

## Refugees: People Forced to Flee Action Guide



Refugees land on the beach at Lesbos. They have paid around €1,000 per person and risked their lives to cross the sea between Turkey and Greece in an inflatable boat. More than 4,000 people died making this journey in 2015.

Credit: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam GB

### Introduction

In 2015 violence and conflict forced 65.3\* million people around the world to flee their homes and seek safety elsewhere. 21.3 million of these people crossed an international border and became refugees in a different country. The remainder were internally displaced within their own countries.

Three countries alone stand out as departure points for the world's refugees; they are Syria (4.9 million refugees), Afghanistan (2.7 million refugees) and Somalia (1.1 million refugees). However there are also many 'forgotten' refugee emergencies occurring across the world, in countries such as Burundi, Myanmar and Colombia. These are mainly out of the public spotlight.

### Why is this happening now?

International human rights law was written in the 1940s to assist the millions of people forced to flee their homes following World War 2. So refugee crises are not new. However the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan (2001-14) and the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, have led to the largest movement of refugees in Europe since World War 2. In addition millions of people in the Global South face worsening insecurity caused by climate change and extreme poverty. Many of these people, too, are on the move.

### What needs to change?

Half of all refugees are hosted by poorer countries, which share only 2% of the world's wealth. Meanwhile the six wealthiest nations host only 9% of the world's refugees. All countries need to play a much more equal role in making sure that the human rights of people forced to flee are protected and respected.



Muddy conditions facing refugees as winter approaches in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Refugees now make up one third of tiny Lebanon's population. Credit: Sam Cunningham/Oxfam GB

### What can you do?

1. **Inform:** Teach others about the topic and support them to think critically about a controversial issue.
2. **Broadcast:** Get creative and raise awareness in your school and community.
3. **Influence:** Persuade decision makers to play their full part in supporting people forced to flee.

\*Statistics from [UNHCR](http://www.unhcr.org)

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### 1. Inform

Nearly everyone will have heard something about refugees, so your challenge is to give them the opportunity to think critically about the issue.

- Show young people the PowerPoint presentation and discuss its main points.
- Ask young people to creatively map out the challenges facing refugees, analyse these together and suggest potential solutions.
- Look at the critical thinking activity and workshop together with other young people. What do you learn? Does it help you to identify how refugees could be better supported?



Young campaigner Meera Mistry raises awareness of people forced to flee at the Glastonbury festival  
Photo: Marc West/Oxfam GB



Young people help to influence the British government by joining a visit to the Foreign Ministry to hand in a public petition.  
Photo: Lisa Rutherford/Oxfam GB

### 2. Broadcast

Plan events and activities to raise awareness in your community.

- Raise awareness: Find out about a refugee project in your community. How could you raise awareness of their work and encourage young people to support them?
- Plan an event: For example, organise a giant photo shoot or make a film to show in school. Decide the key messages you want to communicate.
- Spread your message wider: Invite the press, parents and other schools to your event. Write about it for the school newsletter, blog or website.

### 3. Influence

To give your actions a bigger impact, try to influence decision makers. Show them how much you care about supporting people forced to flee.:

- Write a persuasive letter to a politician or local representative asking them to do more for refugees. It should be no longer than one page, present clear points and be persuasive. You could also ask local or national businesses or education leaders to support you.
- Lead by example. Volunteer for a refugee project and use your experience to influence others to get involved.

#### More Action Ideas:

- Organise a film screening to get young people talking and thinking. There are suggestions [here](#) and [here](#).
- Challenge xenophobia and hate speech. Visit [www.nohatespeechmovement.org/](http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/)
- Research organisations working with refugees and organise a fundraiser for one whose values and projects you support.