INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS KIT

This education kit has been developed as a flexible resource for VELS Level 5 teachers. The kit contains nine topics that cover; confronting stereotypes about refugees; the causes of displacement; international law; real refugee stories; major conflicts throughout history and today; the impact of crisis on different people and the role of humanitarian agencies; long term solutions for displacement; Australian immigration policy and how young people can get active to support refugees and their rights. Each topic contains lesson plans, activity sheets and fact sheets, as well as information about how each resource links to VELS. We have also suggested major project and extension work ideas throughout the kit as well as ways to assess students work.

The kit is flexible enough for teachers to generate their own unit plans using the resources provided. Oxfam Australia has also developed VELS Level 4 and 6 kits. All kit materials are available from www.oxfam.org.au/refugee-realities website or in hard copy by request to refugeerealities@oxfam.org.au.

WHY USE THIS KIT?

In teaching about refugee and humanitarian crisis issues we encourage students to have empathy for others, self respect, global concern, environmental concern, open mindedness, vision and social responsibility. Teaching about refugee issues can bridge a gap between local social justice concerns and matters of global significance.

There are very few school textbooks that deal with these issues, so it is important that teachers familiarise themselves thoroughly with the issues in order to answer potentially difficult questions.

This education kit has been developed in a flexible manner so that teachers can approach the topics from a variety of angles. The topic does not have to sit alone as a single lesson within the realm of Civics and Citizenship.
TOP 10 REASONS TO TEACH ABOUT REFUGEE ISSUES

1. **Ignorance creates tension** – Lack of understanding about refugee rights and experiences leads to distrust of refugees and racial tensions in the community and classroom

2. **Nobody knows what the future holds** – a refugee is an ordinary person who has had the misfortune of being persecuted or caught up in a crisis – it could happen to anyone unless we are able to address the root causes

3. **We are increasingly connected** – As the world becomes increasingly connected it is essential that Australian students genuinely understand global crisis issues, and the international laws that protect us all

4. **Homes and lives are lost in silence** – All too often humanitarian crises and refugee experiences are invisible in Australia – unless there is a newsworthy angle these issues do not sell the papers. It is our responsibility to learn about these issues

5. **Crisis is a BIG deal** – Around the world there are at least 34 million people displaced by conflict and persecution. This is too big an issue to ignore

6. **People have rights in crisis situations** – Whether people are living in times of peace or conflict they still have human rights, war is no excuse for violation of the rights of innocent people. It is everybody’s responsibility to protect human rights – at home and abroad

7. **Humanitarian agencies need awareness and support** – To provide life saving assistance to people suffering in crisis situations

8. **Australia is home** - To thousands of people who have fled persecution and conflict. Australian’s have a responsibility to treat refugees and former refugees in the community with empathy and respect

9. **Australia has responsibilities to refugees and asylum seekers** – Australians play a key role through advocacy and campaigning in ensuring that our government adheres to its international obligations

10. **We have the power** – Australian students have incredible power to effect change. If they are aware of the issues and understand the tools they have for positive social action, they will be change makers well into adulthood
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of a unit of work based on the key topics of this education kit students will be able to:

- distinguish between myth and fact concerning refugees, and avoid common stereotypes (topic 1)
- understand why people become displaced (topic 2)
- define what a refugee and IDP are and understand international law related to refugee issues (topic 3)
- gain insights into the issues, stories, and experiences of refugees trying to find safety (topic 4)
- gain an understanding of the major conflicts today and throughout history, that have caused refugees to flee (topic 5)
- understand the role of humanitarian agencies in responding to the diverse needs of displaced people in crisis situations, as well as the minimum standards of humanitarian response and how refugee camps function (topic 6)
- comprehend the experiences of refugees and IDPs when trying to access permanent protection and resettlement options (topic 7)
- understand Australian policy with regards to resettling refugees and processing asylum seekers (topic 8)
- identify and implement a range of actions to support the rights of displaced peoples around the world and former refugees living in Australia (topic 9)

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

**English language skills** – Students will learn how to read, comprehend and synthesise complex information and develop presentations and written work using various styles of prose

**Historical research skills** – Students will learn how to search for, interpret and analyse historical documentation and information from a variety of sources

**Geographic/geospatial skills** – Students will know how to set up a refugee camp according to SPHERE standards (Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response) and use BOLTSS (Border Orientation Legend Title Scale Source)

**Communication skills** – Activities involve class discussion, opportunities for listening and debate and honing skills of persuasion
Analytical skills – Students will be able to unpack and debunk pervasive myths about refugees and draw their own conclusions on issues based on analysis of an array of documents and sources of information including case studies, refugee testimony, statistical data, fact sheets, online and literary sources.

