



## **Ideas for teachers and youth workers Refugee Week 2007**

Join us in celebrating Refugee Week – seven days of events that will raise awareness about refugees and their needs, as well as celebrating the contribution that refugees make to their new homeland.

During Refugee Week, many events take place all across the UK; including music, art, theatre, crafts, food, fashion, conferences and sport. These events are organised by charities, local councils, refugee organisations, schools, youth groups, libraries and theatre companies – to name but a few. Anybody who wants to organise an event, big or small, can do so.

Refugee Week is an ideal time for your school to get involved in celebrations, campaigns, fundraising or raising awareness and have loads of fun in the process!

Wherever you are, whatever kind of school you are in, there are many things that you can do – and you can make a difference. You could work with other teachers to find ways to integrate refugee issues into different curriculum areas during the week, or you could take the opportunity to do special one off projects or events.

Here you will find ideas, suggestions and some inspiring case studies to get you started.

Contact us if you would like any more information or support for the activities you are planning. We can also have posters, postcards, balloons and T-shirts which could help promote events.

Email: [info@refugeeweek.org.uk](mailto:info@refugeeweek.org.uk) or Tel: 020 7346 6752  
[www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk)

## How to plan and promote Refugee Week in your school

- Make sure you are aware of the school population
- Ensure the commitment/leadership of senior management
- Raise staff awareness through a planning group
- Look for opportunities in the classroom and for broader activities with a wider audience
- Involve students, parents, governors and the local community
- Enlist commitment and share responsibilities
- Explore funding opportunities
- Gather information, and make sure you are aware of current asylum issues
- Link Refugee Week to the school Inclusion or Race Equality agenda
- Let the Refugee Week team know what you are planning
- **Have Fun!**

*(adapted from advice produced by Bill Bolloten, freelance refugee and education consultant)*

### Activity: Getting Started...

If you want to involve students in activities or projects, the best place to start is with them. They are likely to have plenty of original ideas, which could be tailored specifically to your school.

Split the class into small groups and ask them to brainstorm different ideas for things they could do to support refugees and asylum seekers, or to celebrate the contribution they make to this country. Encourage them to think about possible activities they could do in their class, in the whole school, with the local community or even ways to get involved at a national level.

They could also consider what the aims of any event or project might be. For example, would it be to raise awareness of key issues, or maybe to campaign on behalf of refugees? It could be to learn more about the culture of countries where refugees in your local community come from or it could be to make refugees in your school feel welcome when they arrive.

If students are finding it difficult to come up with ideas – you will find plenty of suggestions below which you could use to start them off.

Groups can feedback their ideas to the whole class. If time is limited, they could just share their favourite idea. You could then discuss with the whole class how they might want to develop some of their idea, and set aside some time for planning the next steps they need to take.

## Ideas, ideas..... and more ideas!

**Assemblies** – Over 400 schools put on pupil-led assemblies for Refugee Week in 2005. You could include poetry, stories and other readings, particularly refugee testimonies, participatory activities, opportunities for contemplation and reflection or performances.

**Art projects** – There is no limit to what you could do with art. Students could create their own pieces of art or use photography to depict their feelings about some of the stories they have read in this pack or they could create a **display** of artwork, combined with information about refugees in a prominent place in the school. Alternatively, you could invite a local refugee artist to come into school to work with students.

One example of a successful art project was carried out in Refugee Week 2000 by Save the Children. They worked with children across Birmingham to create a Celebrating Sanctuary art wall. Pupils from several schools worked together to contribute to the final wall, which is now displayed in George Dixon Junior and Infant School in Birmingham.

The images on the wall focus on:

- What makes a place safe?
- Where do you go if you want to feel safe?
- Why might people want to leave their own country?
- What experiences might people be running away from?
- How should we welcome refugees to this country?
- What new experiences might refugees have in this country?

Your group could try and create their own Celebrating Sanctuary art wall or mural for your own school.

*(From: RAP Pack, 2002, p.15, Save the Children)*

**Competitions** – Encourage students to think about refugee issues by participating in a competition. This could be to design a T-shirt or a poster, write a poem or even write and perform a play. Some LEAs run area wide schools competitions for Refugee Week – find out if anything is happening in your area.

**Performing arts** – Have a world music day; learn songs or dance from countries where refugees in this country come from; invite local musicians who are refugees to perform at the school or run a workshop with students; hold a poetry reading; have a storytelling or writing workshop; show films about Refugee stories or issues – or make your own; contact local theatre companies, and see if they can work with the school during Refugee Week; use role play activities as a basis for developing a short drama.

### **Drama at Claremont High School, Brent**

During Refugee Week 2003, Save the Children and the theatre company, Dramatic Changes ran creative and interactive workshops with approximately 100 young people across the age groups at the school. The aim of the project was to challenge myths and counteract negative stereotypes of refugees, and to encourage the participation of both refugees and non-refugees in order to promote mutual respect.

Comments from Students...

*"I liked the play and the acting, it was very funny and what I learnt from this is bullying, lying and racism is very, very wrong and nobody should do it"*

*"I learned to listen to people and see what is happening in their lives"*

**Speakers** – Contact a local refugee community organisation and invite a speaker to come and talk to your class. Hearing personal stories first hand can be incredibly powerful.

**Food Fair** – Try food from different countries, particularly countries from where Refugees in the UK originate; Invite parents or local refugee organisations to come into the school and cook or bring different kinds of food typical of their home country; have a 'Masterchef' competition.

**Fashion** – Have a fashion show featuring and celebrating clothes from different cultures.

**Sport** – learn a sport played in another country; hold a mini World Cup football tournament, with all the different nationalities at your school represented.

