

**Triona Sweeney** worked at Temple Street Children's University Hospital, Dublin as a Manager and Clinical Specialist in Cleft Palate. She was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Limerick where she taught modules in cleft palate/craniofacial anomalies, clinical phonetics, and speech sound disorders. Triona is a Consultant Cleft Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and co-founder of Speech@Home. Her research includes development and evaluation of perceptual and instrumental speech assessments in cleft palate, cleft speech audit, and parent-led therapy. She has worked with speech and language therapists in Ethiopia with Operation Smile Ireland and Transforming Faces, and was involved as an advisor in the development of the Ethiopian speech therapy training course at Addis Ababa University.

**Van Tran** is a postdoctoral researcher at Charles Sturt University and a NAATI-accredited translator. She has been teaching English language and linguistics, translation and interpreting, and Vietnamese language at University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, and Defence Force School of Languages. She hosts SBS Vietnamese's weekly show on maintaining home language for Vietnamese-Australian children. Her research focuses on home language maintenance among Vietnamese-Australian families, multilingualism, and multilingual children's speech and language acquisition.

**Sarah Verdon** is an Associate Professor of speech-language pathology at Charles Sturt University, Australia. Her research focuses on children's speech, language, and communication development in culturally diverse contexts. She is co-chair of The International Expert Panel on Multilingual Children's Speech which advocates culturally responsive practice with multilingual children. She oversaw the development the Speech Pathology Australia national position paper and clinical guidelines for culturally responsive practice. Sarah applies her research and skills in volunteer capacity as director of the Trinh Foundation Australia, an Australian-based international not-for-profit organization whose mission is to develop speech therapy in Vietnam.

**Yvonne Wren** is Director of Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit, Associate Professor of Speech and Communication at the University of Bristol, and Reader in Speech and Language Therapy at Cardiff Metropolitan University in the UK. She is currently Chair of the Child Speech Committee of the International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders and a member of the International Expert Panel on Multilingual Children's Speech. She founded the UK and Ireland Child Speech Disorder Research Network and has been an invited speaker at international conferences including Portugal, South Africa, the USA, and Australia. She is also Senior Research Advisor to the UK Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

**Christine Yoshinaga-Itano** is a Research Professor, Institute of Cognitive Science, Professor Emerita, Department of Speech, Language & Hearing Sciences, at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Visiting Professor, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, Centre for Deaf. Her research for over 45 years has focused on universal newborn hearing screening and predictors of developmental outcomes of children with hearing loss with an emphasis on children and families with socio-economic and linguistic challenges and has assisted state and national departments of health and education in the US and globally in the development of their early hearing detection and intervention systems.

# 1 Unserved and Underserved Populations

Sandra Levey and Pamela Enderby

## Introduction

The International Association of Logopaedics and Phoniatics (IALP), now called The International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders, held its inaugural conference in 1923. The objective of the IALP is to bring together all professions working with individuals with communication and swallowing disorders with the goal of fostering research and clinical practice. Our mission is to improve the quality of life of individuals with disorders of communication, speech, language, voice, hearing, and swallowing. Much has been achieved to extend our knowledge of disorders but there is still a need to increase the understanding and awareness of these difficulties in marginalized communities.

## Unserved and underserved populations

Unserved and underserved populations are those that lack access to health services, education, or other aspects of wellbeing. Across the globe, millions face difficulties due to poverty, political conditions, civil unrest, or climate change that has an impact on the economy, agriculture, and living conditions. In some countries, inequalities are based on structural or systematic bias and discrimination that results in inequalities in education, healthcare, and income.

Unserved and underserved populations frequently consist of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, along with native populations in countries. Migrants are individuals who seek to establish a better life in a new location or country. Refugees are those forced to leave a country because of war, persecution, political instability, or poverty (Gönültaş & Mulvey, 2019; International Organization for Migration, 2018).

Asylum seekers are those who have fled their home country because of conflict, war, or other factors that bring danger to themselves or their families. Whilst forced displacement occurs when individuals are compelled to escape a region or country, voluntary migration is defined as the choice to relocate. Forced migration occurs when populations are compelled to flee a natural disaster, unemployment, famine, persecution, and conflict (Grech, 2019; Immigration Data Portal, 2020; United Nations Refugee Agency, 2017).

Vulnerable unserved and underserved populations face a high risk of health and education challenges. These populations are faced with limited financial and housing

availability and there is often fear or distrust in the access of government programmes or for disclosure of personal information. Due to language differences when entering a new region or country, many have difficulties in receiving and understanding information due to the absence of translators, lack of transportation or other barriers to accessing relevant services. Additionally, many countries have limited provision of health care and services (Serving Vulnerable and Underserved Populations, 2018).

