Caring for Refugees

IN THIS ACTIVITY, the participants will learn about the factors that create refugee crises, and be challenged to think of ways to help.

TIME REQUIRED: 30 MINUTES | INTENDED FOR GRADES 9-12

MATERIALS NEEDED
- Copies of the handout, “Child Refugees,” found on page 312
- Butcher paper and markers

Activity Steps

1. ASK THE PARTICIPANTS what they know about refugees and displaced people. Allow for a few responses. Then note the following:

   » Refugees are people fleeing their country due to conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. They are defined and protected in international law, and must not be returned to situations where their lives and their freedom are at risk. Often, they flee with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

   » In the world today, there are 65 million people worldwide who are refugees, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. If a country were formed with all of the forcibly displaced people, it would be the 21st largest country in the world.

   » In 2015 alone, 12.4 million individuals were forced to leave their homes due to conflict or persecution. More than half of all refugees are children under 18.
More than half—54 percent—of all refugees worldwide come from just three countries: Afghanistan, Syria, and Sudan.

Even when families are able to escape safely, they are still in danger as they travel or when they stay at refugee camps. They are unsafe without a home and often encounter more challenges, like discrimination, poverty, and social marginalization.

Children and women face the biggest risk, as they are especially vulnerable to trafficking, abuse, and exploitation.

Distribute a copy of “Child Refugees” to each group and ask them to have one person read the story to the group. Ask them what struck them in the story. Then, ask them to write down the following:

- Five things you would miss if you had to flee home
- Five risks you think you might face as a refugee

When this activity is completed, ask them to think about a time when they didn’t know what to do or where to go. What did that uncertainty feel like? Have them share their responses with their small groups.

Gather the groups back together into a large group. Invite the groups to share some of the things they would miss and risks they thought they might face as refugees. Then ask for a few volunteers to share their experience of a time when they felt uncertain.

If you choose, conclude this lesson with a prayer of your own or use this one:

God, we pray that you would protect those who have left everything behind in search of safety. We pray they will seek you and trust in you to be their hope. Please move the nations of the world to seek compassionate solutions for refugees and displaced families. We ask you to open our eyes to ways we can respond, and enable our hearts to be open to your leading. Amen.

Noor and Abdul hope for a better life

For many kids, sleeping outside is an adventure. But for 5-year-old Abdul and his 6-year-old sister, Noor, it’s a necessity. After fleeing Syria with their parents and making an exhausting trek through Europe, they’ve been sleeping on the ground near the border between Serbia and Hungary. The border closed while they slept last night. Time will tell whether they’ll be allowed to enter Hungary.

What draws them forward is the hope of a new life, in Germany or Sweden perhaps. The children’s mother, Teasadi, was a teacher in Daraa, Syria, before the war. But death and destruction drove them from home—and keep them from going back.

Though Teasadi’s mind is weighed down with worry, the children’s vitality is a welcome sight. Noor and Abdul—along with their 10-year-old brother, Hamid, and 9-year-old sister, Zamzam—make a lively game of cracking walnuts they’ve gathered, stomping them, crushing them with rocks, and carrying the shelled ones in a plastic bag like trophies. Even though the family has so little, young Noor offers some of her hard-won nuts to others nearby.

Tonight, at least, the family has obtained a few tents so they won’t have to sleep in the open again. Abdul carefully removes his tennis shoes before stepping in; although he is young, he knows this piece of cloth is precious, and for right now, it’s home.

Noor and Abdul are old enough to know that their circumstances are dire. But they haven’t lost hope for a better life, and that’s what keeps them going.

**HOMEWORK:** Caring for Refugees

**STUDENT NAME**

**DATE**

Make a soccer ball by following the steps listed, then bring it to school.

**Making toys from trash**
In countless refugee camps where thousands of Syrian children are living in crowded conditions in makeshift shelters, basics like toys are hard to come by. Most families seeking safety fled their homes with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Everything they owned is gone, just like that. But that doesn’t stop kids from using their imaginations. Kids find what they can and put their creativity to work to make their own toys out of any materials they can find.

**Steps for making a soccer ball**
A soccer ball can be constructed from just about anything. In the skillful hands of a child, recycled items take shape and transform into a ball, enabling groups of soccer-hungry kids to start a game. Here’s how they do it—why don’t you give it a try too!

1. Gather cloth rags, plastic and paper shopping bags, newspapers, and twine.
2. Crumple one bag into a small ball, which will be the center of the finished ball.
3. Layer other bags, newspaper, and cloths over the center, taking care to keep the ball round and push out air pockets with each layer.
4. For the last layer, cover the ball with the thickest bag.
5. Wrap the ball with twine, pulling tightly and making a web of knots to cover the entire ball.
6. Bounce the ball on the ground a few times to see if any parts come loose; if so, cover with more twine and knots.

(Source: https://magazine.worldvision.org/stories/how-d-they-do-that-make-soccer-ball)
Write down what you learned about refugees and be ready to share your response with your class.