

# History – 15-18 years

## Unit and Lesson Plans



### History includes refugees

Throughout history, political turmoil has victimized many civilian families, forcing them to flee their homes. Refugee outflows and other massive displacements of people are a key aspect of many international crises. For children, in particular, looking at world events from the point of view of a refugee family can give new meaning and a sense of reality to events that may otherwise seem abstract and far away. The theme can be introduced in:

**Medieval/early modern history:** The religious wars.

**Contemporary history:** World War I, the Russian Revolution, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Second World War and Nazism, colonization and decolonization in Africa, Soviet influence in Central and Eastern Europe, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Vietnam War, the dictatorships in Latin-America – all these events and many more have victimized millions of people and forced them to flee their homes, families and communities.

### **UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 15-18 IN HISTORY: Population Displacement in the Commonwealth of Independent States since 1991**

#### **UNIT OBJECTIVES**

##### **Knowledge**

To learn aspects of the recent political history and geography of the former Soviet Union.

To understand the political forces which led to the formation of new states in the CIS.

To understand the political and ethnic tensions which give rise to discrimination and persecution, and therefore provoke refugee outflows.

##### **Skills**

To be able to analyse the reasons for complex historical and political phenomena.

To practise skills in the reading and interpretation of maps.

To seek to envisage solutions to seemingly intractable political and ethnic problems.

##### **Values**

To impart a sense of the folly and waste of inter-ethnic hatred.

To foster a feeling of empathy and solidarity with the victims of persecution and civil war.



## LESSON 1

<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES</b>	<b>METHODS/LEARNING</b>
<b>The location of the CIS states, and the direction of the flow of human displacements.</b>	Under the guidance of the teacher, students draw arrows on the map of Activity Sheet: The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to show the directions of human displacements.	Background information for teachers concerning the CIS, its refugees and displaced people, is provided in the Teacher's Resource Sheet.
<b>RESOURCES</b>		
<b>Activity Sheet: The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)</b>		
<b>Teacher's Resource Sheet: "Displaced people in the former Soviet States" in UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees 1995: In Search of Solutions (Oxford, OUP, 1995), p. 24-25</b>		
<b>Suggested readings for the teacher:</b>		
<b>CIS Conference on refugees and migrants (Geneva, UNHCR/IOM/OSCE, 1996)</b>		
<b>"After the Soviet Union", Refugees, no. 98, 1994</b>		

## LESSONS 2 and 3

<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES</b>	<b>METHODS/LEARNING</b>
<b>A brief history of population displacement in the former Soviet Union.</b>	Link to previous lesson: In lesson 1, the students would have noted that the movement of people, in certain situations, occurs in both directions, eg. people fled from Armenia to Azerbaijan, as well as from Azerbaijan to Armenia. In this double lesson, the students will read about how the multi-ethnic composition of the CIS states came about, and the tensions between the ethnic groups that contributed to the mass migrations.	Development: Students read the article "Population displacement in the former Soviet Union" and answer the

accompanying questions, including filling in a table that shows who were the people forcibly moved, where they were forced to migrate, and where the current generation of each group are now moving, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

**RESOURCES**

**Bohdan Nahaylo, "Population displacement in the former Soviet Union", Refugees, no. 98, 1994, p. 3-8**

**LESSON 4**

<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES</b>	<b>METHODS/LEARNING</b>
<p><b>The multi-ethnicity of the CIS states.</b></p> <p><b>RESOURCES</b>  <b>"Minorities Map" from CIS Conference on refugees and migrants (Geneva, UNHCR/IOM/OSCE, 1996) (Activity Sheet)</b></p> <p><b>Suggested readings for the teacher: "In legal limbo: asylum seekers and statelessness" - "Displacement in the Commonwealth of Independent States", UNHCR publication for CIS Conference, May 1996</b></p> <p><b>Jan Cienski, "Chilly reception for refugees in Russia", Refugees, no. 98, 1994</b></p>	<p>Discussion: The "Minorities Map" Pie is a set of pie charts that show clearly how multi-ethnic are the CIS states. Students are asked to consider the history of how these distributions came about, what tensions have evolved between the various groups of people, and how could UNHCR and other UN organisations help in reducing these tensions.</p>	

**LESSONS 5 and 6**

<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES</b>	<b>METHODS/LEARNING</b>
<p><b>The civil war in Tajikistan, the repatriation of Tajiks and the role of UNHCR in the repatriation and protection of the returnees.</b></p>	<p>Link to previous lesson: At the end of the previous lesson, students would have learnt that certain minority groups are present in several countries.</p> <p>Introduction: In this lesson, students will concentrate on one particular CIS</p>	

country, Tajikistan. Teacher provides a brief introduction about the people of this country and about the civil war that broke out only months after the country gained its independence. Background information on Tajikistan is provided in the Teachers' Resource Sheet: Restoring stability in Tajikistan.

