



TAFISA Statement on 'Sport for All Participation – Benefits for Refugees'

Unfortunately, current estimates from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees place global refugee and displaced people numbers at around 60 million – the highest since the agency began collecting numbers some six decades ago. With crises continuing in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, Burundi and elsewhere, leaving Europe and other neighbouring countries grappling with how to deal with these extraordinary numbers, there is little reason to expect imminent improvement.

Refugees' lives are often characterised by physical, psychological, social and emotional impairment and suffering. There is strong evidence that well-run sport and physical activity programmes can improve both the quality of life and psychological well-being for refugees and displaced people.

Refugees and displaced people often experience periods of idleness and boredom, a loss of morale and the feeling of desolation. Negative stereotypes can foster, along with anger, resentment, fear, isolation and depression, too often resulting in extremism and armed conflict. Participation in sports and physical activities creates a sense of belonging, which helps counter negative stereotypes, build trust and bridge social, economic and cultural differences. It can provide remarkable learning experiences as negative prejudices are dismantled, shared identity is constructed and groups learn to work together; to respect and appreciate other cultures. If people, in particular the young, are not offered adequate opportunity to experience a positive and productive environment, reduce and avoid feelings of frustration or aggression, develop independently and be allowed to hope, they may contribute to the next round of conflict.

Sports programmes enable people of all ages to take part in social and recreational activities, creating an environment of recovery and growth rather than stagnation and hopelessness. Refugees and displaced people can enjoy the psychosocial benefits of physical activity and enhanced self-confidence. Children have the opportunity to laugh and play, build social networks, share experiences and restore some sense of normality to their lives. They learn the norms in their new social environment and the vernacular language by interacting

through sports. Sport and physical activity can not only help prevent health crises by participation in itself, they also serve as a tool for the distribution of positive health messages.

TAFISA recognizes the integrative and social power of sport and physical activity and advocates its incorporation into refugee programmes.

Adopted in Budapest by the TAFISA General Assembly, on the 16th of October 2015