

Human Rights and Refugees – 12-14 years Unit and Lesson Plans



UNHCR Lego Posters TEACHERS' GUIDE IN: HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

These posters have been reissued as a set of four, with an accompanying teacher's guide, to mark the 50th anniversary in 1998 of the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The guide has been designed to help teachers to prepare lessons which demonstrate the relationship between refugee protection and human rights. The posters, showing familiar LEGO models, are ideal stimulus materials for students between the ages of 9 and 14 (levels 1 and 2). For older students, a series of articles is used as a basis for classroom discussion for students between 15 and 18 (level 3).

HUMAN RIGHTS, REFUGEES AND UNHCR

A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." (from the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*)

When the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, there were an estimated 1 million refugees to care for, the majority of whom were European. Currently, UNHCR cares for almost 22.4 million people, of whom 12 million are refugees, mainly from Africa and Asia. Eighty per cent of them are women and children. In addition to individual flight from persecution, the modern pattern of refugee movements is that of mass exoduses caused by ethnic conflicts and violations of rights of minorities.

People become refugees because one or more of their basic human rights have been violated or threatened. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) underlines the strong connection between human rights and the work of UNHCR. Article 14 of the UDHR states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."

The work carried out by UNHCR, whether involving protection or material assistance, is influenced by human rights considerations. Violations of human rights are one of the main causes of mass exoduses; they also eliminate the option of voluntary repatriation as long as the violations persist.



No one likes or chooses to be a refugee. Being a refugee means more than just being a foreigner. It means living in exile and often depending on others for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Where most people can look to their own governments to guarantee and protect their basic human rights and physical security, refugees cannot do so. Rather, their country of origin has proved itself unable or unwilling to protect those rights. UNHCR has been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that refugees are protected by their country of asylum, and assists asylum countries as far as possible in that task. Its main role is to ensure that states are aware of, and respect, their obligations to protect refugees and persons seeking asylum and solutions.

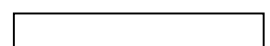
A refugee has the right to safe asylum. However, international protection comprises more than physical safety. Refugees should receive at least the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident, including certain fundamental entitlements of every individual: refugees have basic civil rights, including freedom of thought and of movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Similarly, economic and social rights apply to refugees as they do to other individuals. Every refugee should have access to medical care. Every adult refugee should have the right to work. No refugee child should be deprived of schooling, or recruited into military service or prostitution.

In certain circumstances, such as large-scale inflows of refugees, asylum states may feel obliged to restrict certain rights, such as freedom of movement, the right to work, or proper schooling for all children. Such gaps can and should be filled wherever possible by the international community. Thus, when there are no other resources available – from governments of the country of asylum or other agencies – UNHCR provides assistance to refugees who cannot meet their own basic needs. The assistance may be in the form of financial grants, food, equipment such as kitchenware and tools, sanitation and shelter. There are also programs to establish schools and clinics for refugees who are living in a camps or other communal groupings. UNHCR makes every effort to ensure that refugees can become self-sufficient as swiftly as possible – this may require formal income-generating activities or projects to teach new skills.

On the other hand, refugees also have certain obligations. In particular, they should respect the laws of their country of asylum.

Copies of regular size LEGO posters are available for teachers/schools from UNHCR email info@unhcr.org.uk, UNHCR, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP, UK

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES USING THE POSTERS TO LAUNCH DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING REFUGEE ISSUES



Have copies of three of the four posters set up in the classroom. Do not display *Spot the Refugee* yet.

As the teacher may not choose to use all the posters in class, a couple of the discussion questions in the lesson activities below have been repeated. If using all the posters, ignore the repeated questions.

When watching news reports and documentaries about the massive refugee flows which have occurred in the last decade, students may wonder how they can contribute their part to international cooperation to solve these tragedies. Students may sense that they are powerless to help, but this is not the case.

Introductory questions for the students

Who produced these posters?

Do you think the posters are advertisements for Lego? If not, why not? Ask the students what similarities all the Lego people share? (Responses could include: all the figures have similarly-shaped yellow heads; the facial features are usually the same, i.e. two black spots for the eyes and a smile; they all have similarly-shaped hands, although pirate figures can have a hook instead of a hand; they all have a body and legs which are also similar in shape, but pirate figures can have a stump instead of a leg!)

