

Geography Lesson: learning about global communities - refugees

AIMS

- To empathise with the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees
- To explore our own perceptions and values by reflecting on our attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees
- To consider the terms 'global communities' and 'refugee'
- To link with Y9 Unit 4 SOW (The global fashion industry: What do we mean by globalisation?)

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Sugar paper/felt tips
- 2 different colour hi-liters per group
- Activity Sheets (on pages below)
- Copies of dictionaries/internet (if available)
- Maps of the world with identifiable countries
- Board/flipchart for writing down information for whole group/class to see

METHOD

1. Remind pupils how they investigated the term 'globalisation' as part of their study of the global fashion industry). Explain that we are going to think about the term 'global communities' in a similar way and, as the school is celebrating Refugee Week, we are also going to investigate the term 'refugee'.
2. Ask small groups to think of different types of 'community' and what the word means (eg. faith communities, professional communities, communities of interest, community of nations).

Recall with the class their understanding of the term 'globalisation' and ask them to come up with a definition for 'global communities'.

They could list examples of global communities on sugar paper (communities connected across the globe could be internet users to producers and consumers – ref. fashion industry.)

Feedback and ask pupils which of these global communities they belong to.

3. Give out ACTIVITY SHEET 1. Continuing in small groups, they should discuss their responses to the questions after reading through the country study together.

Mention, during feedback if pupils themselves don't, that one way we in London/Islington are connected with DR Congo, apart from mobile phones etc., is through the Congolese community in exile here.

Ask what pupils understand by the term 'exile'.

4. Ask pupils in their groups to look at ACTIVITY SHEET 2 and discuss their responses to the questions. Feedback so the class can share existing knowledge about countries in conflict situations.
5. Explain that we are now going to do an activity to think about who refugees and asylum seekers are.

Ask the participants to talk in pairs and come up with a definition of a refugee. Like when they thought about the term 'globalisation' they may find it helpful to list words down they connect to 'refugee' to help them reach a definition.

Feedback and write some on flipchart/board. It is important to acknowledge if participants make reference to being forced to leave their countries, seeking safety, having had experiences that put them at risk of harm...etc.

Then go through ACTIVITY SHEET 3 together and discuss the definitions of 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker'. Compare this to what was suggested by participants. Pupils could look up words in bold in the dictionary.

- .6. Give out ACTIVITY SHEETS 4-7. One case study per pair/small group. Make sure all 4 case studies are evenly distributed across the class/group. Have spare case studies to give to fast finishers.

Each pair of participants need two different colour highlighters. In one colour they should highlight any **feelings** expressed by the case study. In the other colour they should highlight any of the young person's **experiences** they think makes them a refugee (according to the definitions)

Give another case study for fast finishers to complete in addition to the first.

Feedback.

7. Mention how the term "asylum-seeker" is often used negatively in parts of the media. Explain that the media create many myths and misunderstandings about asylum-seekers and refugees.

Together with the participants, draw up a list on the board/flipchart of some of the most common myths they are aware of.

eg:

"The UK takes most of the world's refugees"

"Most asylum-seekers come here to live off benefits"

Then remind participants of the refugee testimonies they have read and viewed, and how they challenge these myths.

In groups, participants should look at the cards from ACTIVITY SHEET 8. Make sure these cards have been cut out already. Explain that they are things said about asylum-seekers and refugees in the media that are untrue, and the facts. Groups need to use ACTIVITY SHEET 9 to identify the myths from the facts and to sort the myths into columns, next to the facts that challenge them.

Further differentiation is possible by indicating which are media myths before the sorting activity.

Finally encourage pupils to see any displays for Refugee Week that have lots more information, including about the massive contribution refugees have made to our lives here in the UK.

Country study

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Country study

When studying the fashion industry you have seen how communities are connected across the globe.

With your group, look at the case study below and discuss the questions beneath.

Democratic Republic of Congo

There have been several years of devastating conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

There are valuable natural resources in DRC and the high prices other countries are prepared to pay helps fuel the conflict.

Various rival armed groups are keen to get control of supplies of minerals such as coltan (which is used to manufacture mobile phones), a mineral source of tin (cassiterite), gold and diamonds. With the profits comes the ability to pay for more weapons and power.

The population does not benefit from these riches, yet it is civilians who get caught up in the conflict.

It is estimated that over 3 million people have died, over 2 million have fled their homes and 450,000 have managed to get out of the country to safety.

- How are we in the UK connected to DR Congo?
- Find DR Congo on the map. Is there anything particularly striking about DR Congo in your view when you look at the map?

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

Global conflict situations

“Ten actual or potential conflict situations around the world deteriorated in May 2006”, CrisisWatch (www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm)

WHERE?

Afghanistan saw its worst violence since 2001, with some 350 insurgents, civilians and security personnel killed across its southern provinces.