Team work and problem solving skills – Participation in group work and simulation games will promote collaborative work styles and strategic thinking.

DEVELOPMENT OF VALUES + ATTITUDES

Empathy – students will develop empathy by learning about the true experiences many refugees have gone through, and by exploring how they would cope with those same experiences.

Active citizenship – Students will develop a proactive attitude towards assisting refugees by realising that there are many ways in which they can participate in democratic society.

Local and global perspective – Students will gain insights into issues of local and global significance, thereby supporting their connectedness to people in their immediate and broader world.

Respect – Students will be aware of the many contributions that refugees have made to Australian multicultural society and show their respect towards asylum seekers and former refugees in the community.

LEARNING STYLES

This education kit has been created for students with different learning styles. We have included activity sheets, maps and classification activities as well as more creative mediums such as music, poetry, short stories, role-plays and discussions. We have included library work and the compelling nature of this topic should allow for much classroom debate. We have also included brainstorming activities and simulation games.

For this topic to be effectively taught, it is important that the teacher maintain a learning environment which is supportive and productive as it could be a sensitive topic for some students, particularly students of refugee backgrounds. With this education kit we hope that students will be challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application as they learn about the hardships refugees face. There is also a strong “community engagement” component to this education kit as although it is important that students develop an understanding for the situations of many refugees it is even more important that they are left empowered knowing that there are many things that they can do to get active.
STUDENTS OF REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

Many students in Australian classrooms come from refugee backgrounds. Most former refugee children and young people will have been subjected to or have witnessed traumatic events. The needs of these students is thus paramount when planning activities to educate about refugee issues.

Students of refugee backgrounds may find it difficult and traumatic to discuss issues related to their own experience or their country of origin. Furthermore they may feel embarrassed about the portrayal or refugees in the media and as such may wish to hide their experiences. Using this education kit sensitively will protect the self-esteem and wellbeing of former refugees in your classroom.

For tips on how to deal with teaching controversial issues, establish whether you have any students of refugee backgrounds in your class and support your students responsibly, see the Refugee Realities Preparation Guide for Teachers in this kit or available from www.oxfam.org.au/refugee-realities in the learning space.


LESSON PLANS BY SUBJECT/DOMAIN

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VELS CURRICULUM LINKS

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Learning focus

- Students learn about significant milestones in the development of Australian law, governance and rights
- They consider examples of the fight for political rights
- They look at the origins of Australian citizenship and how it can be acquired.
- They discuss examples in the media of people, laws, and issues concerning these features of democracy
- They develop skills required for active and informed citizenship and use these in class and community contexts. For example, they use cooperative decision making to design and evaluate a group project, seek a variety of opinions and use a voting method to determine the majority view about an issue
- Students interact with a variety of groups and organisations in civic and community events
- They research issues and events of importance to the community, recognise a range of perspectives, and propose possible solutions and actions

Standards – Civic knowledge + understanding

- They identify significant developments in the governance and achievement of political rights in Australia
- They explain key features of Australian Government including the ways that citizens are represented, using some contemporary examples in their explanations.
- They describe the purposes of laws and the processes of creating and changing them.
- They identify and question the features and values of Australia’s political and legal systems.
- They identify and discuss the qualities of leadership through historical and contemporary examples.

Standards – Community engagement

- They explain the different perspectives on some contemporary issues and propose possible solutions to problems
- They participate in events and participate in activities to contribute to action on other community issues.

ECONOMICS
Learning focus

- Students begin to identify markets in which they participate, and how the interaction of buyers and sellers influences prices.
- They explore how access to resources is a significant factor in determining income levels and appreciate that people’s incomes, in part, reflect choices they have made about education, work, careers and skill development.
- Students develop an understanding of the importance of being an informed consumer.

Standards – Economic knowledge and understanding

- Students explain the nature of the economic problem and how economic choices involve trade-offs that have both immediate and future consequences.
- Students make informed economic and consumer decisions, demonstrating the development of personal financial literacy.

