

REFUGEES: TEACHERS' OVERVIEW

A poor welcome from the world's wealthy

Did you know that the world's six wealthiest nations host less than 9% of the world's refugees, while poorer countries shoulder most of the responsibility?

The world's richest countries can and should do much more to help vulnerable people who have fled their homes because of violence and conflict.



Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam

What should we know about this issue?

The number of people forced to flee their homes as a result of war, violence or persecution is at its highest level since records began. The conflict in Syria has been a major factor in this increase, but people have also fled other conflicts, including in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. In total, more than 65 million people have fled their homes – 40.8 million within their own country, 21.3 million as international refugees and 3.2 million awaiting asylum decisions in industrialised countries.

The responsibility for providing refugees with shelter, food and health care, as well as jobs and education, is falling disproportionately on poorer countries, which are often struggling to meet the needs of their own people or are at risk of compromising their own stability.

The world's six richest countries, which make up more than half the global economy, host just 8.88% of the world's refugees and asylum seekers. Among these countries, Germany alone hosts over 736,000 people, while the USA, the UK, France, China and Japan are hosting the remaining 1.4 million between them.

In sharp contrast, half the world's refugees and asylum seekers – almost 12 million people – are hosted by Jordan, Turkey, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Lebanon and South Africa, whose economies collectively account for less than 2% of the world's total.

Those who are forced to flee their homes often face treacherous journeys before they reach a safe haven. Families are ripped apart and many end up living in squalid conditions with not enough food, and without clean water or proper sanitation. Some people spend decades as refugees, with no prospect of formal work or a decent education.¹

¹ All statistics are from Oxfam International's briefing paper [A Poor Welcome from the World's Wealthy](#) (2016).

Richest countries least welcoming

Oxfam calculations, using the latest available UN figures (mid-2016) and the World Bank's ranking of countries based on their economic wealth (GDP),² highlight the stark contrast between the number of refugees and asylum seekers hosted by the world's six richest countries, and the number hosted by the six countries that host the most refugees.

Table 1: Top six wealthiest countries and the number of refugees and asylum seekers they host

Country	No. of refugees and asylum seekers hosted
USA	559,370
China	301,729
Japan	16,305
Germany	736,740
United Kingdom	168,937
France	336,183
2,119,264 refugees and asylum seekers, or 8.88% of the world's total 56.6% of cumulative global GDP	

Table 2: Top six countries/territories hosting refugees and asylum seekers and the number hosted*

Country/Territory	No. of refugees and asylum seekers hosted
Jordan	2,806,414
Turkey	2,753,760
Occupied Palestinian Territory	2,051,096
Pakistan	1,567,604
Lebanon	1,535,662
South Africa	1, 217,708
11,932,244 refugees and asylum seekers, or 50.02% of the world's total 1.9% of cumulative global GDP	

*Includes figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees.

This does not mean that those countries hosting the most refugees and asylum seekers are doing everything possible to uphold their rights, but overall they are taking a far higher share of the world's responsibility than those countries with the biggest economies. One way rich countries can welcome the most vulnerable refugees is through **resettlement**, a process in which refugees are provided with a new start and life in a third country; a different one from the country they have fled and in which they currently live.

² The gross national product excluding the value of net income earned abroad (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

While some richer countries have provided some refugees with a new start, the number of people they have welcomed in this way is extremely small compared to the numbers of refugees hosted by other countries.

In 2015, the six richest countries resettled just 57,167 people, less than 6% of the 960,000 men, women and children around the world in desperate need of resettlement that year.

There are other ways rich countries can welcome more refugees and ensure they do not have to embark on life-threatening journeys to seek safety. Governments can make it easier for refugee families to reunite in their country or offer humanitarian visas allowing refugees to travel safely to apply for asylum. None of these measures should ever be used as a way to undermine the right of people who have travelled outside of these routes to claim asylum in a country. The right to claim asylum – that is, to seek protection from persecution – is a core tenet of international humanitarian law, and must be upheld.

To learn as much as possible about the issue of refugees and the role of non-government organisations from your country, we recommend looking at the following publications:

- Oxfam International briefing paper: [A Poor Welcome from the World's Wealthy](#)
- Oxfam International briefing paper on the rights of migrants arriving in Italy: [Hotspots, Rights Denied](#)
- Oxfam International and ActionAid's report: [Europe, Don't Let Us Down: Voices of Refugees and Migrants in Greece](#)

Further teaching ideas

- Cardiff and Swansea have City of Sanctuary status and there are many groups across Wales working to become towns and cities of sanctuary. What does it mean to be a City of Sanctuary? Ask your young people to find out more about what people in Cardiff and Swansea did to enable their cities to become cities of sanctuary. What are other groups doing? What is the impact of this work? [Find out more about the City of Sanctuary movement.](#)
- Use Oxfam's [School of Sanctuary](#) resource ([available in Welsh](#)) to explore how to make your school a welcoming place.
- Ask your young people to reflect on what it would mean for Wales to be a Nation of Sanctuary. The Welsh Government's Equality, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) committee did an inquiry into the conditions for refugees and asylum seekers in Wales, which was published in April 2017 and came up with recommendations for what needs to be done to improve conditions. The ELGC recommended that Wales become a Nation of Sanctuary. What does it mean to be a Nation of Sanctuary? What steps are being taken to do this? Who should be responsible for this?
- Young people could study the recommendations of the ELGC report and find out what is being done to meet these recommendations. Young people could get in touch with their Assembly Members (AMs) to discuss this and find out what their AM is doing.
- The Oxfam shop in Swansea became the first [Shop of Sanctuary](#) in the UK. Young people could think about what businesses could do to support refugees and asylum seekers.

There are a number of organisations and groups in Wales working to support refugees and asylum seekers. Here are a few:

- [Hiraeth Hope, West Wales](#)
- [Oasis Cardiff: centre for refugees and asylum seekers in Cardiff](#)
- [Ethnic Youth Support Team \(EYST\), Swansea](#)
- [Hay, Brecon and Talgarth Sanctuary for refugees](#)
- [Together Creating Communities, North Wales](#)
- [Swansea City of Sanctuary](#)
- [Cardiff City of Sanctuary](#)
- [Cardiff and Vale Sanctuary Support Facebook Group](#)
- [Pobl i bobl, North Gwynedd and Anglesey](#)
- [Refugee Relief Ynys Mon, Anglesey](#)

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