

STAND AS ONE: FAMILIES TOGETHER

HOW DOES THE LAW AFFECT *YOU?*

Age range: 11 +

Time: 40 - 50 minutes

Outline

Oxfam's Stand As One campaign aims to improve UK refugees' lives. The campaign focuses on changing the rules which restrict refugees' universal rights to family life in the UK for the better.

In this workshop, young people examine real life case studies¹ and learn about some of the current rules about refugee family reunification in the UK. They also explore their own and their peers' opinions about the rules' fairness and learn how the Stand As One campaign seeks to improve these rules.

The workshop's audience is young people who are organising the campaign in their school and young people who are writing 'Home Is ...' messages as part of the campaign.

Learning objectives

- Young people better understand the UK immigration rules preventing the families of refugees from being united, and consider how fair they are.
- Young people empathise with, and have a greater understanding of some of the challenges refugees face.
- Young people understand how UK immigration rules could be changed to allow more families to be united in the UK.

Outcomes

- Young people feel knowledgeable and enthusiastic enough to support Oxfam's Stand As One campaign.
- Young people write a message to their MP to urge her or him to take positive action to support Refugee Family Reunification.

Key questions

- How do some of the UK's immigration rules keep refugee families apart?
- How could current UK immigration rules be changed to help reunite more refugee families?
- How do current UK immigration rules affect refugees' lives?

Resources

- Printed case studies – one case study per pair of students
- Whiteboard for writing up students' ideas.
- Scissors.

¹ All case studies and factual information in this document have been taken from the Joint Agency Briefing Note [Together Again: Reuniting refugee families in safety – what the UK can do](#)

Pre-session learning

Aim to discuss the Stand as One PowerPoint presentation before beginning this activity. Young people should have a basic understanding of current UK refugee rules. They state that a refugee settled in the UK may sponsor the following family members to join them in the UK;

- Their husband, wife or same-sex partner
- Children under 18 years of age

In addition

Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads

‘The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.’

The summary of Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reads

‘If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.’

Activity Instructions

Activity 1 (5 minutes)

Introduction

Introduce the issue to the group: Did you know that unaccompanied child refugees who arrive in the UK can't apply to have their parents come and live with them? So, try to imagine; You are 15 years old. You have to leave your country – it is not safe, there is a war and you fear for your life. You travel alone taking huge risks to find safety, maybe boarding an overcrowded boat. You finally arrive at a country of safety. One of the first things you want to do is to bring your parents to join you so that they can be safe with you too and help you to settle in your new country. But you are not allowed to. Your new country says it will look after you (in the care system) but you cannot arrange to have your parents come and join you. Now stop imagining. This is actually the reality for any child under 18 who arrives in the UK alone as a refugee.

And it's not just children separated from their parents; too many families are being torn apart in their desperate search for safety, and UK rules also make it harder for them to be reunited.

Activity 2 (20 - 30 minutes)

Role-Play Activity – in the shoes of a refugee

Give young people the case studies – one case study per pair of students. Divide the five case studies up so they are shared out around the class

Allow young people some time to read their case study and ask if there is anything they don't understand. Explain to the class that the case studies are about real people. For example, Nabil (case study 2) finally made his way safely to Scotland – he was lucky enough to receive legal advice and was able to come to the UK.

(*New vocabulary:* When a refugee 'sponsors' a family member it means that they are making an application to the UK government to bring the family member to the UK to join them).

Ask young people to cut their case study along the dotted line and hand the questions to their partner – young people can now 'interview' each other in character. Give young people 'permission' to imagine details not provided in the case study when playing the part of a character.

As they role play their case studies ask the young people to note down the following

- Why this family is divided
- What the current UK rules say about this case
- The changes the Stand As One campaign would make if it was successful

Depending on the time available, the young people could role play as many of the case studies as possible.

Activity 3 (10 – 15 minutes)

Plenary

Draw the discussion to a close.

Divide the whiteboard in two with the following headings

What UK refugee law says

The changes proposed by Stand As One

Collect feedback from the different case studies and write it on the board.

Ask whether the young people agree with the changes proposed by the Stand As One campaign. Are these the changes they would hope to see if they were ever in the positions of the people in the case studies.

Young people could now use the ideas and evidence they have discussed to write **Home Is ...** messages to their MP or peer teach the activity to other students.

Case studies

Case Study 1: You are an adult man called Muhammed who lived in Syria, but when the war began you could no longer stay as you feared for your family's safety. You managed to come to the UK with your wife Amal and your two youngest children and you were granted 'refugee status' (that means you can legally remain in the UK). However, you have a son and a daughter aged over 18 who you had to leave behind in Syria. You say: *'My little kids ask me every day: "Dad, what happened to Kusai and Athar? When will they join us? When will we see them, and talk to them?"'*

UK Rule: Adult refugees can apply to have their *close family members* join them in the UK – this includes wives, husbands and children aged under 18. However, requests for their grown-up children, or other family members (sisters, brothers, in laws, aunts etc) to join them will usually be refused.