Economic reasoning + interpretation

- Students use the inquiry process to plan economics investigations, analyse and interpret data, and form conclusions supported by evidence.

HISTORY

- Students frame key research questions, plan their investigations, and report on their findings. They use a range of primary and secondary sources including visual sources that record features of the societies in their investigations.
- They identify the content, origin, purpose and context of historical sources. They evaluate historical sources for meaning, point of view, values and attitudes, and identify some of the strengths and limitations of historical documents.
- They use relevant historical evidence, concepts and historical conventions such as bibliographies to present a point of view.

GEOGRAPHY

Learning focus

- Students use a variety of geographic tools and skills, together with an inquiry-based approach, to investigate the characteristics of the regions of Australia and those surrounding it such as Asia and the Pacific.
- Students extend their knowledge and understanding of physical phenomena, including natural hazards, and of the physical processes that produce them.
- Students apply their knowledge and understanding of scale, grid references, legend and direction to use large-scale maps (such as topographic maps), as
sources of spatial information, as well as other spatial representations (such as those found in atlases and geographic information systems).

- Students research and analyse photographs, maps, satellite images and text from electronic media and add these to their presentations.

**Standards – Geographical knowledge and understanding**

- Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the regions of Australia and those surrounding it including Asia and the Pacific.

**Geospatial skills**

- At Level 5, students collect geographical information from electronic and print media, including satellite images and atlas maps and analyse, evaluate and present it using a range of forms.
- They construct overlay theme maps using map conventions of scale, legend, title, and north point. They identify and gather geographical information from fieldwork and organise, process and communicate it using a range of written, oral, visual and graphic forms.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING**

**Thinking**

- When identifying and synthesising relevant information, they use a range of appropriate strategies of reasoning and analysis to evaluate evidence and consider their own and others point of view.

**Communications**

- They consider their own and other’s point of view, apply prior knowledge to new situations, challenge assumptions and justify their own interpretations
- Students use the communication conventions, forms and language appropriate to the subject to convey a clear message across a range of presentation forms to meet the context, purpose and audience

**INTERPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Learning Focus**

- They participate in activities which enable them to identify the differing values and beliefs held by individuals in local, national and global contexts, and reflect on the impact these may have on relationships.
- They consider the needs of others and ways of responding with appropriate sensitivity, learning to adapt their behaviour and language to suit different settings.
- They manage their impulses to encourage harmonious collaborations and relationships.
They also explore other forms of conflict in both local and broader contexts. Through experience and reflection, students come to understand the need for empathy for others.

They continue to identify strategies to build and maintain positive social relationships; for example, by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of individuals, showing sensitivity to cultural diversity, and acknowledging the existence and possible implications of different values and beliefs.

**Standards**

- Building social relationships- students demonstrate respect for the individuality of others and empathise with others in local, national and global contexts, acknowledging the diversity of individuals.
- Working in teams students accept responsibility as a team member and support other members to share information, explore the ideas of others, and work cooperatively to achieve a shared purpose within a realistic timeframe.

**ENGLISH**

**Learning Focus**

- Students begin to respond in more detached and critical ways to a wide range of print, visual, electronic and multimodal texts that explore familiar and more challenging themes and issues. They include literary texts such as novels, short stories, plays and poetry, and informative and persuasive texts including everyday texts and media texts.
- Students discuss texts analytically and develop confidence in the use of metalanguage to describe and discuss particular structures and features of language. They explore the power of language and the ways it can influence roles and relationships and represent ideas, information and concepts. They learn that texts can be created for multiple purposes.
- They develop a critical understanding about the ways that writers and producers of texts try to position readers to accept particular views of people, characters, events, ideas and information. They discuss the ways in which persuasive texts present opinions and evidence, justify positions and persuade.
- Students learn to use formal language to construct spoken and written texts for a range of purposes and audiences. They extend their knowledge of the structure of a variety of text forms (such as narratives, transactions, reports, procedures, explanations and persuasive texts) and practise writing expressively and in detail about challenging ideas and information.
- Students work cooperatively in discussion groups, using talk to explore and analyse challenging themes and issues. They develop their skills in identifying main issues in a topic, providing supporting detail and evidence for opinions, asking relevant clarifying questions and building on the ideas of others.

**Standards - Reading**
Students read and view imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that explore ideas and information related to challenging topics, themes and issues. They identify the ideas, themes and issues explored in these texts, and provide supporting evidence to justify their interpretations.

