

Syria

A CHILDREN'S CRISIS?

Autumn 2013 Action Guide

By August 2013 100,000 people had died as a result of the conflict in Syria. 38% of the population, 6.8 million people, are in need of humanitarian aid and 1.9 million people have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees. Many of the refugees are children.

Is Syria 'a children's crisis'?

Only 2% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon of secondary school age go to school. In the biggest Syrian refugee camp in Jordan, only 1 in 10 children are enrolled in school. Many refugee families have sold their belongings to buy necessities and pay rent. Therefore children often have to help out with work and even become breadwinners. Becoming a refugee also challenges a child's sense of identity and self worth. Life in a refugee camp can be dangerous and many children do not enjoy security and safety.

What can you do?

Oxfam provides water and sanitation in refugee camps in Jordan, and distributes cash vouchers, blankets and cooking materials to refugees living among host communities in Lebanon. However, despite these essential projects, life as a refugee is difficult. The basic services provided in refugee camps risk being overwhelmed by the sheer number of new arrivals. Meanwhile refugees living in cities and towns face sky high rents for poor accommodation and few ways of making a living. You can raise awareness about the impact of the Syrian conflict on refugee families. Remind MPs about the urgent need to improve conditions for refugees and help bring lasting peace and security to the region. Show MPs and the Department for International Development (DFID) that young people care about this issue. Fundraise so Oxfam projects can reach more families affected by the conflict.

"I wake up in the morning and I see children going to school and I cry why don't I have the right to go to school.... "

Reema, 12, Syrian refugee in Lebanon



For support with taking action contact your regional Oxfam Education & Youth Coordinator or email education@oxfam.org.uk

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Get active — Campaign!

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1. Organise and present a Syria assembly at your school.

Why this action?

Many young people are unaware of how the conflict in Syria affects refugees, particularly children. Raising people's awareness is the first step towards future campaigning or fundraising.

Step 1.

Download the Syria assembly at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/syria> Read through it with your group and make sure you understand it clearly.

Ask for help if there are points you don't understand.

Step 2.

Plan the assembly with your group. Think about what you want your audience to know, feel and do. Is there a way the audience can demonstrate their support for the issue and you could record this as evidence?

Edit the script and the slides so they fit how you wish to introduce and present the assembly.

Decide who in the group is going to present each slide and rehearse.

Step 3.

Plan with your teachers to set a date and time for your assembly.

Make sure you have the PowerPoint properly loaded and all the technology is working. Ask the AV technician to help you.

If you'd like to present your assembly at a neighbouring school write to the Headteacher asking for permission.

Step 4.

On the day.

Arrive in good time to set up and have a final rehearsal.

Take a photograph of the assembly.

Relax and enjoy a brilliant presentation!

Quick guide to planning your SYRIA campaign!

Form a group:

If you don't have an Oxfam group already, see who else in your school that might be interested. Talk with your friends and teachers to get the ball rolling

Learn about the issue:

There's an assembly and a lesson plan so you and others in your school can get up to speed on Syria.

Plan your activity:

Whatever you decide to do make sure you divide responsibilities and manage your time. Focus on what you want your campaign to achieve.

Spread the word in the media:

Whether your school newsletter or the local paper, let the media know what you've achieved.

Evaluate:

Start planning your next action by discussing how this one went. Let Oxfam know how many people participated and send us pictures if you have them. We'll try to put them up on our website.

Blog about your activities!
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2. Write to your MP.

Why this action?

So far the British Government has been generous in its support for Syrian refugees. However MPs aren't hearing enough about aid and a peaceful solution to the conflict. Writing to your MP shows that young people care about Syrian refugees. Asking your MP to write to the Department for International Development (DFID) shows the UK Government that young people support the aid the UK is giving. Showing that you have reached a large number of students in your school will make your letter even more persuasive.

Step 1.

Think of how to show your MP the number of young people you've involved in your campaign.

Can you include a photo of your assembly or include other evidence that show you have many students' support?

Step 2.

Think about the content of your letter to your MP. Do those who signed the letter think Syria is mainly a 'children's crisis' or do you think it affects both children and adults equally?

The content of your letter will depend on your group's answer to this question.

Step 3.

You can find the name and address of your MP at <http://bit.ly/tdpA>. Alternatively google the name of your MP. Your letter shouldn't be more than 1 side long.

Make sure you ask your MP to take an action on your behalf, for example to write to DFID or ask a question in Parliament. Finally, ask for a reply to your letter.

Step 4.

Afterwards

When you hear back from your MP thank her or him for their response and let Oxfam know what they said.

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3. Spread the word in the media.

Why this action?

Spreading the word in the media generates more interest and attention for your activities. Local weekly newspapers publish stories featuring local people and frequently MPs track events in their constituencies through the local papers. Even the school website or newsletter may have a readership of several thousand people.

Step 1.

Research the names and contact details of your local newspapers. You may already receive the papers at home or your teachers or a newsagent may know them.

Find out who is responsible for the school website or newsletter and how you can get a story published.

Step 2.

Plan a press release and quotes for your campaign. There are guidelines about how to do this at <http://bit.ly/13Sla1y>.

Plan the photograph you'll be sending with the press release. Very often local newspapers won't send a photographer.

Make sure you have a good quality camera. School may lend you one.

Step 3.

Call the newspaper editor and pitch your story. Make it sound as exciting as possible and find out the press deadline. Young people leading their own campaign on Syria with a message for their MP is pretty exciting!

Follow up by sending your press release and photograph in good time before the press deadline.

Don't forget your school website and newsletter. Aim to follow the same process as for a local newspaper.

Step 4. Afterwards

When your story is published please send Oxfam a copy.

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Get active — fundraise

In response to the Syrian crisis, Oxfam has issued a Syria Crisis Appeal. We aim to expand our work in the region from helping 200,000 people to helping 650,000 people. Oxfam's current work includes building water and sanitation systems in the refugee camps and providing cash transfers for refugees living outside the camps. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/WIZKIQ>.



Simon Rawles/Oxfam

HOW TO FUNDRAISE:

Organise a fundraiser at your school. Get a group of students together and plan an activity that will raise money.

Step 1. Learn more:

Make sure to look at the material that is available from Oxfam and learn about the crisis. Your fundraising will always be better if you know the topic well.

Step 2. Pick a theme:

When you decide your activity, try to keep in mind why you are fundraising. 8,000 refugees flee Syria every day. They hope that their new home will be welcoming and helpful. Can you make this the theme of your fundraising? Can you be sponsored to do something welcoming or helpful in your school?

An idea: make your school more welcoming and helpful

Think of ways to make your school more welcoming and helpful. For example, you could help out in the school cafeteria, fill up water bottles on a warm day or help new students who may not know their way around. Get thinking about something that would help make a difference.

Step 3. Include all students:

Make sure that the activity you have picked includes all students in the school. Everyone should be able to participate. Try to come up with activities that everyone in your school could participate in and that people would be prepared to sponsor you for.

Step 4. Plan and take action:

Sit down with your group and make a plan, divide responsibilities and see if you need to ask your teachers for help. Try to keep your plan small and successful rather than big and unmanageable. A successful project will raise money and help students to learn more about Syria.

Oxfam's fundraising guide is at <http://bit.ly/X1Xc05>

Paying in your money:

After you finished ask your teacher to send the money to Oxfam. [Donate online](#) or post a cheque (payable to Oxfam) to Syria Appeal, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, OX42JY

Blog about your activities!

Write a blog post about your fundraising for our blog

oxfam.org.uk/youth

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