Ask how they think the manufacturers make a Lego figure resemble a woman or a girl? (Possible replies could include: select a feminine hairstyle, female clothing, pastel colours, etc).

Spot the Refugee

Place a copy of the poster on the wall, folded, so that the writing is not visible. Ask the students to look closely at the rows of Lego people. Ask them to suggest an identity for each figure, beginning from the first Lego person in the first row. After several have been identified, ask the students by what means they decided upon each identity? For example, did they look at the clothes, the facial appearance and/or the gender?

The students are informed that the people who designed this poster decided that one of the figures is supposed to be a refugee. Ask the students to **spot the refugee**, and to describe how they came up with their identification. Do any of their reasons match the descriptions written on the blackboard at the beginning of the lesson?

This is an important lesson in the dangers of *prejudice* and *stereotyping*. The students should be brought to understand the harm which can be caused by ignorant, thoughtless name-calling and attribution of negative characteristics to a whole social group.



Now unfold the poster to reveal the text and allow the students time to read the information quietly by themselves.

Comprehension and discussion questions

Ask the students to write answers to the following questions in their notebooks.

What is the one difference between refugees and you and me?

What events do you think could have happened to cause a person to flee and leave everything behind?

What types of experience might refugees endure during their flight?

How would you feel if you were a refugee who had to leave your home, family and possessions behind and live in another country?

Define the term 'open mind'. What does it mean? Why does UNHCR ask that people keep an open mind and a smile of welcome?

Discuss the answers to these questions around the class. Refer to the concept of *discrimination*.

How Does It Feel?

If the class is used to working in small groups, give each group one of the following scenarios and ask them to discuss among themselves how they would feel if they were:

a new student who has just joined their class in the middle of the school year

a child of their age who has been holidaying with his/her family in another country where the language is foreign, and the child has somehow been separated from the other family members

someone who has just heard the bad news that the breadwinner of the family no longer has a job

After a suitable time has elapsed, the students can reassemble as a class group, and are led by the teacher to share the fruits of their group discussions.

Now turn the class' attention to the UNHCR Lego poster *How Does It Feel?* Allow the students a few minutes to take in the picture and to read the text.

Comprehension and discussion questions

Thinking about the three situations we just discussed, what similar *feelings* might the lonely Lego person have?

What similarities and differences are there between the *situation* of the lonely Lego figure and the three cases we just considered?

What do you think the people who designed this poster are trying to suggest through the way the Lego figures have been arranged?

Who do you think is the intended audience of this poster?

What attitudes towards refugees is UNHCR encouraging people to adopt in this poster?

What's Wrong Here?



Discussion questions

UNHCR has the responsibility to ensure that refugees are protected in their country of asylum and assists refugees by coordinating the provision of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care in emergency situations.

What makes a person a refugee?

Why would a refugee have nothing?

How does UNHCR suggest, through this poster, that individuals can help refugees?

Do the students agree?

What else can governments do to protect the rights of refugees?

What responsibilities do you think refugees might have in their host countries?

What's The Difference?

Refugees have frequently been successful in finding asylum in countries in the industrialised world. Having found asylum, the refugees are safe from the persecution that they feared in their own home countries, but they may face the problem of not being thoroughly accepted in their new country.

Discussion questions

What is the difference between each Lego figure?

If there is no difference, why is there a different name underneath each one?

Why do you think some people call other people nasty names?

If you had to divide the Lego people into two groups, how would you do it? Would you group *you and me* in a small group of two, and put the *refugee* with the rest?

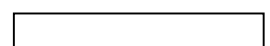
Or, would you group the last three Lego people, the *refugee, you and me*, together? Give your reasons for your decision.

re-read the last two sentences. What do you think is the message of these sentences?

Conclusion

Referring to all the posters, ask the students how they have previously regarded refugees about whom they have seen news stories, and how have they viewed refugees who live in their community. Do they sense any change within themselves, concerning their attitudes towards refugees, since starting this unit of work? What changes are there? The teacher needs to guide this discussion with sensitivity, encouraging the students to be frank, but being assertive if students rudely challenge each other over differing viewpoints.

UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 12-14 IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES: Rights, Responsibilities and Refugees



UNIT OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

To understand the nature of human rights and responsibilities

To know that:

- a) the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) exists
- b) that it sets forth the basic civic, economic, political, and social rights and freedoms of every person
- c) the UDHR is meant to serve "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations"

To understand that refugees flee their countries because their human rights are violated

To understand what individuals and governments can do to ensure respect of human rights

Skills

To articulate the rights, and the corresponding responsibilities, which are needed to secure harmony in and outside the classroom

Values

To appreciate the need for reciprocal rights and responsibilities

To appreciate the common humanity we share - citizens of our country and refugees

LESSONS 1 and 2

CONTENT	TEACHING STRATEGIES	METHODS/LEARNING
Classroom rights and responsibilities: People cannot function in a situation of anarchy. Rules setting out the rights and responsibilities of each individual are required to allow any unit of society to function harmoniously.	Students first are asked to envisage a classroom where everyone can do whatever they want. They are asked to determine the consequences of such a situation.	Working in groups, students are then required to decide upon the basic rights to which each student is entitled, and to devise a set of class rules that would bring about a harmonious learning environment in the classroom, while respecting the students' rights.
		Homework: The students are to imagine that they have been given the job of planning the rules to manage the global community.

RESOURCES

Suggested readings for the teacher:
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

LESSON 3: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

CONTENT	TEACHING STRATEGIES	METHODS/LEARNING
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights	<p>Review the homework assignment around the class, building up a blackboard summary of the rules suggested by the students for the global community.</p> <p>Ask the students to explain their understanding of 'rights' and 'responsibilities'.</p> <p>Introduce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Go through the rights listed there, ensuring the students understand their meaning and importance.</p>	
RESOURCES		
Student Resource Sheet: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated)		
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in full (see United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights website – http://www.unhchr.ch/)		

LESSONS 4 and 5: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Rights of Refugees*

CONTENT	TEACHING STRATEGIES	METHODS/LEARNING
The Rights of Refugees	<p>Make sure that the students understand who refugees are and why people become refugees. Reference to concepts and materials in the Geography units, ages 9-11 and 12-14 may be useful and necessary.</p> <p>Discuss the 3 Lego posters and the messages they convey. Help the students to identify the needs and rights</p>	

of refugees in countries of asylum.

Stress solutions to these problems - the contributions that governments, refugees themselves and we all can make to ensuring the acceptance and wellbeing of refugees.

RESOURCES

UNHCR Lego posters: Spot the Refugee, How Does It Feel? and What's Wrong Here?

Teachers' Resources:

The Geography Unit, ages 9-11 and 12-14.

UNHCR, Protecting Refugees: Questions and Answers [PDF] (Geneva, UNHCR, 1996) for more background on who is a refugee.

LESSON PLANS FOR FOR AGES 12-14 IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES: Rights, Responsibilities and Refugees

Purpose

No one likes or chooses to be a refugee. To be a refugee means more than being simply a foreigner. It means living in exile. According to the *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, a refugee is a person who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country".

This unit has several aims: to have students understand that people become refugees because their basic human rights have been violated in their own countries; to familiarize students with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; to understand why such a declaration was drawn up at the time and its continued relevance. While working through this unit, students will also learn that it is the responsibility of the international community to recognize and ensure that refugees are able to enjoy their basic human rights.

LESSONS 1 and 2: Rights and Responsibilities: The Two Sides of a Coin

Introduction

The teacher could begin by asking the children how they would feel if everyone in the class did what he or she liked all the time. For example, everyone can talk when they want to, even at the same time; everyone can say what they like; everyone can use whatever they like, even if the object does not belong to them; everyone can lose their temper and even hit others if they want to. Try to involve as many class members as possible in this discussion.



Encourage the students to think about the consequences of anarchy in the classroom, and to think about the desirability of class rules that allow each student to feel secure and valued in class.

Group discussion

At this stage, the students could work in groups to discuss what should be done to maintain a friendly and working environment in the classroom. This exercise will help students to think in terms of rights and responsibilities.

First, the students need to decide what their basic rights are in the classroom. An example to start them off could be: Every student, and even the teacher, should feel safe in this classroom. Have the students identify at least five classroom rights. When the students get back together again, a representative from each group can write on the blackboard what basic rights were agreed upon in their groups. If the combined list is long, the students need to agree which rights are the most basic and important. The students should give reasons for their choices.

