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The UN Refugee Agency

TEACHING ABOUT REFUGEES

AGES 9-12 | ACTIVITY GUIDE

Find more materials at: unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A note about inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in lesson-planning.



Before undertaking any activities on the topic of refugees, asylum, nationality and migrants please take some time to think about the students in your class. Are some of them refugees, in the process of seeking asylum, or are they stateless? If so, think about talking to them and their parents depending on their age.

If possible include ideas and feedback from parents and the children in sessions and refer to them to answer questions if and only if they have expressly explained that they are interested in answering questions or speaking about these issues.

Stateless persons do not have the nationality of any country. Statelessness can occur in many different situations. For example, certain ethnic or religious groups may be not recognized under national laws as citizens of that country, some children are born outside of the country of their parents' citizenship and are not able to obtain citizenship from their parents' country or the one they were born in. A number of countries globally have laws which do not allow mothers to pass their nationality to their children.

Stateless persons may have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment, freedom of movement and others. Without these things, they often face obstacles and disappointment.

Be careful while using words such as "country" and "nationality" if you have any stateless children in your class. Instead you could use the words "your home" or "your culture".

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Here are some activities that you can undertake with your classes to move their learning about refugees into taking action.

LEARNING OUTCOME

1 | Understanding and empathizing with new arrivals in school.

Undertake a research project in order to create a guidebook for new children in the school.

Step 1: Facilitate a discussion about what it is like to start in a new school as a new arrival in the country. Get the children to choose topics they think would be helpful to have guidance on.

Step 2: This could take the form of a research project where children collect, anonymously if wanted, surveys from other children in the school about what it is like to be a new arrival in the school.

Those who are comfortable could identify themselves as being available for interviews by the children undertaking the research. Children can also interview their parents on what they need to do when they enrol or start a new school year.

Step 3: The children can then organize their research together using a bulletin board in the classroom, for example a large board where they can write results. Finally, a teacher can facilitate writing a guidebook from all the research written on the bulletin board.

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"This has been a valuable way for us to learn how important it is to be kind and helpful to new arrivals in our school. Let's see if we can continue to do this together as the year goes on."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

2 | Understanding the economics of people seeking asylum.

Step 1: Ask children to talk with parents about how much money they spend each week or month on food shopping. Children could anonymously put the number on a piece of paper and then children can find the average amount per week.

Step 2: Find out the weekly budget allowance for asylum-seekers and ask children to compare the amounts.

Step 3: In small groups, ask the children to make a list of what food is needed for one week for a family of four.

Step 4: Undertake a field trip to local supermarkets or shops for children to see how much money it takes for them to buy what they believe is necessary. Compare this amount with how much their families spend on average and how much an asylum-seeker gets. Conduct a group conversation about the information gathered and see if the children have ideas about recommendations for allowances for asylum seekers.

Step 5: Write to a local or national politician with the results of the findings and encourage children to make videos and other brochures about what they have learned which can be shared with politicians.

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"This has been a productive and helpful activity to understand how families who are seeking to be refugees live in our country when they arrive."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

3 | Learning how to work together to create something participative. Understanding that everyone's contribution is important.

Undertake a collaborative creative activity with the theme of refugees and share it with their community, for example by inviting parents or doing a show for the school or other classes.

Example 1: Creating and holding an exhibition

Example 2: Dance recital or play

Example 3: Holding a poetry recital

Example 4: Writing a story book

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"This has been a wonderful activity and everyone has contributed. It is a valuable way for us to learn how important everyone's contribution is."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

4 | Providing an opportunity for children and families to learn how to be together in a community.

Hold a welcoming evening or a monthly breakfast for new arrivals in the school at the beginning of the school year with games providing opportunities for the whole community to interact with each other. Children can choose games, make drinks and food or sing a welcoming song.

LEARNING OUTCOME

5 | **Learning how to work together to create something participative. Understanding that everyone's contribution is important.**

Write a story or poetry book for other children to understand the experiences of a refugee child. The book could be donated or the school library or a local library. Each child could have a copy.

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"This has been a wonderful activity and everyone has contributed. It is a valuable way for us to learn how important everyone's contribution is."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

6 | **Empathize with the situation of newly arrived refugee children.**

Write letters to newly arrived refugee children about what life is like at school in their country. Letters could be dropped at a reception centre and shared with children.

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"Thank you for offering these letters for these children who have newly arrived in the country. It is important to think about the situation of others when we can."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

7

Understanding the situation of new children seeking asylum in my country.

Some reception centres or reception networks have opportunities to learn about the asylum procedures in that country.

Step 1: Check on-line or contact a network or particular reception centre and see what options they have for understanding the reception center system and asylum process.

Step 2: Some centres may send a communications officer to visit your class or school and in some countries there may be an option to engage in exchanges with other young people, for example sending letters or having an open football match or games-time.

Step 3: See what options there are in your area to learn on a more hands-on basis about the experiences of asylum-seeking children and students.

Suggested closing statement for discussion *can include a thanks to whoever has participated in a visit or activity.*

LEARNING OUTCOME

8

Including families in our classroom activities is a great way to understand how diverse and interesting our class is.

Invite parents to contribute ideas for an activity day, celebrating cultural differences, such as cooking or cultural activities. Hold a circle time or class meeting with a list of parents' ideas to see which ones children are interested in pursuing.

Suggested closing statement for discussion – *"Thank you to all children's parents for their participation."*

LEARNING OUTCOME

9 | Understanding the situation of refugees in my country.

Step 1: First check if there are any parents of children who are refugees in the class. If so, ask them if they would be willing to share their experiences of being a refugee. If not, contact a local community organization that helps refugees and ask if there is a refugee or staff member that would be able to visit the class.

Step 2: Encourage the children to ask as many questions as they can to understand the refugee experience of integrating into a new country.

Step 3: Ask the students to ask about how they could help this process and then as a class design a project that incorporates the feedback from the refugees or the organization involved.

Suggested closing statement for discussion - *"Thank you to whoever has participated in a visit or activity and a note about how valuable it is to learn about being a refugee from interaction."*

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These educational materials were developed by Mialy Dermish with input from Laetitia Lemaistre.

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