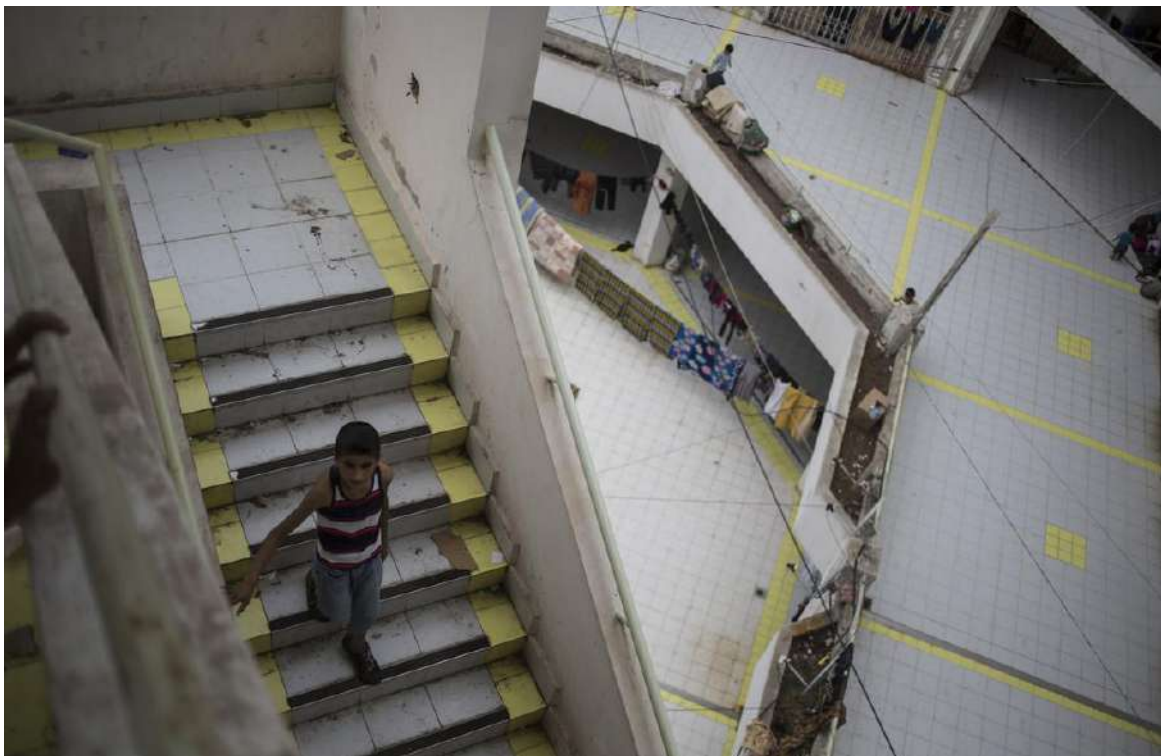


Syria, a children's crisis? Teacher's notes and background information.

Introduction

Since it began in March 2011, the conflict in Syria has been in the news headlines almost every day. The human impact has been immense. 6.8 million people – 38% of the total population – inside Syria require humanitarian aid. 4.25 million people have been internally displaced and 1.9 million people have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees. These figures are increasing rapidly. In June 2013 the UN estimated that an average of 200,000 extra refugees per month were leaving Syria.

In June 2013 the UN predicted that the number of Syrian refugees could top 3.25 million by the end of 2013. If this occurs Syria will become the world's greatest refugee emergency, surpassing the 2.6 million refugees who had fled the conflict in Afghanistan up to the end of 2012 (source UNHCR).



*Home for this young Syrian refugee in Lebanon is a derelict shopping centre
Photo: Sam Tarling/Oxfam*

Since 2012 humanitarian agencies, comprising the UN agencies and the development charities working in partnership with the UN, have been expanding their response to the

crisis. Syria and its neighbours are middle-income countries, possessing some capacity to respond to emergencies. In March 2013 Oxfam warned that the scale of the crisis was becoming so great that it risked overwhelming the capacity of both host governments and agencies to respond.

By mid 2013 approximately one million Syrian refugees had moved to Lebanon and Jordan, adding significantly to both countries' small populations and threatening their already strained public services and social order. Large numbers of refugees have also moved to Turkey, Iraq and countries beyond. However, this resource focuses on refugees' experiences in Lebanon and Jordan and contrasts the experiences of large numbers of these refugees; settling in host communities in Lebanon and moving to refugee camps in Jordan.



Za'atari refugee camp, Jordan

Photo: Karl Schembri/Oxfam

Taking action

Students are encouraged to explore and participate in **campaigning** and/or **fundraising** actions. These actions could happen in extra-curricular time (e.g. as an Oxfam Youth Ambassador) or as part of citizenship or similar lessons.