Then, ask the students to decide collectively how each of these rights can be realized. In other words, how should everyone in the classroom behave to ensure that these rights are respected. For instance, if everyone has the right to feel safe in the classroom, then no-one should physically or emotionally hurt anyone else. The students should draw up a set of rules to ensure that everyone's rights are respected. Stress that each member of the classroom is *responsible* for obeying these rules to maintain a friendly and working environment in the classroom. Explain the problems that would be encountered if no one accepted these responsibilities.

For homework

Having agreed that each member of the class has certain basic rights, and that there needs to be certain rules to establish those rights, the students are now required to broaden their perspective to consider the basic rights and responsibilities of members of society.

Ask the students to imagine that they have been given the job of planning the rules to manage the global community. As planners, they do not know who they will be when they join that community themselves. They could be male or female, rich or poor, young or old, disabled in some way, or be a member of any particular race, ethnic group, culture or religion.

Each student should write a list of fundamental rules for the planet, designed to define human rights and responsibilities.

LESSON 3: THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Preparation



Either have ready a class set of the Student Resource Sheet: *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated)*, or have it prepared on an overhead transparency.

Have available copies of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in its full form.

Link to previous lesson

Ask around the class what rules the students invented for managing the global community?

Build up a blackboard summary of the most frequently mentioned rules.

As each student offers a rule, ask for the reasons behind the suggestion.

Introduction

The students are asked in the light of the discussion from the previous lessons and of their homework to give their interpretation of the meaning of the words "rights" and "responsibilities".

Lead the children to see that while every person in the world has basic rights, these rights need to be guaranteed through the maintenance of a framework of rules. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is such a framework of rules.

Development

Individual copies of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated)* can be handed out, or display it on an overhead transparency. If possible, copies of the Declaration in its full form should be made available to the students.

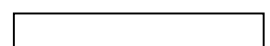
Convey the following information to the students:

Human rights could be generally defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to develop fully and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience to satisfy our needs. They are based on mankind's increasing demand for a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each human being will receive respect and protection.

The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms is not only an individual and personal tragedy, but it also creates conditions of social and political unrest, sowing the seeds of violence and conflict within and between societies and nations. As the first sentence of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states, respect for human rights and human dignity "is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world".

In 1945, after the horrors of World War II, an international organization was



established, known as the United Nations, dedicated to maintaining peace and security and to seek co-operation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems. In 1948, a code of conduct for the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled without any discrimination, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. This was called the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. The Declaration is not legally binding, but its content has been incorporated into many national constitutions, and it has become a standard measure of human rights.

Recommended Readings:

Teaching Human Rights (New York, United Nations, 1989), p. 19-27

David Selby, *Human Rights* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Ask the students to explain the most important articles of the Declaration to the rest of the class (articles 1-5, 13-14, 17-21, 25-26). Some are reasonably straightforward; others will require some interpretation by the teacher. Be sure to ask the students to give concrete examples from everyday life, or from history or current events, of the rights which are more difficult to grasp.

LESSONS 4 and 5: THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES

Preparation

Have available A4-sized copies of the UNHCR Lego posters *Spot the Refugee, How Does It Feel? and What's Wrong Here?* Display large format copies of the posters prominently in the classroom.

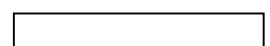
Introduction

Explain that the three posters on the wall were produced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the international organization which provides protection and assistance to *refugees*.

*At this point, the teacher may wish to introduce portions of other lessons available on UNHCR's website, in the **Teaching Tools** section. For example, the teacher can use the Geography units for ages 9-11 or 12-14. With many examples, these lessons will make the concept of a refugee clearer to the students.*

The teacher should now define the word *refugee* for the students:

"a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."



Go through the definition carefully, to ensure that the concepts are clearly understood.

These Lego posters can be seen in mass-circulation magazines, and are pasted on walls in public places, such as bus shelters and train stations. Ask the students why they think UNHCR is publishing such posters. What message are they trying to convey?

Referring to the posters, ask the students which article(s) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are especially relevant to refugees and the people of their host countries. Answers may include Article 14 (Right to Asylum), but also Articles 1 (Right to Equality), 2 (Freedom from Discrimination) and many others not explicitly mentioned in the poster texts, for example, Article 3 (Right to Life, Liberty and Personal Security; Article 5 (Freedom from Torture, Degrading Treatment), and Article 9 (Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest, Exile). Violations of any of these articles have caused people to flee their home country.

