

# ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

## ACTIVITY

### BUST SOME MYTHS!

Ask the group to stand up. When you share the following statements, get them to put their hands on their heads if they think it's a fact or put their hands on their hips if they think it's a tall tale. Then share the correct answer.

- Refugees don't contribute to Australian society. **myth**  
*Quite the contrary, once refugees are established in Australia, they make positive economic and cultural contributions.*
- There are more than 24 million refugees worldwide. **fact**  
*That's as many people as there are living in Australia.*
- Asylum seekers who arrive by boat are illegal. **myth**  
*Seeking asylum, regardless of how you arrive, is a basic human right under the UN Refugee Convention that Australia has agreed to, but is not keeping its word on.*



## SOFIA'S STORY

Ten year-old Sofia has been living in a refugee camp for four years. She doesn't know what became of her parents; all she really remembers about her homeland is leaving.

"We came to Tanzania by boat. We were very many people running and pushing because of the fighters, because they were coming."

Sofia goes to school at the camp where she lives, but only if her grandmother doesn't need her for chores.

Many children in refugee camps have to take care of younger siblings, and spend a lot of time gathering firewood, collecting water, or doing the cooking.

## ACTIVITY

Reflect on Sofia's story and discuss as a group:

- What has happened in the past four years? How have you changed? Is it a long period of time?
- What would be different for you now if you had spent the past four years in the same place as Sofia?
- Are you ever kept home from school to do chores? How would this effect Sofia?

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Ask the group questions then discuss the facts.

### WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

A refugee is a person who has fled their homeland for their safety.

### WHAT IS AN ASYLUM SEEKER?

An asylum seeker is a person who has sought protection as a refugee, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been granted. They are still *seeking asylum*.

### DOES EVERY ASYLUM SEEKER BECOME A REFUGEE?

No, if their application is declined, that means they can be sent back to the country they fled from.

### WHERE DO REFUGEES COME FROM?

These five countries were responsible for 68% of all refugees resettled between 2004-2016:

#### The majority are staying in:

- Burma 201,752
- Somalia 93,854
- Iraq 141,959
- Syria 68,225
- Bhutan 105,796

### WHY DO THEY LEAVE THEIR HOMES?

Becoming a refugee is not a choice. People are forced to flee their homeland because of:

- War;
- Persecution on the grounds of race, nationality, sex, and religion, or;
- Being displaced due to a natural disaster or the adverse effects of climate change.

### HOW MANY REFUGEES COME TO AUSTRALIA?

In 2015-2016, the Australian Government granted 17,555 refugee and humanitarian visas. That's not many considering the 24 million refugees worldwide.

# WHAT VINNIES DOES

## VINNIES MIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Across Australia, we offer a range of services and programs for newly arrived families of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds across Australia. These programs hope to enable newly settled families and communities to become self-reliant, to participate in the broader Australian community, and to develop a shared purpose and a sense of identity and belonging. We also aim to create opportunities to engage with local community.

These services include accommodation and material support, counselling and referrals, and education scholarships. We also run programs such as homework help clubs, learn to swim or drive programs, and social community events.

## VINNIES CAMPAIGNS

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a vocal advocate for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers at the local and national level.

Check out the current campaigns at [vinnies.org.au](http://vinnies.org.au) to get involved or to start your own local campaign. Sometimes all we need is enough signatures from everyday people to force the parliament to discuss an issue. You can help us collect these signatures!

*"It is not an option for asylum seekers and refugees to return to their place of origin when doing so could result in persecution or harm,"*

– Dr John Falzon, CEO, St Vincent de Paul Society Australia.

## ACTIVITY

Imagine what it would be like to be a person who has been forced to flee their country for their own safety. What are some challenges you might face when arriving to a new country? For example: no job, different language, etc.

Draw a mind map with these challenges in thought bubbles then add some flow on challenges that you might face.

Now you can see that some issues quickly snowball and lead to greater disadvantage for people seeking safety in a new country.

## CHALLENGE

As a group, find out what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is and talk about what rights are listed for asylum seekers, and how we could better uphold these rights in Australia.

*"Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution"*

– Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

**BE ADVOCATES.** Talk to your family, friends, classmates, and community to help raise awareness of the issues facing refugees and asylum seekers in the world today, and bust those myths!

**RESEARCH THE TOPIC** See what Vinnies is doing in your local area and how they're advocating to government. Collect signatures for a Vinnies petition, start your own or invite a local MP or Mayor to your group meeting or event so you can share your concerns with them – and let us know about it!

**BE GENEROUS.** Run a fundraising activity at school. Get in touch with a local Vinnies service to check what donations are most needed.



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