



LIFE IN A REFUGEE CAMP

Time	45 – 60 minutes
Level	intermediate
Skills	reading, speaking, writing
Knowledge goal	raising awareness of life in a refugee camp
Materials	Ss' worksheet: p. S1 - p. S3 - texts A - F (one for each group) p. S4 - a photo of a refugee camp, "Language of Comparing and Contrasting" (one for each student)

1 Lead-in

- Ask Ss: *Have you ever been to a summer camp?* Tell Ss to form pairs and discuss their experience, and to think about typical characteristics of a camp (e.g. living in tents, a lot of people in one place). If there are people who haven't, pair them with those who have. When finished, discuss it in the class.
- Present the picture of a refugee camp (p. S4) or print it out from www.globalissues.eu. Ask Ss what type of camp it is and who lives in such a camp. If Ss don't come up with the word, tell them that it is a refugee camp. Ask them:

What is a refugee?

What are the differences between a summer camp and a refugee camp?

A refugee is a person who has left their country because they didn't feel safe. This may be because they belong to different racial or ethnic groups or have different political views to the current establishment.

2 Reading activity

- Tell Ss that they are going to learn some facts about living in a refugee camp. Ask them to form groups. Ideally there should be the same number of students in a group as the number of groups (e.g. three groups and three Ss in each). In small classes you can ask people to work individually or in pairs, and then do the final speaking activity and the poster as a single group. If you want Ss to work in groups and you do not have many, each group can get two reading texts or you can choose only the texts from A – F you want them to do.
- Each group gets a text (A – F) about a certain aspect of life in a refugee camp (p. S1-3). Ask them to read the information and prepare a summary of the main points. Tell them that after they have finished, they will go and talk about the facts they have learnt to people from other groups. The summary should be prepared from the refugees' point of view, i.e. Ss should use the form "we" when possible to make it more personal.
- When Ss are finished, ask them to form different groups. Each group should contain people who know different facts. Ask Ss to present their summaries.

- If you want to finish the activity here, give Ss a few minutes to discuss what they have learnt and to compare lives of refugees to their lives. Otherwise continue as suggested in the follow-up.

3 Follow-up

- Ss remain seated in their groups. Tell them that they are going to create a poster where they will compare and contrast lives of refugees with their own lives. Give them time to discuss the differences.
- Give Ss the handout *Language of Comparing and Contrasting* (p. S4). Go through it.
- Ask Ss to create a poster where they will compare their lives to that in a refugee camp. They can compare one aspect or more. Ask them to use the language they have, draw pictures and be as creative as they want to be.
- When finished, put the posters on the wall and ask the class to walk around and read their classmates' posters. When finished, invite Ss to ask questions about the posters of the other groups.

4 Homework

- A. Ss watch a video about Carly, a refugee girl. You can find it on www.youtube.com: Carly, a refugee's story (UNHCR, 1999). Discuss it the next lesson.
- B. *How do refugees live in your country?* Find information on the Internet about the living conditions of these people. Present your findings during the next lesson.

Sources of info/photos/videos:

<http://www.unhcr.org>

<http://doctorswithoutborders.org/news/refugees>

<http://www.refugeecamp.org>



A. GENERAL INFORMATION

Every refugee camp is different because every situation is different.

Population

The number of people living in a camp depends on the crisis itself. When the number of refugees is in the hundreds of thousands, a few smaller camps with a population of no more than 20,000 are established rather than one big camp. In smaller camps it is easier to manage problems such as fire, security or the spreading of diseases.

Location

Camps are usually situated on the edges of towns or cities, away from borders and war zones.

Length of Stay

Camps should be only temporary solutions, giving refugees a place to live until they can safely return to their country. They are not meant to become permanent homes or settlements. However, refugees often have to live in the camps for much longer than expected.

In Albania, refugees from Kosovo lived in camps for only three months, while refugees from Somalia have been living in camps in Kenya since 1991.

Camp advantages

- Provide protection
- Easier to find out how many people live there, and what they need
- Some basic services are easier to organize (e.g. food distribution, vaccinations)

Camp disadvantages

- Too many people increase the risk of spreading diseases
- People are dependent on aid coming to them from the world
- Isolation and not much to do
- Degradation of the surrounding environment
- Security problems within the camp



B. ACCOMMODATION and SHELTER

Materials

Shelters for refugees are usually made of local materials such as wood, metal sheets, tree branches or plastics. When possible, refugees build their own "houses". Shelters usually have stoves for heating and cooking. In warm climates cooking facilities are often outside.

Space

The minimum shelter space recommended is 3.5 square metres per person in warm climates where cooking is done outside, and 4.5 to 5.5 square metres in cold climates where indoor kitchen and bathing facilities are needed. The minimum distance between shelters should be two metres.

Tents

In emergency situations or if local materials are not available, tents are often used. Refugees should be able to stand in all areas of the tent without hitting their heads on the ceiling. Tents last two to three years.

The Organisation of Shelters

The best method is to organize the camp into smaller units where each unit has its own community facilities such as toilets (latrines), water-points and washing areas.

C. DRINK

Quantity

It depends on the climate and on the habits of the population. In order to survive, people need to drink 4 to 5 litres a day. But water is also needed for cooking, washing the dishes or clothes, and personal hygiene, so ten litres per person per day is seen as the minimum.

