

# Displaced Children: "Adverse Childhood Experiences Amongst Refugees from the Horn of Africa: Influences on Development, Attachment, and Risk/Resilience"



Segen G. Zeray, University of California, San Diego, Global Health Program



**Introduction:** This poster addresses what it means to be displaced and introduces the concept of ACE's and their presence throughout the last of the three stages that a displaced refugee endures: trauma during relocation. It is acknowledged that the more ACE's there are, the more child development is negatively impacted. The trauma experienced during the previous stages accumulates during relocation. This research analyzes how it leads to the disruption of secure attachments with family. That trauma and violent disruption filters through psycho-social/mental, developmental, and educational health. Refugee youth are often ascribed to two strict narratives, being "risk" (vulnerable) or "resilience". However, much of their resilience relies on the lack of trauma from having no violent disruption of their secure attachments. Such circumstances apply to unaccompanied refugee minors (URM's). There is not much understanding of this connection between URM's and what their resilience depends on, which leads to many gaps and constraining assumptions about the health and development of displaced and refugee youth.

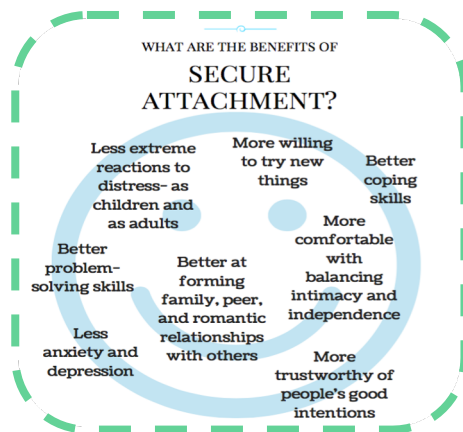


## Key Terms:

- ❖ **Secure Attachments:** A child's close and secure relationships with their family or peers.
- ❖ **Social Network:** One's main family unit or peers.
- ❖ **ACE's:** Adverse Childhood Experiences
- ❖ **URM:** Unaccompanied Refugee Minor
- ❖ **Community-Based/Holistic Treatment:** Intersection of community and treatment systems for more positive health results
- ❖ **Displacement:** Forced migration or displacement of people due to political or violent circumstances
- ❖ **Risk/Vulnerable:** Vulnerability or risk factors that negate a child's health and development
- ❖ **Resilience:** Overcoming adverse circumstances through protective or individual factors

**Results:** The result of this research displayed the trauma experienced being reflected in:

- High rates of PTSD, anxiety and depression among displaced and refugee youth.
- Community-based treatment is acknowledged as the most effective form of intervention because of the focus it has on building healthy social networks and attachments, especially during relocation.
- The layer of trauma that is rooted in losing loved ones or having loved ones suffer around you does not apply to URM's so there is more adaptability with development and healing.
- URM's in this case do not have to endure this trauma as they go through the three stages independently → 1) trauma in the native land 2) trauma during the journey 3) **trauma during relocation.**



## Significance:

Having support during resettlement is especially important as that allows for victims of displacement and violence to feel secure to develop in their new space and with their familial attachments. This matters for the global health field because the overall life trajectory for many displaced and refugee youth all across the world is negative and much of that is due to developmental and health concerns that stem from these issues.

## Conclusions

These findings relate to the importance of maintaining a secure attachment and social network within resettlement. The implication of these results highlights why youth need a secure base for their attachment with their support groups in order to properly develop in all areas of their well-being and health, especially in a new culture in their resettlement.

## Acknowledgements & References:

- Betancourt, Theresa S., Rochelle L. Frounfelker, Jenna M. Berent, Bhuwan Gautam, Saida Abdi, Este. D., Simich, L., Hamilton, H., & Sato, C. (2017). *Perceptions and understandings of mental health from three Sudanese communities in Canada*. International Journal of Culture and Mental Health, 10(3), 238-249.
- Fazel M., Stein A. "The mental health of refugee children" *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. 2002; 87:366-370.
- Huyck, Earl E., and Rona Fields. "Impact of Resettlement on Refugee Children." *The International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2 (1981): 246-54. Accessed January 23, 2020. doi:10.2307/2545341.
- Kelly-Irving, Michelle, Benoit Lepage, Dominique Dedieu, Mel Bartley, David Blaine, Pascale Grosclaude, Thierry Lang, and Cyrille Delpeire. "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Premature All-cause Mortality." *European Journal of Epidemiology* 28, no. 9 (2013): 721-34. Accessed January 23, 2020. [www.ijer.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1007/s10653-013-9531-0](http://www.ijer.oxfordjournals.org/doi/10.1007/s10653-013-9531-0).