**Essex Primary School** in East London have been celebrating Refugee Week with a number of activities:

- They held special assemblies in which some of the children who are refugees shared their experiences of coming to England and memories of home.
- They held a poetry competition on the theme 'Feeling Safe'.
- They organised a food fayre, combined with a fashion show in which children wore their traditional clothes.
- They invited performance artists to the school including African drummers, a multicultural poet / storyteller and a Polish Roma band.
- They hired a badge making machine and all the children in the school made a badge.

## Refugee Week at Sion Manning RC Girls' Secondary School

Staff at Sion Manning School, in West London used the opportunity provided by Refugee Week to increase awareness of the refugee experience, celebrate the contributions of refugees and counter negative images portrayed by the media. Angie Long, the school's EMAG teacher, worked in partnership with the Assistant Headteacher, LDS Secondary Refugee Education Teacher and the LDS Connexions PA, to plan a combined approach of assemblies, displays and a PSHE programme that would extend beyond the confines of Refugee Week itself and give every pupil access to the true facts. She explained the aims she had in mind: 'Certainly this year more than any other I can remember, the term 'refugee' has become synonymous with media hype, demonising them as scroungers etc. The idea of the assembly was to reclaim, if you like, the term 'refugee' and provide through it, the displays and PSHE a more realistic, humane picture that would counteract the hype.'

Three separate displays were planned: one in a busy stairwell area, that celebrated the linguistic diversity in the school; a second large display in the school foyer, that provided statistics and information to counter media myths and was accessible to visitors and students alike; and a third in the library which included a wide variety of books, some ordered specifically for Refugee Week, that the students were encouraged to read.

The EMAG teacher worked with the Headgirl and student leadership group to plan assemblies for every year group. The assemblies were delivered entirely by the student leadership group. The students did a presentation using Power Point, photographs, data and written information on refugee experiences, media myths and refugee countries of origin; this included a linguistic map of languages spoken in the Sion Manning School community. Personal accounts written by former Sion Manning students were read to the school and these along with the inclusion of appropriate music made it a highly emotive occasion. All students were reminded that refugee children could be sitting amongst them.

Crucially, there were follow up sessions for all year groups in PSHE lessons the following week and this is to be revisited next term. A video of the assembly and photographs of the displays were taken as a record of what the school had done to inform future practice.

The impact that this type of programme can have was evident in the responses that Angie Long received from the students:

***'I've started seeing that stuff in the papers on refugees with new eyes.'***

***'I never realised that there were so many child refugees, why don't newspapers tell us the truth?'***

***'That assembly was so good Miss, you had us all crying, I want to know more.'***

*(Adapted from an article by Emma Goodman from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Language Development Service Newsletter, Summer 2003)*

## Fundraising

One way to show your support for refugees, could be to hold a fundraising event to benefit a local refugee organisation or charity which supports refugees.

Here are some ideas:

- ! A sponsored walk, swim or run
- ! A sponsored football match or tournament
- ! A sponsored fast, where you don't eat anything for a day
- ! A quiz where everybody pays £1 to enter, the winner gets a prize bought with some of the money collected, and the rest of the money goes to charity. You could write the questions yourself, and include a section on famous refugees or other refugee issues.
- ! Put on a play or a concert in aid of refugees
- ! Research on the internet or in the library some cake or biscuit recipes from other countries. You can then make them and sell them at breaktime or lunchtime.
- ! A non-school uniform day, where pupils pay £1 to charity for the privilege of not wearing their uniforms.

*(Information from Appeals and Events, Refugee Council)*

## Being a Global Citizen...

In today's interconnected world, we all have global influences on our life. Pictures from around the world are beamed into our homes and the web has made instant communication with the other side of the world an everyday reality. It is possible for all of us to play our part in contributing to the community at both a local and a global level.

As well as supporting refugees in our local community, there are ways we can respond to situations that create refugees with the aim of preventing such situations from arising in the first place.

By working together, we can make a difference. We can campaign against human rights abuses, we can speak out against injustice and we can take action to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.

This year we would also like Refugee Week activities and events to explore notions of identity, community and common humanity. We know that there are some refugees that are famous for particular achievements such as Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud but most refugees are ordinary people, working hard and living ordinary lives. We would like events and activities that celebrate these lives and illustrate that differences between cultures and lifestyles should be valued and not

feared. We would like to make the notion of common humanity both relevant and tangible to young people. Why not discuss some of the issues with students, and encourage them

New websites needed

[www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)

The largest ever campaign against arms – jointly run by Amnesty International, Oxfam and IANSA (International Action Network on Small Arms). The website has many ideas for straightforward ways to get involved and take action.

[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

Amnesty International – various campaigns on human rights issues as well as ‘Control Arms’ mentioned above. They have a Junior Urgent Action network aimed at young people.

[www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

Oxfam – Campaigns on cutting conflict and controlling arms, and other issues linked to global poverty and social justice. Refer to the Cool Planet section for information on global citizenship work in schools.

[www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org)

International Action Network on Small Arms. Information and campaign suggestions. Part of the Control Arms campaign.

[www.caat.org.uk](http://www.caat.org.uk)

Campaign Against the Arms Trade - working for the reduction and ultimate abolition of the international arms trade. Up to date information and campaign actions. Links to many other related websites.

[www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

Safer World - an independent organisation that works for the prevention of armed conflict. Background information, research and links to other websites.

[www.landmines.org.uk](http://www.landmines.org.uk)

Adopt a minefield – awareness raising and campaigning against the use of landmines. Also funds clearing of landmines and rehabilitation of survivors.