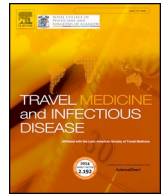




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COVID-19 pandemic and economic cost; impact on forcibly displaced people



Dear Editor,

We read with great interest the recent publication of illness among travelers returning from a mass gathering of religious purpose between August 2015 and April 2019 [1]. The current outbreak of COVID-19 is estimated to cost \$1 trillion to world's economy during year 2020. According to experts this impact is even worse than Great Financial Crisis that world faced in 2007–2008 [2,3]. Countries are cutting interest rates and revising their expenditures and might have to cut donations to different programs run by United Nations [2].

There are 70.8 million forcibly displaced people in the world, among these there are 40.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs), 25.9 million refugees and 3.5 million asylum seekers. Factors contributing to the low standards of living for these people include lack of space, poor healthcare facilities, high population density, and low levels of education [4].

People in refugee camps are already fighting for basic necessities of life and are currently under high risk of acquiring COVID-19. There are inadequate facilities for sanitation, washing and disinfection in these refugee camps [5]. Furthermore, unviability of precautionary equipment like hand sanitizer, soaps, disinfectants, masks and high population density makes the scenario worse.

These refugee camps are mainly monitored and run by UNHCR. The funding system of UNHCR is entirely dependent on voluntary donations from different rich governments across the globe [4]. America, European Union, Scandinavian countries along with some other strong economies are main donors of UNHCR (Fig. 1). Data analysis revealed that 15 top economies of the world are badly hit by this COVID-19 outbreak. There is a sharp decrease in economic activities ranging from decline in restaurant and hotel bookings, air travels, fuel consumption, retail sector and even media industry [2,3]. This economic crunch will have an effect on donation programs of these countries in coming months.

Till now, 196 countries are hit by this pandemic and countries have to spend a lot more money in their own health and public welfare sector [4]. There are chances that UNHCR will face a drop in funds. This will further worsen the situation for these displaced people including 37 million children living in these camps [5,6]. World has to act smartly in order to prevent another human crisis in coming months. Periodic diarrhea, malaria and polio cases had been reported from these refugee settlements in the past [6]. It is high time for global community to act swiftly to save these lives.

Funding

Not Applicable.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

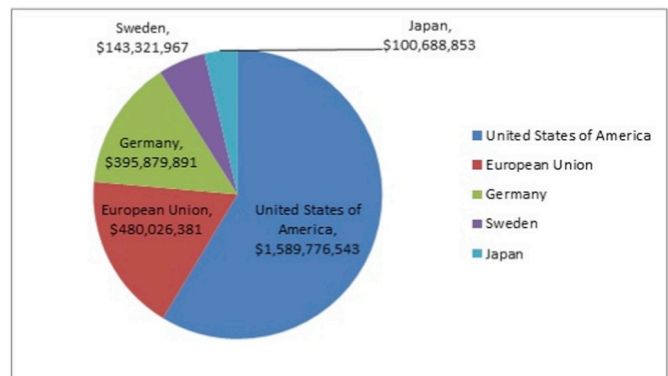


Fig. 1. Donations for UNHCR in 2019 [Data extracted from 4].

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