They produce personal responses, for example, interpretive pieces and character profiles. They infer meanings and messages in texts, analyse how social values or attitudes are conveyed, compare the presentation of information and ideas in different texts.

**Syandards - Writing**

- Students produce, in print and electronic forms, texts for a variety of purposes, including speculating, hypothesising, persuading and reflecting. They write extended narratives or scripts with attention to characterisation, consistency of viewpoint and development of a resolution.

**Standards - Speaking and listening**

- Students express creative and analytical responses to texts, themes and issues. They identify main issues in a topic and provide supporting detail and evidence for opinions. They use a variety of multimodal texts to support individual presentations in which they inform or persuade an audience.

**THE ARTS**

**Learning Focus**

- In Drama, students work as an ensemble to explore cultural diversity by sharing experiences and observations through improvisation and role-play about a familiar situation, maintaining a diary of personal reflections throughout their performance making.
- Students use processes of rehearsal, reflection and evaluation to develop skills in refining and shaping their works to effectively communicate their intended aims, and experiment with imaginative ways of creating solutions to set tasks.
- Students work both independently and collaboratively to develop creative and effective ways of combining and manipulating arts elements, principles and/or conventions when designing, making and presenting arts works for particular purposes and audiences.
- Students develop their ability to listen to, reflect on and acknowledge others’ perspectives when discussing their own and others’ responses to arts works.

**Standards – Creating and making**

- They experiment with, select and use appropriate skills, techniques, processes, media, materials, equipment and technologies across a range of arts forms and styles. They generate and develop ideas that explore particular concepts, techniques and issues when making arts works.

**Standards – Exploring and responding**
At Level 5, student’s research, observe and reflect on their explorations to develop, discuss, express and support opinions about their own and others’ use of arts elements, principles and/or conventions, skills, techniques, processes, media, materials, equipment and technologies.

PREPARING FOR REFUGEE REALITIES

Before attending Refugee Realities all teachers must read the *Refugee Realities Preparation Guide for Teachers*.

PREPARATION OF THIS RESOURCE

We welcome any feedback about the usefulness of this resource and ways we could develop it in future. Send comments and suggestions to refugeerealities@oxfam.org.au.
FACT SHEET 1A: KEY TERMS

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee, under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is recognised as a person who is outside his or her country of origin, and;

“...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country”.

This definition was expanded in the Conventions’ 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, for those who have fled war or other violence in their home country. In 2006 there were approximately 10 million people around the world recognised as refugees under the 1951 UN Convention/1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention.

WHAT IS ‘REFUGEE STATUS’?

It is important to recognise that once a person has fled persecution for reasons of their race, religion, membership of a social group, political opinion or nationality, they are a refugee, whether they have been granted Refugee Status or not. People may therefore consider themselves refugees whether or not they have been formally recognised as such by the government of the country in which they are seeking asylum. Refugee Status is granted by some governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in an attempt to regulate sovereign borders. Refugee status is granted to those people whose claim for asylum is found to meet the requirements of the 1951 Convention. They are given protection and have the right to remain in the new country until the reason for their flight has ended. In Australia, if a person is not granted full Refugee Status, they may be given an alternative form of protection and allowed to stay in Australia if there is reason to believe that it would not be safe for them to return to their own country.

WHO ARE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE?

An Internally Displaced Person (IDP) is someone who has been displaced by war, natural disaster, political conflict or persecution, but is still located within their country of origin. IDPs are therefore not eligible to claim refugee status or to be considered for permanent resettlement in another country, as they have not yet crossed an international border to seek asylum. Nonetheless, fortunately the UNHCR extends their protection and assistance to IDPs. There were more than 14 million IDPs around the world in 2006.
WHO ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS?

An asylum-seeker is someone who has fled their home country and entered another country where they have asked the government to recognise them as a refugee. Once they have sought asylum they have the right not to be returned to their home country. Asylum seekers may also be registered in other ways with the UNHCR via a group determination process. In 2006 there were approximately 750,000 registered asylum seekers globally.

In Australia, a person must apply to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for asylum when they first arrive in the country. While they are waiting for a decision about their application, they are referred to as an asylum-seeker. The refugee definition is very strict, and asylum-seekers have to prove that they meet all aspects of the definition in the 1951 Convention if they are to be granted ‘Refugee Status’. There are around 12,000 asylum seekers in Australia.