Campaigning

Much media coverage and political debate on Syria concentrates on the 'hard politics' of war – particularly focusing on guns, who's got them, who hasn't got them and who should or

shouldn't have them. This resource provides students with the opportunity to focus instead on the human impact of the conflict on Syrians who have fled to Lebanon and Jordan as refugees. These human stories are often omitted from the daily discourse on Syria.

Oxfam's **action guide** begins by asking students to learn about the plight of Syrian refugees and to share this knowledge with other students through peer teaching. The suggested activity is for students to **present an assembly**. Alternatively they could peer teach a lesson. This is a stand alone activity in its own right. However, the following activities build upon this learning and peer teaching activity.

Next students are asked to **write a letter to their MP**. Students should reach broad agreement on whether Syria is specifically a 'children's crisis' or not and then decide whether to focus their letter on the needs of children or the broader needs of families. If students concluded that children were being denied protection under particular UNCRC rights they could ask decision makers to take action to ensure these rights are met.

MPs names and contact details are at <http://bit.ly/tdpA>. Alternatively, entering an MP's name into an internet search engine often provides links to their personal website and contact details.

Letters should be brief and to the point. MPs should be asked to take an action. Although the UK Government has been generous in its aid for Syrian refugees, Oxfam believes that individual MPs aren't hearing enough from their constituents about aid for refugees and a peaceful solution to the conflict. Therefore letters should focus on demonstrating public support for the government's actions and ensuring they continue into the future.

Furthermore, asking your MP to write to the Department for International Development (DFID) shows Ministers that young people support the UK's aid for Syrian refugees. So MPs, for example, could be asked to ask DFID about how they are helping refugees or to ask a parliamentary question on a specific point about refugees.

Please let us know when you receive a response from your MP or from DFID. Scan the letter and email it to your regional Education & Youth Coordinator or education@oxfam.org.uk

Finally students could **spread the word about their campaign in the media**. We suggest students begin by getting a story in local newspapers or the school website or newsletter. There's a guide to writing a press release at <http://bit.ly/13Sl1y>



*Refugees arriving at Syria's border with Jordan are bussed to Za'atari camp
Photo: Anastasia Taylor-Lind/Oxfam*

Fundraising

Oxfam has launched a \$53.4 million emergency appeal for Syria. So far 28% of this target has been met. We hope expand our work from helping 200,000 people to help 650,000 people in need of aid over the next 12 months. These will include refugees in Lebanon and Jordan and internally displaced people in Syria.

When a refugee flees danger or oppression for safety and security in another country they hope to be welcomed and helped when they reach their destination. Unfortunately, despite provisions within international law, this welcome and this help are not always given. Therefore young people could think of activities they could be sponsored to do that will make school more welcoming and helpful. This could involve activities like helping out in the cafeteria, filling water bottles on a hot day or helping new students who don't know their way around the building.

Students should begin by learning and peer teaching about Syria (see above). Successful fundraising is based on fundraisers having a good understanding of what they are raising money for and why. Then they should aim to make the fundraising activity creative and participatory. There are fundraising guidelines for schools and other ideas at <http://bit.ly/X1Xc05>

Curriculum making

The Syria conflict is fast moving and controversial. Statistics are out of date as soon as they are published and people's opinions are polarised. This resource has deliberately omitted many important aspects of a complex crisis and focused on the experiences of refugees in two countries. The following links provide up to date background reading and further ideas for curriculum making:

What's happening in Syria and neighbouring countries?

Oxfam's Syria page <http://bit.ly/19NzRef>

The BBC's Syria pages <http://bbc.in/ltqd74> and <http://bbc.in/NyX36P>

BBC Newsround report on school life in Za'atari camp (March 2013) - <http://bbc.in/17h1xoW>

UNHCR Syria emergency page - <http://bit.ly/11nloQB>

Updates on killings in Syria from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights - <http://bit.ly/18Bs2c0>

Children and armed conflict report, Syria page - <http://bit.ly/13ElfHu>

The UN OCHA's Syria page, with links to the latest UN humanitarian reports - <http://bit.ly/SNOF55>

Reliefweb's Syria page (regularly updated) - <http://bit.ly/liPxYd>

Teaching controversial issues

Oxfam's curriculum guide on teaching controversial issues - <http://bit.ly/19iD8zy>

Oxfam Youth Ambassadors

For more information about Oxfam Youth Ambassadors go to <http://bit.ly/13TLwA7>

Your resources

Please share any new resources you develop by contacting your regional Education & Youth Coordinator or emailing education@oxfam.org.uk