

Expanding Global Impact through the Consortium on Displacement, Climate and Health

Strategic Plan Theme: Global Impact

Funding Level: Between \$1-5 million

Facility Needs: No new facilities will be needed

Submitting Unit: Osteopathic Medicine/Institute for Global Health

Collaborating colleges/departments/units involved with this proposal.

Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, Human Medicine, Social Science, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Law, Engineering, Education, James Madison, Nursing, and Residential College of Arts and Humanities

What is the proposal's big theme or idea?

Creating a transdisciplinary consortium for research, teaching, and outreach to solve problems related to refugees and displacement, building on MSU's existing strengths in health, climate change research, and scholarship and advocacy around forced migration. It will create opportunities for faculty currently working in small groups within their disciplines to form larger collaborations to create more innovative solutions to problems related to health, climate, and displacement.

What is the proposal's goal?

To combine MSU's existing strengths in community health research and services, refugee and forced migration studies, immigration law, food security, education, and environmental and climate change research to create the Consortium on Displacement, Climate and Health (CDCH). MSU has a long and distinguished 70-year history of globally engaged research that supports the health and development of the world's most vulnerable populations. The CDCH will align MSU's existing capabilities to create transdisciplinary solutions that will promote greater health equity and access through new research collaborations, strengthening global health partners and outreach, and creating new learning opportunities. Targeted initiatives include: 1. Development of field sites in areas deeply impacted by refugee migration and other types of displacement where data can be collected, medical, legal, education, and environmental interventions can be implemented, and education abroad and hybrid instruction can take place. 2. Research labs focused on external funding proposals, development of pre- and post-doctoral fellowship opportunities. 3. Endangered Students and Scholars Program: providing study opportunities for displaced undergraduate and graduate students, and employment opportunities for displaced faculty. 4. Development of an annual Consortium Conference on Displacement, Climate, and Health (CDCH) that will be sponsored by MSU and its participating institutions. 5. Development of Virtual Institutes for education and research with our global partners that will continue to energize multi-institutional partnerships and research.

Define the significance, or impact of your big idea.

Displacement has been a major global problem for over half a century, but it has become even more widespread and intractable due to increasing environmental disasters brought on by climate change, political instability, ongoing conflicts such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and growing rigidity of nation-state borders. Recent conflicts and environmental disasters have resulted in millions of displaced people who often live in overcrowded conditions without proper infrastructure or who lack the legal status to access resources to ensure their well-being. Climate extremes have destroyed homes and livelihoods and disrupted agricultural activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to significant health disparities of refugees and other displaced populations, which because of limited access to accurate information and low trust in government are more likely to be skeptical of infection mitigation public health practices, and less likely to be vaccinated. The problems related to displacement are intractable, but they are not unsolvable. As a world grant university, MSU has the expertise and capacity to radically improve the lives of displaced persons and the communities in which they now live. We can improve basic health services, help communities to be resilient to climate extremes, ensure access to environmental resources including clean water, create new educational opportunities for children, and support innovative ways for communities to integrate displaced peoples. All of these activities are happening now in various pockets around campus, but the CDCH will consolidate those efforts to create greater capacity and coordination which will expand MSU's impact. As such, we have the resources and duty to help our fellow human beings acquire what is necessary to survive physically, mentally and emotionally. Michigan has traditionally been in the top 5 states for resettlement of refugees. The cities of Detroit and Lansing have resources that will partner with the CDCH. While Michigan is an important location for resettlement, globally resettlement accounts for a tiny fraction of all refugees. In the last six weeks over 4.5 million people have fled Ukraine, there are over 5.7 million registered Syrian refugees, and in 2020 globally there were 34.4 million refugees and asylum seekers and another 48 million people internally displaced (forced from their homes but stayed within their country of citizenship). While it is important for us to have an impact locally, the real refugee crisis is happening abroad. The CDCH will be an ideal platform to generate extramural grants to study the implications on public health of such disruptions, and the social systems that can facilitate interventions to improve conditions.

Who will be impacted?

1. Refugees and other displaced persons in Michigan and abroad. We plan to initially focus on several areas in which we have established relationships in international contexts (most likely the Dominican Republic, Middle Eastern region of Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon, Mekong Delta and surrounding areas of southeast Asia, and Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda).
2. MSU faculty working in the 10 collaborating colleges, including researchers studying the effects of climate change and environmental disasters, health practitioners, and migration scholars and immigration legal experts.
3. MSU students participating in CDCH-organized education abroad programs, internships, research field trips, health outreach programs, and remote learning opportunities that connect field sites with campus classrooms.
4. Community stakeholders, including partnering organizations in Michigan and abroad, and refugee hosting communities that will benefit from the research, teaching, and outreach activities and the collaborative efforts with MSU personnel to better integrate displaced peoples.

What does sustainability for your proposal look like?

The mission of the CDCH is to address the multiple issues facing the diaspora of refugees and displaced populations through an extensive engagement of faculty and staff at MSU and partners beyond MSU, locally, nationally and globally. As a World Grant university MSU has the wide range of relevant disciplines with expertise to research and treat this population. By fostering linkages through the consortia model and virtual institutes existing and new collaborations will generate new publications and grants, laying the foundation for further external funding and grant proposals. The long-term vision is to continue to build on these investments to bring a surge of long-term research, educational, and outreach support from US and global funding sources that are sustainable and synergistic in feedback loops within MSU and our global partners.