

Civic Education –15-18 years

Unit and Lesson Plans



Refugees are a painful living reminder of the failure of societies to exist in peace. People should be able to lead productive and independent lives in their home communities. Sadly, they are sometimes forced to flee because of abuse, violations of their rights and various forms of social breakdown, including war. These issues are linked to concepts such as justice, equality, tolerance, freedom, minority rights and the formation of community. Refugees can be the subject of work units on human rights, nationalism, racism, immigration, persecution and war.

UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 15-18 IN CIVIC EDUCATION: REFUGEE WOMEN

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

To understand that women of all cultures and from all nationalities have the same basic human rights to shelter, food and safety, and also to dignity, self-sufficiency and self-determination

To realise the plight of refugee women which includes the denial of these basic rights

To comprehend the various difficulties which they have to face in their daily lives, identifying what are the contributory causes of these difficulties

To see that refugees, especially women need protection

To understand the concept of empowerment

Skills

To be aware of unconscious sexism and stereotyping, i.e. perceptions of women in different cultures

To devise ways to improve the living situations of refugee women, and how they can be helped to help themselves.



LESSON 1

CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STRATEGIES
<p>Many modes of perception and interpretation of reality result in individuals having unconscious mind sets. These mind sets affect one's view of others and their role in a community.</p> <p>The view of the role of women varies from culture to culture and from community to community. Religious education, politics and location, whether urban or rural, all contribute to determine a woman's permissible roles and activities.</p>	<p>Stimulus Students work in pairs through the activity "My son, My Son" as outlined in the lesson plan.</p> <p>Homework Students continue to work in the same pairs and each pair is given an article about one group of refugee women. The student pairs are required to answer questions which form a summary. Class time should be available the following lesson to pool information to obtain an overall view of what the refugee women are allowed and not allowed to do within their specific culture.</p>
<p>RESOURCES</p> <p>Activity: "My Son, My Son" from Graham Pike and Daniel Selby, <i>Global Teacher, Global Learner</i> (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p. 52 (see lesson plans for details)</p> <p>"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in simple language" in Jill Rutter, <i>Refugees: We Left Because We Had To</i> (London, Refugee Council, 1996), pp. 51-52</p> <p>Ayesha Khan, "Two steps forward, one step back"; Sandra Garcia, "Outside, looking in", <i>Refugees</i>, no. 100 (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995)</p>	

LESSON 2: Refugee Women - Survivors Twice

CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STRATEGIES
<p>80 per cent of the world's 27 million refugees and internally displaced people are women and children.</p> <p>This lesson deals with features of refugee women's lives.</p>	<p>Link to previous lesson Review of homework questions dealing with the attitude of women refugees concerning themselves, the attitude of the menfolk of the women refugees, and the daily work load of a woman refugee.</p> <p>Development View and discuss the video.</p>

Reconsider answers to the homework questions in the light of new insights gained from the video.

Students read "Refugees, Feminine Plural", then answer comprehension and discussion questions.

RESOURCES

Video: Refugee Women: The Courage to Move Onward (Geneva, UNHCR, 1996), available from from the Public Information Section, UNHCR, PO Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND.

Ruth Marshall, "Refugees, Femine Plural", Refugee, no. 100 (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995)

Suggested further reading

Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (Geneva, UNHCR, 1991)

Brochure: Refugee Women (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995), available from info@unhcr.org.uk, UNHCR, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP, UK.

Corinne A.A. Packer, UNHCR and Refugee Women: Rebuilding a Future Together (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995). p. 6-16

LESSON 3

CONTENT

Protection of refugee women: cultural dilemmas

TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STRATEGIES

Students research background material and write an essay. (Refer to lesson plan for essay topic.)

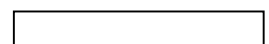
RESOURCES

Christiane Berthiaume, "Do we really care?", Refugees, no. 100, 1995, p. 12-13. Refer also to resources from previous lessons

LESSON PLANS FOR AGES 15-18 IN CIVIC EDUCATION: REFUGEE WOMEN

Purpose

Before the students attempt to study how women are perceived in different communities, they should first discover their own perceptions and unconscious mind-set. The activity provided in Lesson 1 "My Son, My Son" is a simple but effective way to stimulate discussion about sex roles and stereotyping, and of illustrating the idea that we tend to view the world on the basis of a fixed set of assumptions.



Refugees, especially women refugees need help and protection. Due to disruptions before, during and after flight, the traditional family structure of many refugees is upset. Husbands, brothers, fathers and sons - who normally contribute to the care and protection of their families - are often absent fighting in wars or seeking better work prospects. Others may have been killed or separated from their families in the upheaval of flight. As a consequence, a large number of refugee women find themselves as single heads of households. These women often risk ill-treatment and exploitation as they assume the responsibilities of caring, alone, for their families. Their problems are exacerbated when they are unable to participate in refugee community decision making.

The selected texts from UNHCR publications provide a window into the hardships which women refugees have to face and at the same time demonstrate the need for awareness of sensitive action on the part of aid agency workers. Working through lessons 2 and 3, students can also develop such a sensitive awareness, and realise that any situation can be viewed from a variety of perspectives (e.g. from the perspective of an aid worker, from the perspective of a woman refugee, and from the perspective of the people with whom she has to interact on a daily basis). The students will also become familiar with the principle of empowerment, how it can aid in conflict resolution (especially in the case of situations of women refugees), and practise formulating strategies of empowerment.