In summary, limited access to health care and education are frequent factors that describe the situation faced by unserved and underserved populations. The authors of the different chapters in this book describe the issues that affect health care and wellbeing of those with a range of speech, language, communication and swallowing difficulties in unserved and underserved communities and provide information related to these difficulties which will be of use to local and national governments when developing services, information for non-specialist healthcare providers as well as information and resources for professionals working in these challenging situations.

### Movement across the globe by migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

Large-scale movement of populations has taken place in different countries for different reasons including war, civil conflict, and climate change. Economic collapse has led to movement due to the loss of power, water, famine, and medical support (Krueger, 2019; Labrador, 2019). Warfare and internal conflict have also led to movement due to the loss of agriculture. There have also been attacks on certain ethnic groups that has caused large numbers of people to flee from their home countries, as in Syria and Colombia (Abdulazeez & Oriola, 2018; Conner, 2016).

Climate change has had a significant effect on countries across the globe through the rise of sea-levels, salinization of farmland, water scarcity, storms, and glacial lake floods. (International Organization for Migration, 2019; Podesta, 2019; Zickgraf, 2020). Consequently, the continued rise in sea level has led to migration to non-coastal areas within or outside of the native country (Hauer, 2017). Another consequence of climate change is drought, resulting in arid farmland that becomes infertile. It is predicted that the rise in sea level will lead to forced displacement for 80 million adults as climate change continues (Zickgraf, 2020).

### The global burden of disease

The global burden of disease is borne by many migrants, refugees, displaced individuals, and native-born people who face health challenges (American Public Health Association, 2018; Bempong et al., 2019; Mukherjee, 2018). Some suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after witnessing or experiencing violence (Grace, Bais, & Roth, 2018). Many of the unserved and underserved populations lack adequate nutrition, leading to the risk of succumbing to a range of disorders and diseases for adults and placing children at risk of impaired physical and neural growth (Creighton, Goldman, Pebley, & Chung, 2012; Dawson-Hahn et al., 2016a; Dawson-Hahn, Pak-Gorstein, Hoopes, & Matheson, 2016b; Kroening & Dawson-Hahn, 2019; Smock et al., 2019). However, there are approaches to addressing the needs of these populations through the development of projects described in the following chapters.

## Collaborative approaches to provide services to unserved and underserved populations

Many of the unserved and underserved have disorders of speech, language, voice, hearing and communication. They include those in low- and middle-income countries who lack essential health and education services as well as migrants, refugees and others seeking sanctuary in high-income countries. The special needs of these individuals must be met, with obstacles and barriers for these needs removed. Understanding the physical, environmental, political, social, cultural, linguistic, and local needs of the target population is a necessary step in providing relevant, sustainable, and scalable solutions. Sharing knowledge and collaboration is essential among and within governments, industry, the community, and professionals to ensure that unserved and underserved populations receive necessary services. This is a necessary step in providing relevant, sustainable, and scalable solutions to a broad range of human problems. The aim of this book is to assist all those involved in collaborating to improve services to address the needs of those with speech, language, communication and swallowing disorders.

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## 2 Supporting the Communication of Unserved and Underserved from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds

Sarah Verdon, Wiebke Scharff Rethfeldt, and Helen Grech

### Key information for local and national policy and lawmakers

The purpose of this chapter is to inform country leaders, professional organizations and institutions of the communication needs of people from humanitarian migrant backgrounds. A humanitarian migrant is someone who has been forcibly displaced from their home country and subsequently migrated to a new host country for refuge or asylum. In the host country, these migrants are those who have been granted some form of protection (Boese, van Kooy, & Bowman, 2018).

There are two types of communication barriers that may be faced by humanitarian migrants. One is the inability to speak the language of their host society and the other is the possible presence of a communication disorder. The inability to speak the language of the host country is not a communication disorder; however, it does present many challenges for newly resettled humanitarian migrants. For those with communication disorders, the barriers to accessing support and participating in society may be further exacerbated by a lack of proficiency in the language of their new host country. This chapter discusses the factors that impact upon the language competence of humanitarian migrants and strategies to support positive communication outcomes for this population. The focus of this is not on second language learning but rather supporting communicative competence as a whole across all languages spoken by a person.

Humanitarian migrants may arrive in their new host country speaking one or multiple languages and then acquire the societal language of their host country. Humanitarian migrants should be supported to maintain their heritage language(s) in addition to acquiring the language skills they will need to flourish in their new environment (Verdon, 2017).

Governments need to be aware of the impact of resettlement schemes upon the long-term outcomes of humanitarian migrants and their ability to successfully rebuild their lives in their host country. For example, many displaced people are settled in rural areas of English-speaking countries, such as Australia, under regional