What change does the Stand As One campaign want? When UK immigration rules refer to *close family members*, they should include children over 18. They should also include young adults who were dependant on the family unit prior to fleeing; parents, siblings and in-laws and any dependent relatives.

Role play Muhammad. Ask the person sitting next to you to interview you:

✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂

Case Study 1 questions:

How is your life Muhammed?

What worries you the most? What would you like to happen?

Why can't the UK government help you?

What is the Stand As One campaign trying to change? Do you agree with this and why?

Case Study 2: You are a 17-year-old boy called Nabil. You are from Syria, but when bombs started falling you escaped alone to Lebanon (a country next to Syria). Many of your family members were killed but some survived, including your brother who is safe in Scotland. But because of UK rules you cannot legally travel to join him. Instead you decided to travel alone by land and sea to France. You nearly drowned when your boat capsized in the Aegean Sea. You ended up in the 'Jungle' in Calais, and take huge risks trying to board lorries into the UK.

UK Rule: Only parents can sponsor a lone child to join them in the UK.

What change does the Stand As One campaign want? A wider range of relatives should be able to 'sponsor' a lone child to join them in the UK; for example, adult siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc.

Role play Nabil. Ask the person sitting next to you to interview you:

✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂

Case Study 2 questions:

How have the last few months been for you Nabil?

What worries you the most? What would you like to happen?

Why can't the UK government help you?

What is the Stand As One campaign trying to change? Do you agree with this and why?

Case Study 3: You are a 16-year-old boy called Tesfa from Eritrea. In Eritrea boys are often forced to join the army against their will. Your own brother was taken by soldiers and you never heard from him again. Soldiers even came into your school, so you stopped going. Finally, you decided to flee. You didn't have a plan, you just had to keep moving. You passed through Sudan and Libya and eventually ended up in the UK by chance. A year and a half after leaving home you managed to speak to your mother. It was the best moment ever. You desperately want to see your mother and younger siblings again but you can't due to UK rules: *'If I was to be able to be reunited with my family in Britain it would be like a dream. The government is doing its best to help refugees and we thank them for that. But if we're to make our home here then we need our families; people we feel safe and secure with.'*

UK Rule: Even though adult refugees in the UK are allowed to sponsor their closest relatives to join them, lone child refugees are not.

What changes does the Stand As One campaign want? Allow lone child refugees to sponsor their closest relatives to join them, so they can be with their families and not in the care system.

Role play Tesfa. Ask the person sitting next to you to interview you:

✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂

Case Study 3 questions:

- Why did you run away from Eritrea?*
- What worries you the most? What would you like to happen?*
- Why can't the UK government help you?*
- What is the Stand As One campaign trying to change? Do you agree with it and why?*

Case Study 4: You are a Zimbabwean refugee living in the UK. *'I could never have made the application on my own [to sponsor my family to join me]. I'm not earning enough money to hire a lawyer. I wouldn't know where to start. I don't agree when they say it's straightforward. There's a legal piece to everything. Like applying for family reunion. It's a legal thing to get approval from government. They want to see a case being put across. I've heard of people struggling until now in bringing their family over. It's difficult.'*

UK Rule: Legal aid is not provided for refugees applying for their family members to join them.

What change does the Stand As One campaign want? Reintroduce legal aid for refugee family reunion.

Role play the refugee in your case study. Ask the person sitting next to you to interview you:

✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂-----✂

Case Study 4 questions:

- What worries you the most? What would you like to happen?*
- Why can't the UK government help you?*
- What is the Stand As One campaign trying to change? Do you agree with it and why?*

Case Study 5: Your name is Sharif, you are a man and originally from Iraq. You came to the UK 14 years ago and were given refugee status. You then successfully became a British Citizen. You have applied to bring your family to the UK 4 times but each time you were refused. Eventually your family became so scared of the threat of ISIS to their home town in Iraq that they fled to Europe. Because your family are not allowed to come to the UK, you have joined them in a refugee camp in France. The conditions are awful but you must protect your family and be with them.

UK Rule: Refugees *can* sponsor family members forcibly displaced or at risk to join them for free and without proving their income (under the Refugee Family Reunion Policy). However, British citizens *cannot*. They must pay to sponsor their family members, and must prove they have a minimum income.

What change does the Stand As One campaign want? If a British Citizen's family have been forced out of their home country, then the British Citizen should be allowed to sponsor family members in the same way as someone with refugee status (under the Refugee Family Reunion Policy).

Role play Sharif. Ask the person sitting next to you to interview you:

X-----X-----X-----X-----X-----X-----X-----X-----X

Case Study 5 questions:

You are a British Citizens but you are living in a refugee camp – how did that happen?

What worries you the most? What would you like to happen?

Why can't the UK government help you?

What is the Stand As One campaign trying to change? Do you agree with it and why?

Terms of use

Copyright © Oxfam GB

You may use photographs and associated information in this resource for educational purposes at your educational institution. With each use, you must credit the photographer named for that image and Oxfam. You may not use images and associated information for commercial purposes or outside your educational institution. All information associated with these images relates to the date and time the project work took place.