

Geography – 15-18 years

Unit and Lesson Plans



Refugee issues can give a human face to lessons on:

Mapping: Location of refugees worldwide; origin of refugees; distribution within the local population.

Spatial organization: Refugee camps and local integrated settlements; site planning.

The environment: Massive outflows have consequences for the environment of the region they settle in; the ecological balance of the area can be put at risk.

Population: Within areas such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, Africa or Asia, or from the South to the North, the complex mosaic of different ethnic groups can be illustrated with stories about families who have been forced to flee ethnic fighting.

Economic development: Refugees contribute to the life of the community in which they integrate; they may bring initiative, skills and manpower which are keys to the development process of some areas.

Poverty and developing countries: There is a correlation between refugee problems and development, and it is no coincidence that the largest refugee populations are found in the poorest parts of the world.

UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 15-18 IN GEOGRAPHY: THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF REFUGEES AND UNHCR'S RESPONSE

This unit can be taught in the Geography curriculum as an illustration of the topic of land degradation.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

To understand the effects of large concentrations of refugees upon the environment of host countries, especially where the conditions are marginal: deforestation, land degradation and reductions in the quantity and quality of water supply

To understand the impacts of such environmental degradation upon the well-being of refugees and host communities

To understand the impact of refugee-related environmental degradation upon the institution of asylum



To know what UNHCR and its partners are seeking to do to address environmental problems associated with refugees

Skills

To practise skills of reading, interpretation and analysis of statistical information, presented in graphs and tables

To draw inferences and conclusions from the analysis of such data

Values

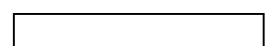
To use the inferences and conclusions of the above-mentioned analysis to envisage and generate possible solutions to refugee-related environmental problems

LESSONS 1 and 2

| CONTENT | TEACHING STRATEGIES | METHODS/LEARNING |
|--|--|-------------------------|
| Environmental impact of refugees deforestation land degradation reduction in quantity and quality of water supply Impact of environmental degradation on the well-being of refugees and local communities Solutions to these problems - the efforts of UNHCR and its partners RESOURCES Student Activity Sheet 1: "Environmental dimensions of the refugee problem" in UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees 1995: In Search of Solutions (Oxford, OUP, 1995), pp. 162-171 Background reading for teachers UNHCR Environmental Guidelines (Geneva, UNHCR, 1996) Available from the Office of the Senior Coordinator on Environmental Affairs, UNHCR, Geneva, bentleyr@unhcr.ch | Guided reading, followed by comprehension questions and discussion | |

LESSONS 3-5

| CONTENT | TEACHING STRATEGIES | METHODS/LEARNING |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Case study of domestic energy consumption among Rwandan | Work in pairs Detailed study of the results of a | |



refugees, formerly living in North-Western Tanzania thorough survey of domestic energy consumption patterns: statistical interpretation, analysis, drawing of inferences and conclusions.

Through careful guided reading and discussion in pairs, the students should be led to a point where they can propose solutions and evaluate the practicality of those solutions.

RESOURCES

Student Activity Sheet 2

Matthew Owen and Ivan Ruzicka, Energy Consumption in the Refugee-Hosting Areas of Kagera Region, Tanzania (Geneva, UNHCR, 1997)

Background reading for teachers

Elizabeth Umlas, "Household Energy Use in Refugee Camps of Eastern Zaire and Tanzania: The Experiences of UNHCR and its Implementing Partners", Boiling Point, no. 37, June 1996, 12 page supplement.

Available from the Office of the Senior Coordinator on Environmental Affairs, UNHCR, Geneva

LESSON PLANS FOR AGES 15-18 IN GEOGRAPHY: THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF REFUGEES AND UNHCR'S RESPONSE

Purpose

Refugees are people who have fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, cannot or do not want to return.

The countries who generously offer refugees shelter are called countries of asylum. Often they are neighbouring countries, and often the environmental conditions of these countries of asylum are already fragile before the arrival of the refugees. In this unit, students will study the impact of human populations on the physical conditions of their surroundings, and learn about how UNHCR and its partners are trying to alleviate some of these pressures upon the land.

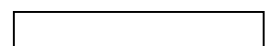
LESSONS 1 and 2

Preparation

Run off a class set of Student's Activity Sheet 1: *Environmental dimensions of the refugee problem*.

Procedure

It is suggested that the first few paragraphs of the Activity Sheet be read aloud by



individual students, to the rest of the class, (perhaps until the end of the section entitled *Wood, land and water*). This will allow the teacher to stop and check understanding along the way. Once the teacher feels that the students are grasping the overall picture, he /she can ask the students to continue the reading privately, answering the comprehension questions as they go.

After a short while, the teacher should check the students' progress and understanding, by asking a couple of them to read out their answers, which will become starting points for discussion.

Evaluation

An essay topic is provided at the end of the Activity Sheet.

LESSONS 3-5

Preparation

Run off a class set of Student's Activity Sheet 2: *Energy consumption in the refugee-hosting areas of Kagera region, Tanzania*.

Procedure

This Activity Sheet is perhaps a little more difficult, technically, than the first one. Most of the questions require understanding of the content of tables and graphs, and application of the information contained in those graphics to the problems of refugee fuelwood consumption. It is recommended that the teacher leads the class through the interpretation of the graphics, taking the opportunity to teach the skills needed for such interpretation, as well as ensuring that the geographical/environmental concepts, raised by the questions, are understood.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Office of the Representative for the United Kingdom

21st Floor, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7828 9191, Fax: 020 7630 5349,

E-mail: gbrlo@unhcr.ch, Website: <http://www.unhcr.ch>