Somalia there was heavy fighting in Mogadishu between the Islamic Courts militia and the U.S.-backed Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism, leaving over 200 dead.

DR Congo, tensions increased and clashes in Ituri province killed 60.

Timor-Leste, security collapsed after renegade soldiers clashed with security forces.

Israel/Occupied territories, mounting violence in Gaza fuelled by a power struggle between Fatah and Hamas loyalists raised fears of civil war.

Lebanon experienced its worst cross-border fighting in six years after rockets were fired into Israel (response to killing of an Islamic Jihad leader?)

Sri Lanka and Turkey, experienced deteriorating situations.

QUESTIONS

- Find these countries on the map
- Discuss what you know about these countries already

ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is seeking **refuge**. People have given shelter and protection to people fleeing danger for thousands of years.

Because there were so many refugees after the second world war, many countries signed a **convention** to make sure people who would be seriously harmed if they had to return to their own country were protected.

The convention stated that a refugee is someone who has had to leave his or her country and who is afraid to return there “owing to a **well-founded fear** of being **persecuted** for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

In 2002 there were 13 million refugees in the world. Whilst Africa and the Middle East hosted 63% of them, Europe only hosted 7%.

Who is an asylum-seeker?

An ‘asylum-seeker’ seeks **asylum**. An asylum seeker has crossed an **international border** and is seeking protection in another country.

In Britain they are awaiting a decision by the Home Office as to whether they can remain in the UK and whether they qualify for protection under the UN Convention refugee definition. They are fully **entitled** to be here whilst they await a decision.

In 2006 there were 24,000 asylum applications in 2006. This represents a fall of more than 80% since 2002. Only about 5,000 were granted asylum.

Question: Look at the words in sections 1 and 2 above in bold type. Discuss with your partner what they might mean, looking them up in a dictionary if necessary.

ACTIVITY SHEET 4

Name:	Leyla
Age:	10 years
Country of origin:	Iraq
Background information:	<i>The Kurds are a people with their own language and culture who live in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and states from the former Soviet Union. Since the early 1970's human rights violations, including detention and torture have been documented as being widely used by the government in Iraq against political opposition and the Kurds. Up to 150,000 Kurdish people have disappeared. Saddam Hussein, president since 1979, deported hundreds of thousands of Kurds and seized their property. In 1988 the Iraqi regime used chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians, killing 6,000 people in one attack on the village of Halabja.</i>

Ten-year-old Leyla fled Iraq because her family was being persecuted.

"We were forced to leave Kurdistan because Saddam Hussein hated my dad. He told my dad that we had to leave the country immediately or else he would kill him. My dad had already been hit two times before which is why he is poorly. I didn't want to leave, my life was good but we had to go. My friends were crying and saying don't go.

We walked across the mountains

We needed money so we sold my mum's jewellery, she wasn't happy about it but we had no choice. Then we started walking, first of all to Iran, then to Turkey. It was a really long walk. We would sleep outside at night, avoiding police. My Dad would give me a tablet to sleep and be quiet. We then rode in the back of a lorry for eight days. We weren't allowed to take much with us, one or two bags only. It was freezing, my sisters were crying and they were sick all the time. I was scared too. Along the way we changed to another lorry. I remember being taken downstairs and we were told to keep quiet and not talk and then we were taken to another lorry.

There's no fighting here

When we did finally get out of the lorry we were picked up by the police. My Dad asked where we were and the police said in London - my Dad was pleased that we had finished our journey. My first day at school was hard but good - the teachers would talk slowly to me. I didn't understand English. But the best bit about being here is there's no trouble, no fighting and no hitting my dad - that's why it's so brilliant."

From a BBC Newsround case study

ACTIVITY SHEET 5

Name:	Eric
Age:	16 years
Country of origin:	Democratic Republic of Congo
Background information:	<i>A brutal Belgian colonial government in the 19th and 20th century. Became independent in 1960. Democratic government removed by USA backed army coup. Thousands of political opponents are arrested, tortured and killed during next 30 years. In 1997 rebels take over the government. From then the region erupts into war with neighbouring countries supporting opposing armed groups or invading and occupying parts of the country. The region is rich in minerals. DR Congo could become a rich country but the wealth gives little to the majority of the people; at least 80% live below the poverty line.</i>

Eric, 16, came to England from the Congo after his father was killed.

"They came to my house with seven men, I think it was three o'clock in the morning.

They were looking for my father and my mother. They came to my bedroom, then went to my father's bedroom, and one man was fighting my father.

I saw my father killed

When they killed my father I was very scared. I had never seen anything like that before in my life. I ran away.

The church helped me and brought me to London from my home in the Congo. The man from the church dropped me in London. I didn't know what to do, I was feeling sick at the time.

I prefer it here

I got help from a special centre for refugees - and I'm now studying English at school. I prefer this country, I can do more, have a good life.