LESSON 1: Perceptions of Women in Different Communities

Preparation

My Son, My Son, a six sentence story for every pair of students, each sentence appearing on a separate slip of paper:

- There is a road accident.
- A lorry ran over a man and his son.
- The father was killed outright.
- The boy was taken to hospital.
- The surgeon at the hospital recognised him.
- 'My son,' cried the surgeon, horrified, 'that's my son.'

Overhead transparency or copies of "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in simple language" (to be referred to when needed).

Run off copies of "Two steps forward, one step back" and "Outside, looking in".

Procedure

To gain the maximum effect with the introductory activity, it would be better not to tell the students the title of this unit, yet.

Arrange the students in pairs, and give each pair the six slips of paper with the six sentences that make up "My Son, My Son, but in a jumbled order. The students have to arrange the sentences in a sequence that makes sense. Those pairs who finish quickly should not divulge their solution to the problem. After a



few minutes those who are struggling could be asked to express their difficulties.

This is a simple, but very effective means of stimulating discussion about sex roles and stereotyping, and of illustrating the idea that we tend to view the world on the basis of a fixed set of assumptions. Some pairs will probably work out the 'answer' (that the surgeon is the boy's mother), but there will usually be a number who fail to solve the problem, or who offer a tortuous alternative solution, and who will be startled when they are told. There in lies the power of this exercise: the sudden self-discovery of one's own assumptions and limited perspective. Because of the 'trick' element of this exercise, it may need to be handled with some sensitivity, particularly for those who did not get the 'right answer'.

The discussion questions lead the students through a quick review of what are basic human rights, and then encourage the students to consider how denial of certain basic rights for women can exist within a social structure. The homework reading provides examples of such a situation.

Discussion questions

The most simple solution to the mystery in "My Son, My Son" is that the surgeon is the mother, yet the solution is not the most obvious. Give your reasons why this is so.

In western societies, professions such as surgery and law are dominated by men. What factors in the lives of women contribute to their absence in these fields?

Every individual in the world has basic human rights. What are some of them? (Refer to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Women have to fight sexism within their own culture. Which human rights are denied by sexism?

How can our communities ensure that women are able to realise their basic human rights, such as the right to choose whether and when to bear children, and the right to work.

For homework, and as a link between lessons 1 and 2, half of the student pairs are given the article entitled "Two steps forward, one step back" and the remaining pairs are given the other article called "Outside, looking in". The students are required to read their articles and complete the accompanying homework questions in preparation for lesson 2.

Homework questions (for each article)

1 a) From which country do the refugees come?

- b) Name their country of asylum.

2 a) Describe the attitude of the women concerning themselves - select some key words for this description.

- b) What was the attitude of menfolk prior to the refugee women taking positive action for themselves, and what was the attitude after?

3) Make a list of the various duties that you consider a refugee woman has to do in her daily life.



LESSON 2: Refugee Women - Survivors Twice

Preparation

Have ready the video *Refugee Women: The Courage to Move Onward* (Geneva, UNHCR, 1996), available free from the Public Information Section, UNHCR, PO Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND.

Run off a class set of "Refugees, Feminine Plural", *Refugees*, no. 100 (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995), pp. 3-9

Procedure

Commence the lesson with the video *Refugee Women: The Courage to Move Onward*.

Allow the students to reassess and modify their answers to the homework questions, in the light of the video just watched. Then, go through the questions.

Distribute copies of "Refugees, Feminine Plural" to be read silently by the students. The following comprehension and discussion questions could be done verbally.

Comprehension questions

What is the figure given for the number of refugees cared for by UNHCR and of this figure, what proportion is made up of women and children?

Why are many refugee families headed up by only one parent, usually the mother? What happened to the menfolk?

List the dangers which women and girls face during conflict, during their flight, and during their sojourn in a refugee camp.

Think about the situation faced by a refugee mother who has to fend for her family alone. Look back at question 3 from the homework. Modify and expand the duties carried out by a refugee woman to ensure the survival of her family. With each duty, list the dangers which she has to face in order to carry out what she must do.

Discussion questions

In order to help the women refugees, why is it necessary to have refugee participation in UNHCR programmes?

What are some practical ways which can be employed to reduce danger to women in refugee camps?

Give some reasons why women should be included in distribution of aid materials, especially food.

How could the situation of women refugees improve if there were increased representation by women, and if there were more women administrators?

Essay:



"Within this agency, there are two opposing attitudes. There are people who believe that the organization should not interfere with refugee customs. According to this school, we are not there to change people's culture or mind-set, and we should respect the traditions of refugees, whether this means the veil, forced marriage, failure to educate girls, genital mutilation, or lack of access to family planning. To this school, I respond that respect for human rights is also part of UNHCR's mission". Ann Howarth-Wiles, former UNHCR Senior Coordination for Women, quoted in Christiane Berthiaume, "Do we really care?" *Refugees, no. 100*, 1995, p. 12-13

Discuss the issues raised in this quotation. Background reading materials for the essay are listed in the Resources column of the Unit Plan.