Discussion questions

UNHCR has the responsibility to ensure that refugees are protected in their country of asylum and to assist refugees by coordinating the provision of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care in emergency situations.

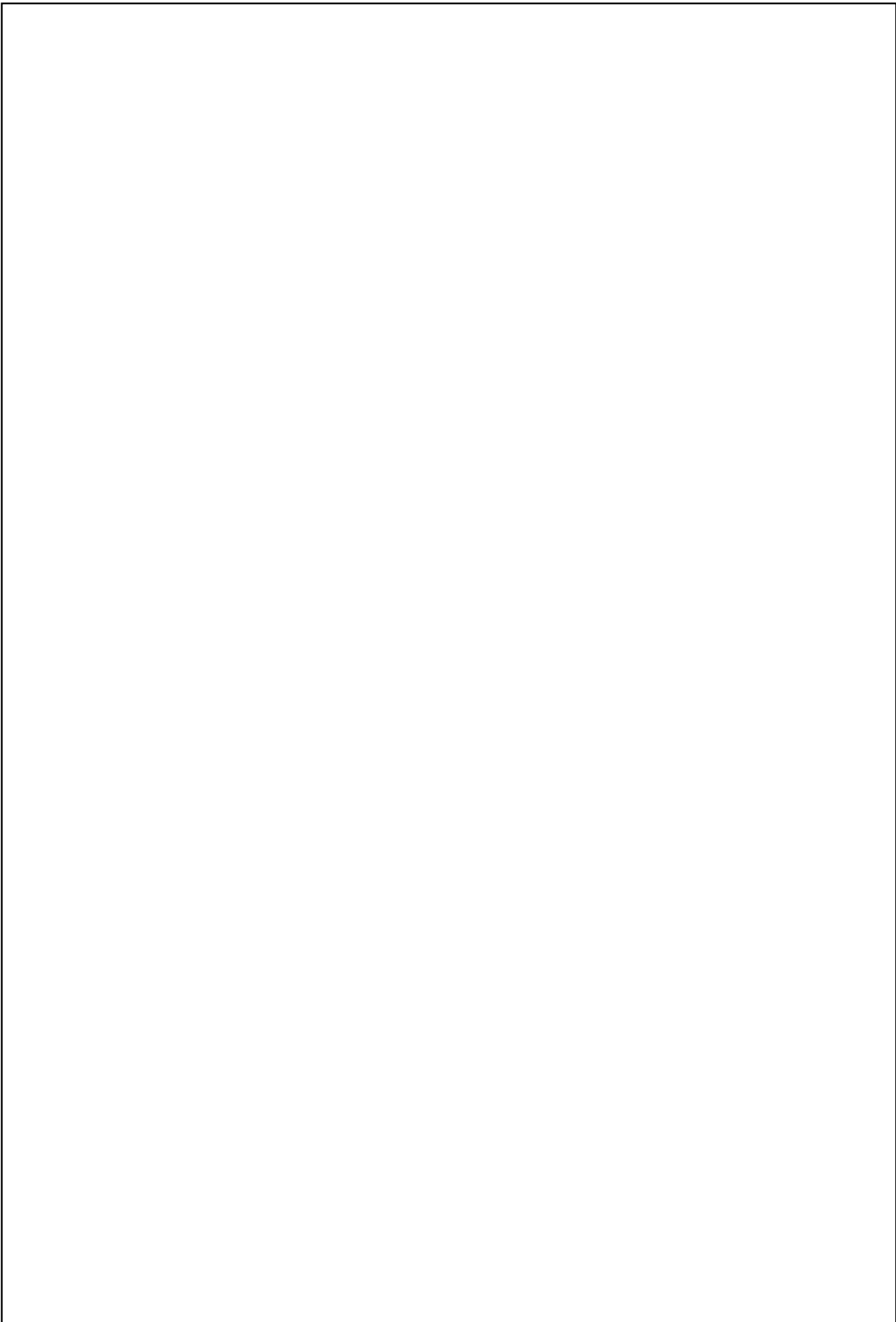
How does UNHCR suggest, through these posters, that individuals can help refugees?

Do the students agree?

What else can governments do to protect the rights of refugees?

What responsibilities do you think refugees might have in their host countries?





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>