WHO IS THE UNHCR?

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established on 14 December 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

WHAT IS A ‘DURABLE SOLUTION’ TO DISPLACEMENT?

The UNHCR aims to ensure that refugees have access to one of three durable, or long lasting, solutions to displacement:

| Voluntary Repatriation | Voluntarily returning back to your country of origin once the fighting or threat of persecution has stopped. Unfortunately many current conflicts have lasted for years or even decades, and displaced populations often have no home to return to. |
| Local Integration | Settling into the host country where you initially sought protection. Local integration is often not possible where the local laws prohibit refugees from working or attending school. |
| Resettlement | Resettling in a third country who has a resettlement program, such as Canada, the United States or Australia. This is often the only viable solution for a refugee where the threat of persecution is ongoing, and local integration is undermined by instability in the host country or unjust local laws and/or customs. Unfortunately resettlement is only an option for approximately 1% of the worlds refugees. |

There are obviously barriers to each of these durable solutions, making survival and a happy life extremely difficult for most of the world’s refugees.
WHO ARE STATELESS PEOPLE?

A stateless person is not considered to be a citizen of any country. Statelessness may result from a variety of causes, including conflict of laws, the transfer of territory, marriage laws, discrimination, lack of birth registration (i.e. getting a birth certificate) or a country canceling a person’s nationality. People who have been uprooted from their homes because of conflict or persecution are at risk of statelessness, especially when their displacement is accompanied or followed by a redrawing of territorial boundaries. There were an estimated 15 million stateless people worldwide in 2006, although only 5.6 million stateless persons are recognised by the UNHCR.

WHO ARE RETURNEES?

Returnees are refugees or internally displaced peoples who have returned to their place of origin during the calendar year. There were approximately 2.6 million returnees around the world in 2006.

WHO IS AN ECONOMIC MIGRANT?

The UNHCR calls people ‘economic migrants’ if they leave their country voluntarily in order to improve the future prospects of themselves and their families or earn a living. Unlike refugees, they still enjoy the protection of their home government. Refugees have to move if they are to save their lives or preserve their freedom – they have no choice. It is this difference which gives each category a different status in law.

WHO IS AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT?

An ‘illegal immigrant’ is someone who goes to live or work in another country when they do not have the legal right to do this. In Australia, most illegal immigrants have entered the country legally to work or visit as a tourist, and have since overstayed their visa or failed to meet its conditions. For example some tourists in Australia are meant to stay for only 2 months but continue to live in the country long after their visa expires.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN ‘ILLEGAL’ ASYLUM-SEEKER?

NO. This term is not correct. Seeking asylum is a fundamental right for all human beings – under international human rights law and the Refugee Convention seeking asylum cannot be an illegal act. In Australia, asylum seekers who have registered with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship are legally allowed to stay here while their claim is being considered.

WHAT IS A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS?

A humanitarian crisis is the impact of an emergency, conflict or natural disaster on the people caught in its wake. For example, war and conflict can cause a humanitarian crisis when people are forced to flee from their homes, villages or cities in large numbers and don’t have any place to go (i.e. relatives or friends houses). They may be forced to live in areas where they do not have ready access to food, shelter,
water or medical attention. Overcrowded living conditions can be unsanitary, leading to outbreak of disease. Neglecting to assist people in a humanitarian crisis unchecked can lead to thousands of unnecessary deaths. Humanitarian agencies such as Oxfam Australia, the UNHCR and the Australian Red Cross aim to provide life saving assistance to people caught up in humanitarian crisis situations.

**WHAT IS PERSECUTION?**

Persecution is systematic discriminatory conduct that causes serious harm, e.g. threatening a person’s life or liberty; physical harassment; denying someone the right to work or to practice their religion. For a person to be recognised as a refugee, the discriminatory conduct has to be on grounds set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention (see below), i.e. their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.

**WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS?**

The United Nations was established on 24 October 1945 by 51 countries committed to preserving peace through international cooperation and collective security. Today it has 191 members, nearly every nation in the world. When countries become members of the United Nations they agree to accept the obligations of the UN Charter, an international treaty that sets out basic principles of international relations. According to the Charter, the UN has four purposes: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems and encouraging respect for human rights; and to be a centre for harmonising the actions of nations in attaining these aims.