Water Point

There should be at least one place to get water for every 200 to 250 refugees. Shelters should be no more than 100 metres from a water point.

Water Sources

Sometimes there are nearby water sources such as rivers, lakes, wells or springs. If the water source is clean (e.g. from wells or springs), it can be used without treatment. Water that comes from rivers and lakes can be contaminated and must be treated before people can use it. When water is not available nearby, it has to be transported to the camp.

Water Quality

Water can be contaminated with microorganisms that cause disease. This is why the quality of the water is as important as the quantity. In a refugee camp, where so many people live close to one another, epidemics can start easily and spread very quickly. Cholera, a disease caused by drinking contaminated water, can kill people within hours if they do not get medical help.

How water is treated

1. Sedimentation: The water is stored for a few hours so that the biggest particles can settle to the bottom.
2. Filtration: It is then necessary to get rid of the small, invisible particles by filtering the water through sand filters.
3. Chlorination: The last step is chlorination. This is done by adding a chlorine solution to the water which kills all the microorganisms.



D. FOOD

When people have to leave their homes quickly, they usually do not have time to take food with them. This is why refugees must be able to get things to eat when they arrive in a camp.

Food needs

Depending on the region and their eating habits, families are usually given basic ingredients such as corn, grains, beans, oil, sugar, and salt. For cooking, they may find wood around the camp to build fires, and they use cooking utensils that they have brought with them or received from aid agencies. The minimum recommended daily ration is 2,100 calories per person.

Example of a recommended ration

Commodity	Recommended Ration (grams per person per day)
Cereal (e.g. rice or wheat)	400
Pulse (e.g. beans or lentils)	60
Oil/Fat (vegetable/butter oil)	25
Sugar	15
Salt	5

Storing food

Food is usually stored in one large tent. This tent should be situated near administrative offices for reasons of security, and also near the entrance of the camp so that supply lorries do not have to drive through the camp.

Food Distribution Point

Food distribution can be done at one place or divided into several ones. Refugees are given food which lasts for a week or even a month so that they do not have to wait for it every day. The camp is divided so food is distributed to different people on different days to avoid long queues and chaos.

E. HEALTH

Hospital

Some refugee camps have good and well-equipped hospitals where doctors are able to deliver babies or even operate. If refugees can go to a hospital in the host country, the camp will not build its own. A hospital usually serves a population of 200,000 (or one hospital per ten refugee camps).

Health Post

In a camp there are usually smaller health posts established, each for 3,000 to 5,000 refugees. Nurses provide treatment for things such as sore throats, fevers and cuts. Serious cases are sent to the main health centre.

Toilets (Latrines)

Ideally there should be one latrine per family. If public latrines are used, there should be at least one for every twenty people. When there is no organized way to go to the bathroom at the beginning, people usually go to the "toilet" anywhere around the refugee camp. But the human waste can cause the spread of many infectious diseases, so it is necessary to organize a waste disposal system immediately. Latrines should be at least 6 metres away from homes, but not further than 60 m. For privacy, mud, bricks and other materials are used to build a roof and walls around the latrine.

Diseases

There are two categories of disease that usually appear in a refugee camp. The most common non-epidemic diseases are malnutrition (when people do not have enough food), breathing problems and malaria. But there are also deadly diseases that can turn into epidemics such as cholera. Cholera is a disease that people can get by drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food. Without quick treatment, about 50 percent of people who get cholera will die of dehydration.



F. EDUCATION

Education should be provided in a camp because it's very important for children to have a sense of normalcy. The international community should support refugee education in those countries where the host government is unable to do so by helping local schools and/or by establishing a system of refugee schools. There should be one school per sector of the camp (about 5,000 people).

Advantages of Education

- Education protects children who are refugees.
- Education helps to meet the needs of children and is a way of promoting their future development.
- Schools and pre-schools have an important role because young children can play here.
- The early weeks and months in a refugee camp are characterised by a sense of shock, which can be followed by a sense of depression and resignation. Going to school helps to restore a sense of purpose in children's lives. Refugees themselves almost always identify education as one of the main priorities.
- Education gives children the opportunity to discuss their experiences of violence, danger or having no home. By doing this they develop an understanding of these events.

Refugee Curriculum

A recent review of UNHCR's Refugee Education Activities noted that the curriculum in refugee schools should also include topics specific to the refugees' situation such as:

peace education, conflict resolution, human rights, the environment, health issues (including sex education and drug abuse), an introduction to the host country culture.

Pic. 1



LANGUAGE OF COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

Comparing

- A and B lead similar lives.
- A is similar to B as regards/regarding food which is needed every day.
- A is (exactly, practically, more or less) the same as B.
- Both A and B need water to survive.
- A is as difficult as B.

Contrasting

- A is (much, rather, somewhat) smaller/bigger/more difficult than B.
- A is not as healthy as B.
- A is not (exactly, entirely) the same as B.
- A is (completely, quite) different from B in terms of the water supply they need.
- A and B are (completely, totally) different.
- A differs from B in the way of life.
- A needs ..., whereas/while B needs
- In contrast to A, B usually eats more meat every day.

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