Video: Students watch the video and take part in a class discussion based on its contents.

### **RESOURCES**

**Teachers' Resource Sheet 2: Restoring stability in Tajikistan, in UNHCR, The State of the World's Refugees 1995: In Search of Solutions (Oxford, OUP, 1995), p. 77-78**

**Video: Tajikistan: Mission Accomplished (Geneva, UNHCR, 1995)  
The video is available from Public Information Section, UNHCR, PO Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND.**

**Rupert Colville, "Rebuilding Socialism" Refugees No.98, 1994 p.26-30.**

## **LESSON PLANS FOR AGES 15-18 IN HISTORY: Population Displacement in the Commonwealth of Independent States since 1991**

### **Purpose**

This unit should be taught after a study of the history of the break-up of the Soviet Union (1982-1991).

1989 was a watershed in world history for, in that year, the Berlin Wall came down. In December 1991, the Soviet Union, the largest country in the world, with the third largest world population, dissolved into fifteen independent states, twelve of which now make up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Since 1989, around 9 million people have involuntarily moved within or between the countries of the CIS. In this unit, students will learn where the CIS countries are situated, and discover some of the reasons why these human displacements, including refugee flows, have taken place. They will also study in more detail the recent history of one CIS country, Tajikistan.

### **LESSON 1**

#### **Preparation**

Run off a class set of the Activity Sheet: The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).



Teacher's Resource Sheet 1: Displaced people in the former Soviet states, has been provided as background information.

### **Procedure**

Looking at the map on the Activity Sheet: *The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)*, allow the students a few minutes to familiarise themselves with the names of the CIS countries. A number of the CIS countries end with "-stan". Most likely the students would have heard of some of them, but only vaguely know that these countries are somewhere in the former USSR, in Central Asia, in the Caucasus...

The two principal areas of the CIS that have been troubled with armed conflict, and have experienced the resulting refugee movements, are the Caucasus and Central Asia. In this lesson, the students should draw arrows on the map on the Activity Sheet to indicate the flow of population displacements in the Caucasus region:

an arrow from Abkhazia to Russia and another arrow from Abkhazia to Georgia  
an arrow from Georgia to Abkhazia

an arrow from South Ossetia to Georgia, a second arrow to North Ossetia, a third arrow that crosses Georgia to Abkhazia, and a fourth arrow to Russia

an arrow from North Ossetia to Ingushetia

an arrow from Chechnya to Ingushetia, a second arrow to North Ossetia and a third arrow to Daghestan

an arrow from Armenia to Azerbaijan

an arrow from Azerbaijan to Armenia

an arrow from Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan and a second arrow that crosses Azerbaijan to Armenia.

Students will probably ask why there is a two way traffic of people between some of the countries, as in the case of Georgia and Abkhazia. The next lesson will explain why.

Population displacements in Central Asia can be shown as:

an arrow from Tajikistan to Afghanistan

an arrow from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan

an arrow from Tajikistan to Turkmenistan

an arrow from Tajikistan to Russian Federation

an arrow from Tajikistan to Ukraine

an arrow from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan

an arrow from Tajikistan to Belarus

an arrow from Uzbekistan to Azerbaijan

an arrow from Uzbekistan to Russian Federation

an arrow from the Russian Federation (Chechnya) to Kazakstan

an arrow from Afghanistan (not a CIS country, but part of the Central Asia region) to Uzbekistan

By now, the students' maps probably look a mess, with arrows everywhere. It is to be hoped that this exercise has conveyed to the students the fact that around 9 million people have been on the move in the last decade, fleeing violent conflict and ethnic strife. In the next lesson, the students will read about reasons that underlie the ethnic strife.



## LESSONS 2 and 3

### Preparation

A class set of atlases showing the former USSR, and a class set of the article "Population displacement in the former Soviet Union" are required.

### Procedure

Students read the article and answer the following comprehension questions.

**Comprehension questions** (the questions follow the internal order of the article)

The size of the USSR was so big that it spanned how many time zones?

