



Examples of Making a difference all Year Round

Information from J. Rutter, *Refugees: we left because we had to* (Refugee Council, 3rd edn 2004)

You don't have to restrict your activities to Refugee Week, you can make a difference all year round.

In different parts of the UK, refugee children and their classmates have worked together to improve the lives of refugees and to make a difference. Even if there are no refugee or asylum-seeker children at your school, there is still a lot you can do.

Here are some examples of things that other young people have done:

- Designing Christmas cards. These were printed and sold in local shops and the proceeds went to two refugee charities. One charity worked locally with young refugees and the other provided medical assistance to refugees in war zones.
- After finding Albanian and Somali newspapers on the internet, a group of students decided to organise an after-school computer club for newly arrived families in their neighbourhood. The students provided refreshments and helped the adults learn how to find and download the newspapers.
- As a result of the bullying experienced by a refugee student, a GCSE drama class wrote and produced a play about being a newcomer in the UK. The play was performed in the school and then toured neighbouring schools.
- A school in central England received its first refugee student. He was 15-years-old and had come from Kosovo by himself – he was a young unaccompanied refugee. His new tutor group made him a poster which said 'Welcome' in Albanian and English. Two weeks later on his birthday they bought him a cake with candles. Now more refugees have come to the school and the first arrival is helping them settle.

- School students in Glasgow, including many refugees, made a video and teaching pack called Going Global. The teaching material was to inform their peers about why people become refugees.
- Children at St Mary's School in London collected art materials for refugee children. These were presented to the Refugee Council for children to use at a day centre for refugees. Your school could contact the Refugee Council or a local refugee organisation in your area to find out if they need children's clothes or toys, and organise a collection. Many refugee children arrive in a new country with very few belongings.
- Year 7 students in a school in east London successfully campaigned to stop one of their friends being removed. Natasha Matambe had come to the UK from Angola after her father had been imprisoned and beaten by the government. Government soldiers had also killed her two-year-old brother. One Wednesday morning she came in and told her teachers that the family was going to be sent back to Angola the next day. Students and teachers then began a campaign against the removal and Natasha's story was covered in the local newspapers, TV and radio. The British government delayed Natasha's removal and eventually the family was allowed to stay. As a result of the campaign run by the students, the school thought about other things they could do to support refugees. An early morning homework club was started for children living in hostels or over-crowded housing. This helped lots of children, not just refugees.

(You can read more about Natasha's story at www.irr.org.uk/sad. This is the Schools Against Deportation website.)