- a refugee is any person who: “... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”
- An asylum-seeker is someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.

Refugees

Refugees, including persons
in a refugee-like situation



Asylum Seekers

Asylum-seekers (pending cases)



- Protection and assistance for refugees, IDPs and former refugees who have returned home
- Work with implementing partners
- Help refugees to find durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration, resettlement
- In Europe, supporting governments to coordinate response

UNHCR's role in Europe

- Support governments in their leadership role
- Work with partners-coordination



Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan- Europe



- Protection- protection monitoring, strengthening national asylum systems, identification of persons with specific needs
- Food assistance
- Health care
- Shelter- reception facilities, 'hotspots'
- Distribution of non- food items
- Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities
- Support to local communities

Child and Family Support Hubs

- Partnership between UNHCR, UNICEF and ICRC
- 20 support centers for families and children- vital services and protection
- Package of services provided by NGOs and national Red Cross societies



Concerns raised by refugees with disabilities worldwide

- High levels of stigma and discrimination
- Exclusion from decision- making processes
- Risk of sexual and gender based violence
- Limited access to specialist health care, rehabilitation and assistive devices
- Barriers to accessing education, child friendly spaces and livelihood programmes
- Challenges around food assistance, including specific dietary needs
- Isolation of families and development of negative coping mechanisms