The USSR was the world's largest multinational state, but basically, its people were divided into two main groups - Russians and non-Russians. During the time of its existence, there were tensions in the USSR, of two main types. What were they? (Much of the conflict that has occurred since the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been a manifestation of the tension between the non-Russians in the various states that made up the USSR.)

In the form of a table with five columns, list the forced population displacements that took place in the Soviet Union before and after the Second World War. In the first column, write down who the people were, put in the second column where the people originally came from, in the third column where the people were forced to migrate, in the fourth column the reason, if it is given in the article, why they moved, and finally in the fifth column, where the descendants have fled to during conflicts in the CIS. (Examples are scattered throughout the article.)

List the factors that contributed to the growing tensions between Russians living in non-Russian states and the local people.

- a) Why did Kazaks riot in December 1986?
- b) Find Nagorno-Karabakh on your map from lesson 1. Which ethnic group makes up the majority of the population? Who has had control of Nagorno-Karabakh since the 1920s? What is happening now in this area that is causing people to flee?
- c) Who were the people who were driven out of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1989? Where did they originally come from?

Give reasons why there are border disputes between neighbouring states

The independent countries which emerged as a result of the disintegration of the USSR are themselves multi-ethnic states.

- a) What does 'multi-ethnic' mean?
- b) What needs to be done to avoid ethnic conflicts?
- c) Over two million people have moved to Russia since 1989. List the reasons why the people moved.
- d) The Russian authorities have divided these displaced people into two categories - 'forced migrants' ie. refugees, and economic migrants. What percentage of the people who have moved to Russia since 1989 have been recognised as refugees, and who are these people?

## LESSON 4

### Procedure

Show the students the Minorities Map to confirm the impression, which they would have gained after completing the comprehension questions in the previous lesson,



that the CIS countries are multi-ethnic in their population composition. Looking at each pie chart on the map, the students will see that certain ethnic groups are present in several countries. For example, Uzbeks form minority populations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

### **Class discussion**

In the light of the information contained in the article from the previous lesson, what suggestions can the students give to explain such population distributions?

What problems have emerged from the huge forced population displacements which occurred during the communist regime?

How can UNHCR and other UN organisations help the CIS countries to deal with these problems?

### **LESSON 5 and 6: Case study – Tajikistan**

In this lesson, students will study in more detail one of the CIS countries, Tajikistan, where a civil war broke out in 1992, only months after the country gained independence. Thousands of Tajiks fled from the countryside to the capital city of Dushanbe, to Afghanistan and elsewhere. The students will be introduced to UNHCR's role in the protection and reintegration of returnees and displaced people in Tajikistan.

### **Preparation**

For the teacher, background information about the conflict in Tajikistan is provided in the Teachers' Resource Sheet 2: restoring stability in Tajikistan.

Have ready the video *Tajikistan: Mission Accomplished*. This video lasts 15 minutes and is available free of charge from the Public Information Section, UNHCR, PO Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2, SWITZERLAND.

The *Minorities Map* from the previous lesson will also be needed.

### **Procedure**

Have the students locate Tajikistan on their map on the Activity Sheet from Lesson 1. Which countries share borders with Tajikistan?

Referring to the **Minorities Map** from the previous lesson, what is the ethnic composition of the population of Tajikistan?

Before showing the video *Tajikistan: Mission Accomplished*, provide a little background information about the inhabitants of Khatlon province. For details, see Teachers' Resource Sheet 2: *Restoring stability in Tajikistan*. Between the 1930s and 1970s, those inhabitants, the Garmis, were forcibly moved by the Communist regime from their own valley to Khatlon, to provide labour on the cotton farms.

### **Post-video discussion**

Not all the houses in Khatlon were destroyed in the civil war. The houses which were destroyed belonged to whom?

a) Who is a returnee?

b) What hardships in Khatlon did the first returnees face?

How did UNHCR help in the protection of the returnees?



- a) Who were the two groups of people who lived in the village of Socialism?
- b) What happened in this village during the civil war?
- c) What specific problems faced the Garmis who returned to the village?
- d) How did UNHCR and the local authorities help in resolving the conflict between the Garmis and the Uzbeks?

'A man's home is his castle'. However, when the Garmis returned to their village, they found that their homes had either been destroyed or had been taken over by those who remained in the village. The government had rewarded its supporters with the property of those who had fled. How was the issue of house occupancy resolved?

Whenever and wherever possible, UNHCR seeks to repatriate refugees. What factors must exist before refugees can return to their homes?

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