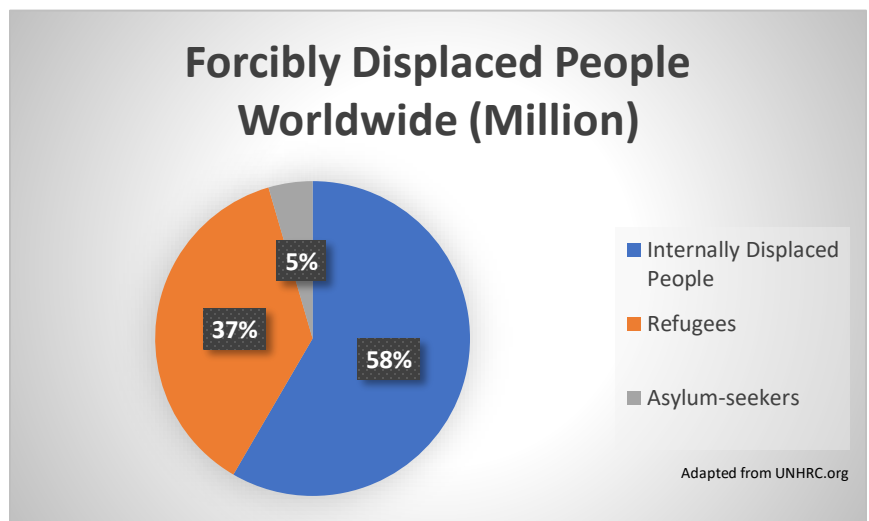




## Refugees in Sport

Sport practitioners are in a unique position to support refugees through involvement in sport. A **refugee** is someone who has been forced to flee their home because of persecution, violence, or war. Refugees have a well-founded fear of persecution due to a social identity or membership in a particular group. These identities can include race, religion, nationality, gender, or political party (UNHCR, 2018). Internally Displaced Persons are those who seek safety wherever they can find it and normally do not cross international borders. Reasons for why individuals become Internally Displaced Persons include natural disasters, financial costs, laws and policies, or the psychological toll of leaving your home.

The persistent hardships faced by refugees and Internally Displaced Persons are challenging to overcome, but sport is one avenue through which these individuals can gain a sense of inclusion in unfamiliar contexts. Quality sport participation can lead to health-related and psychosocial benefits for athletes of diverse levels, sport types, and ages. Additionally, social inclusion with teammates, coaches, and the larger community is a potential benefit of sport involvement for the refugee population (Amara et al., 2005). However, a sense of belonging one may gain from participating in sport is not inherent and has the means to enhance difference and potentially lead to exclusion (Spaaj, 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider the challenges accessing sport as well as the sport environment created for these athletes.



### Benefits of Sport

- Improve fitness
- Decreases risk of chronic diseases
- Builds self-esteem and social cohesion
- Opportunity for social interaction
- Breaks down cultural barriers and stereotypes
- Site for trust building between communities
- A diversion strategy
- Site for transitional support

### Challenges Accessing Sport

- Language, cultural, and religious barriers
- Reaching women and girls
- Legal status
- Anti-migration sentiment
- Lack of resources, transport, and equipment
- Uniform regulations
- Previous traumatic experiences
- Different experiences and expectations

*“These refugee athletes will show the world that despite the unimaginable tragedies that they have faced, anyone can contribute to society through their talent, skills and strength of the human spirit.” Thomas Bach IOC President*

## How can I Support Refugee Athletes?



## Organizations Working to Help Refugees



## Where can I learn more about Refugees in Sport?

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Waardenburg, M., Visschers, M., Deelen, I., & van Liempt, I. (2018). Sport in liminal spaces: The meaning of sport activities for refugees living in a reception centre. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport, 1*(19).

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