



PRESS RELEASE

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Forcibly-displaced people living with diabetes at higher risk of disability and early death.

International Diabetes Federation announces initiative to improve diabetes care in humanitarian settings.

(Brussels, Belgium, 22 May 2018) - The [International Diabetes Federation \(IDF\)](https://www.idf.org/) estimates that four million people living with diabetes are forcibly displaced as a result of man-made and natural disasters. In these difficult circumstances, people with diabetes often struggle to manage their condition and are at increased risk of disability and early death. In order to raise awareness of the challenges of preventing and managing diabetes in humanitarian settings, IDF has launched a multi-stakeholder initiative to encourage action, improve health services and ensure access to essential medicines for displaced people with diabetes.

Managing diabetes is not always easy. It can cause unnecessary suffering for individuals and their families and place a significant burden on healthcare resources. Caring for diabetes becomes particularly difficult when people are forced to flee.

Undiagnosed and poorly controlled diabetes can lead to acute and life-threatening complications such as blindness, amputation, kidney failure, cardiovascular events and early death. Worldwide, IDF estimates that one in two people are undiagnosed.¹ People in humanitarian settings face an even greater risk of under-diagnosis.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 65 million people displaced as a result of conflicts alone.² Conflicts and disasters result in large-scale movements of populations. Their arrival into unprepared locations puts severe pressure on healthcare resources and poses a significant challenge. Health systems struggle to respond to the emergency and provide healthcare for the new arrivals and their existing population.

Limited research has been conducted to assess the burden of diabetes among displaced people. Where studies have been undertaken, they suggest higher diabetes prevalence rates than in the general population.

Forcibly displaced people with diabetes may not be able to gain access to the medicines and supplies they need and emergency healthcare personnel are not always trained to deal with the condition. This situation is compounded by disruption to food, water and utilities.

Commenting on the new initiative, IDF President Professor Nam H. Cho said, "People living with diabetes must be able to access the essential medicines and care they need to manage the condition and avoid its debilitating complications. For some, this is a matter of life or death. Securing immediate access to essential medicines is a priority when people with diabetes are forced to flee their homes. The supply must be uninterrupted and provided at no or very low cost so that medicines are not priced out of the hands of those who need them most. All too often, the care for people with diabetes is



overlooked in the response to a humanitarian crisis. We are calling for concerted action to make sure the healthcare needs of people with diabetes are not disregarded when disaster strikes.”

IDF calls on national governments, international and donor organisations, civil society and the private sector to:

- Guarantee uninterrupted access to diabetes medication and care for all forcibly-displaced people with diabetes and integrate diabetes care as a key component of the humanitarian response
- Increase funding to strengthen health systems in areas with a high burden of displaced populations
- Conduct research to assess the exact burden of diabetes among forcibly displaced people

The multi-stakeholder campaign involves representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and Santé Diabète Mali. It is supported by a grant from the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF).

“WDF is delighted support this effort to improve diabetes care in humanitarian settings. Our vision is to alleviate the burden of diabetes among people that are most vulnerable to the disease. Reducing the suffering caused by diabetes during crises is central to that vision – and a priority for WDF, given the growing number of displaced people worldwide,” said Jakob Sloth Madsen, Programme Manager, WDF.

Visit the [dedicated section of the IDF website](#) for more information.

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References:

1. International Diabetes Federation. IDF Diabetes Atlas, 8th edn. Brussels, Belgium: International Diabetes Federation, 2017. <http://www.diabetesatlas.org>
2. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 21 June 2017, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/> [accessed 9 April 2018]

About the *Managing and Preventing Diabetes in Humanitarian Settings* initiative

IDF has launched a [multi-stakeholder initiative](#) to ensure that the voice of displaced people with diabetes is heard and their needs met. The key objectives of the initiative are to:

- Raise awareness of the challenges of preventing and managing diabetes in humanitarian settings



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- Encourage action, financial commitment and the development of financial mechanisms to improve health services and access to essential medicines and care in the immediate and longer-term response to humanitarian crises
- Target needs during the initial humanitarian responses to a crisis and in the protracted phase

The first phase of the initiative will run until December 2018 and focus on reviewing and gathering relevant data and leveraging key regional and global events to disseminate key messages and recommendations through a variety of communications channels and stakeholders.

The initiative is supported by a grant from the World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) and overseen by a Steering Committee that includes representatives from IDF regions, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World Health Organization (WHO), WDF and Santé Diabète Mali.

About the International Diabetes Federation:

The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) is an umbrella organisation of over 240 national diabetes associations in 165 countries and territories. It represents the interests of the growing number of people with diabetes and those at risk. The Federation has been leading the global diabetes community since 1950. The Federation's activities aim to influence policy, increase public awareness and encourage health improvement, promote the exchange of high-quality information about diabetes, and provide education for people with diabetes and their healthcare providers. IDF is associated with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations and is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). www.idf.org