

Activity Sheet 1.2

A UNHCR – United Nations High Commission on Refugees www.unhcr.ch/teach

Background: The UNHCR is a branch of the United Nations and has a large set of responsibilities. Its work ranges from coordinating direct help for refugees around the world to providing information about refugees.

What does it do?: Some of the work the UNHCR has undertaken can be seen as campaigning for a better understanding of refugee issues. For example:

- Lesson plans and materials for use in schools and colleges to help people understand refugee issues
- Poster campaigns to try to raise awareness and encourage people to question their own ideas and myths about refugees
- Production of videos and teacher packs for use in schools which give refugees the chance to speak for themselves
- Running a website for the public to get access to up-to-date and accurate information about refugees

- Encouraging governments to help refugees when they arrive in their countries
- Encouraging governments not to create the circumstances in which some people have to run away and become refugees
- Working with other organisations to help refugees.

Who does it?: UNHCR employs over 5,000 people (mostly involved in the direct work with refugees) in 210 countries, and spends about US\$1 billion each year. It seeks to help over 4,000 people for each one of its own staff and therefore depends on good partnerships with other groups.

Why?: The campaigning work they do is only one part of their overall work and it fits in with the aims of the United Nations: maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.



B Children Of The Storm

Background: In 1989 Hampstead School began admissions of refugee children. The staff realised that many of these children had been through terrible experiences and would need extra help and support if they were to benefit from their time at the school. One incident in particular made the school take action – one of the refugees, a girl, suffered a panic attack while playing a game as she suddenly remembered being hit by a rifle and raped. The staff had no idea of what she had been through before she arrived at the school. Children Of The Storm is a charity that grew out of the work the school undertook to support students.

What does it do?: In the beginning it supported its own students by doing the following:

- Training teachers to be more aware
- Training other students so they were more aware of what they could do to help
- Changing its admission procedures so they were less stressful for refugees, who probably wouldn't have all the correct papers

- Starting the Cocoa Club so refugee students could get support from others in the same position

As the charity became more effective, it began to produce other materials to help other schools:

- A video of young people talking about how they felt when they arrived at school
- A booklet with some important advice and phone numbers as well as useful English phrases, to help newly arrived refugees
- A handbook for teachers to help them learn from the experiences of Hampstead School.

Who does it?: Teachers and students from the school initially, and then other people help out.

Why?: This grew out of the school's own personal response to an important issue on its own doorstep – the work now aims to help spread good practice and useful ideas.