Sometimes I meet up with English people. We talk, go out, play football, and go to the cinema.

I've applied to stay here but I don't know if I can yet."

From a BBC Newsround case study

ACTIVITY SHEET 6

Name:	Besa
Age:	12 years
Country of origin:	Kosova (former Yugoslavia)

Background information: *A region in former Yugoslavia populated mainly by Albanian speaking people who were persecuted by the Serb dominated government and army. Serbian nationalists took away the region's limited self-rule in 1987 and sacked thousands of Albanian teachers and doctors. Schools using Albanian were closed and political opponents arrested and beaten. In 1998 civil war broke out.*

12-year-old Besa fled Kosova because her family was persecuted

“It is painful remembering the terrible things of the past. I saw my brother killed, he was just 14 years old. He was going to school when he suddenly got shot. I could do nothing, just scream and cry until the rest of the family came over. That moment was the worst moment in my life and has stuck in my mind forever.

The Serbs treated us in brutal ways. I had very difficult times. I was afraid of losing all my family and being alone but I couldn't tell that to anyone. Now I still remember what I have gone through.

I can't remember much about my journey because I wasn't feeling good. I had a headache and I was hungry so I was sleeping most of the time.

I want to try to leave the bad things behind. I want to get out of the darkness and start a new life. I can recover if I am allowed to stay away from where my heart was wounded.

I love peace and I want everyone to be free. My school in England has so far been the place where I have found peace and met caring people. When I see them playing laughing and being free it gives me hope for happiness and a good life. I hope one day I can be same as them.”

From a Newham school case study

ACTIVITY SHEET 7

Name:	Fardin
Age:	14 years
Country of origin:	Afghanistan
Background information:	<i>Placed where rival cultures and empires have met, the region has been colonised by many empires over the last 2000 years. Central control has never been strong. In 1979 the president was killed. Soviet troops entered from Russia to support the government. Rebels were supported by the USA and the UK who supplied them with training and arms. By 1982 over 3 million refugees fled the war into neighbouring countries. The Soviet army was eventually forced to leave and the Taliban government rose to power, controlling much of the country by 1998. They brought some stability and law and order, but their strict interpretation of Islamic law caused great hardship. Widespread detention and human rights abuses persisted. The USA and allies removed the Taliban, who were linked to al-Qaida, and installed an interim government in 2002.</i>

14-year-old Fardin fled Afghanistan because his family was persecuted

“I lived in Kabul with my parents. A group arrested my uncle who was only 17 years old. The whereabouts of my uncle is still unknown. Our house was looted.

My father decided we must leave Kabul. We moved to Mazar e Sharif. My father was employed as a teacher. He was travelling when a group of Taliban stopped him because of his appearance. My father was dressed in a suit. They detained him. He was held for nearly 2 years. He was beaten with sticks and bats. They would force him to drink large quantities of water and not allow him to urinate. This resulted in his having problems with his kidneys and his stomach. Finally my father escaped. He stayed one night in the mountains and then he was able to make contact with me and my mother.

We joined him over the border in Pakistan. When I saw my father I was so happy. We found an agent and left Pakistan travelling by car, lorry and ship. In the UK we applied for asylum. We didn't even know what country we were in. We were just glad we were safe. The Home Office let us stay in accommodation in East London. We were living there about 8 months. We had vouchers of about £88 to live on.

Then they sent us to East London. It is very difficult for us all to live in one room. We do not know how long we are going to stay in this dirty hotel.”

From a Newham school case study

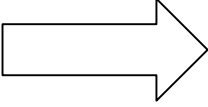
ACTIVITY SHEET 8

Cut out the cards and participants to sort into appropriate columns on an A3 copy of ACTIVITY SHEET 9.

Media Myths	Facts
Most asylum-seekers come from countries where they are safe	Under the 1951 Refugee Convention people have the right to apply for asylum - the UK is obliged to examine their case
Some asylum seekers repay our generosity by thieving in town and city centres	Most asylum-seekers coming to the UK are fleeing countries where there is war and human rights abuses
Asylum-seekers take our housing	Asylum seekers commit no more crime than anyone else... though violence and crime is often directed at them.
Asylum-seekers are here illegally	In the UK refugees are less than 0.2% of the population
The influx of refugees is threatening to swamp the UK	Asylum seekers are not allowed to claim benefits. If supported, a single adult has to survive on about £39 a week.
Asylum-seekers get huge state handouts	Asylum-seekers have no right to permanent housing. They are usually housed in temporary, substandard accommodation

ACTIVITY SHEET 9

Place the media myth cards and fact cards and place under the appropriate column below, making sure the fact card is opposite the appropriate myth. There is an example to help you.

Media Myth		Fact
Most asylum-seekers come from countries where they are safe		Most asylum-seekers coming to the UK are fleeing countries where there is war & human rights abuses
	