

# Syria

## Seen and Heard

Spring 2014 Action Guide

The statistics of the Syria conflict are staggering. 15 March 2014 will be the third anniversary of the beginning of the conflict. Since then, out of a total population of 21.4 million people, 9.3 million Syrian citizens now require humanitarian support. In addition, more than 2.25 million Syrians have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees. Almost half of these refugees are children under 18. In Syria more than 100,000 people have died as a result of the conflict.

### The need for Syria Seen and Heard

The UK government has been generous in its support of Syrian refugees. However the sheer scale and long term nature of the crisis means that donors will have to remain involved for a long period of time. There are risks, despite the government's generosity, that the commitment of UK decision makers and the public may waver. This is only natural. The purpose of Syria Seen and Heard is to re-engage the support of MPs and to ask MPs to make this support as visible as possible both inside and outside Parliament. This will strengthen the ongoing commitment of the UK government towards supporting those affected by the conflict and finding a peaceful solution.

### Syria Seen and Heard project outline

The Seen and Heard project aims to move beyond the statistics and look at the human stories of children affected by the conflict in Syria. Virtually everyone in the UK is aware of events in Syria and the resulting humanitarian crises. However, fewer people may be aware of the scale of the conflict's impact upon children.

The Seen and Heard project asks young people in the UK to ensure that the voices and experiences of Syrian children are both seen and heard by decision makers. Young people will achieve this by collecting a postcard petition in their schools. The project then asks young people and their MPs to work together as 'multipliers', with young people devising and applying campaign strategies to ensure that their campaigning has the maximum possible impact.

*"I want people to know how we live. I don't want more people to have to go through what we are going through and to have to live this life."*

Bushra, 16. Syrian refugee in Jordan



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# Syria SEEN & HEARD

## Get active — Campaign!

Spring 2014 Action Guide

### 1. Plan your campaign.

#### Why this action?

Your target is to collect between 500—1,000 postcard messages from your school to show to your MP. Collecting this many cards will require careful planning.

#### Step 1.

Download the Syria Seen and Heard presentation.

At a group meeting two or three of you should show and explain the presentation to the rest of the group.

Ask for help if there are points you don't understand and rewrite the script so it makes sense for you.

#### Step 2.

Work through the activities in the Seen and Heard workshop plan. This should take two group meetings.

Make sure a group member is taking notes.

By the end you should have a clear plan for your campaign and a record of who is doing what and when.

#### Step 3.

Complete any tasks you have set yourselves—e.g. asking permissions.

Set yourself an ambitious but realistic target for the number of postcards you will collect. It will most probably be between 500 and 1,000.

Ask your Oxfam contact or email [education@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:education@oxfam.org.uk) to order postcards. They will be posted to you.

#### Step 4.

##### Let's get started

You should aim to collect postcard messages during February 2014.

Once you're started invite your MP to a meeting as close to the third anniversary on 14 March as possible.

### Quick guide to planning your SYRIA campaign!

#### Form a group:

If you don't have an Oxfam group already, try to see who else in your school that might be interested. Talk with your friends and teachers to get the ball rolling

#### Learn about the issue:

There's an assembly and a workshop plan so you and others in your school can get up to speed on Syria.

#### Plan your activity:

Whatever you decide to do make sure you divide responsibilities and manage your time. Focus on what you want your campaign to achieve.

#### Spread the word in the media:

Whether your school newsletter or the local paper, let the media know what you've achieved.

#### Evaluate:

Start planning your next action by discussing how this one went. Let Oxfam know how many people participated and send us pictures if you have them. We'll try to put them up on our website.

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### 2. Make your school aware.

#### Why this action?

Campaigning is at its most powerful when those taking part in an action are well informed and passionate about the issue. Campaigners have a moral responsibility to make sure the people they ask for support know about the issue they're supporting. For these reasons make your school community aware of how the Syrian conflict is affecting refugees, particularly children.

You should cover most of these points in the planning workshops—activity 1

#### Step 1.

Think carefully about the best ways to make as many people as possible in your school community aware of Syria Seen and Heard.

This will depend on how your school is organised. For example a regular morning assembly would be a great opportunity.

#### Step 2.

Think of how to get your message across to your audience(s). A PowerPoint should work in an assembly but will it work the same way in a lesson?

Prepare any materials you need for newsletters, social media etc.

#### Step 3.

Think critically about fitting your activities around the number of people and time you have available.

For example, two or three of you could quite quickly present an assembly. However, it would take a lot longer for the same number of you to speak individually to every form group in the school.

Make sure your plan is realistic.

#### Step 4.

There are Seen and Heard posters to download at: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/syria-seen-and-heard>

Work out how you could use these to help you raise awareness.

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## Get active — Campaign!

Autumn 2013 Action Guide

### 3. Collecting Seen and Heard postcard messages.

#### Why this action?

In any campaign it is important to demonstrate the size of the campaign's support. The Syria crisis requires a massive humanitarian response for the foreseeable future. However, with all the other issues facing decision makers and the public, there is a risk that Syria may fall down MPs' priorities. The purpose of this action is to demonstrate to MPs and the government that young people support long term help for Syrian refugees and peace in Syria.

**You should cover most of these points in the planning workshops—activity 2**

#### Step 1.

Your target is to collect between 500 and 1,000 postcard messages.

Think carefully about the best ways to collect as many postcards as possible. What are the best times and places to do this in your school?

#### Step 2.

Make sure you have a rota and all the materials you need to start collecting. Ask for the necessary permissions. Then get going.

If you're disappointed by initial numbers think about what you could do to inform more young people of what you're doing and why.

#### Step 3.

When you're collecting messages speak to the young people writing them about the issues. Encourage them to write interesting and creative messages. Have conversations.

This is a voluntary action. If young people don't want to write a message it isn't compulsory!

Afterwards remove any messages that are inappropriate. There shouldn't be many.

#### Step 4.

You should have agreed a date to meet your MP by now.

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### 3. Meet your MP

#### Why this action?

Meeting and influencing your MP is the key outcome of Syria Seen and Heard. The postcards you have collected demonstrate a high level of support from your school community to show your MP.

MPs are also 'multipliers'. They influence government by asking questions or making statements in Parliament. They have a high media profile and can raise issues in the press, TV and radio. Finally, they communicate with large numbers of the public through their websites and twitter.

Often campaigns are driven by the energy of a single MP. Think of Stella Creasy MP and her role in the campaign to regulate payday lenders.

#### You should cover most of these points in the planning workshops—Meeting Your MP

##### Step 1.

Set up a meeting with your MP close to 15 March 2014, the third anniversary of the Syria conflict beginning.

MPs are usually available to meet locally on Fridays, when Parliament doesn't sit.

##### Step 2.

You are likely to have around 20 minutes with your MP.

Plan carefully what to say to your MP about your campaign and what you'd like her or him to do demonstrate support in advance.

##### Step 3.

Be prepared to answer your MP's questions. S/he won't be an expert but may show interest by asking you questions.

So go over the main issues in advance.

##### Step 4.

If your MP is unavailable to meet send your postcards to your MP with a covering letter.

Finally please tell your Oxfam contact what you have achieved and the actions your MP will take.

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