



World Organization of the Scout Movement  
Organisation Mondiale du Mouvement Scout



## Refugees go home!

Seeing life through the eyes of a refugee

**THEME:** An awareness game confronting the plight of refugees. Through a simulation game, participants can experience the feeling of helplessness, loneliness and alienation that asylum-seekers and refugees experience in their lives.

**DURATION:** 2 hours (up to 2 1/2 hours), roughly divided into 45-75 minutes for the game and 45 minutes for assessment and debriefing.

**NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:** 15 to 60 for "Passages" and 15 to 30 for "Junior Passages".

**STAFF REQUIRED:** 3 to 5 leaders.

### BACKGROUND

The refugee tragedy has a long history. As long as there have been wars, persecution, discrimination and intolerance, there have been refugees. They are of every race and religion and can be found in every part of the world. Forced to flee out of fear for their lives and liberty, they have often left everything behind – home, belongings, family and country. In refugee camps, living conditions are very difficult most of the time. In their country of asylum, refugees are often victims of xenophobia. If, after years in exile, they are finally able to return home, they go back to a country that must be completely rebuilt.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a non-political, humanitarian agency devoted to protecting and assisting the world's refugees. Currently, the UNHCR is helping over 26 million people. Its tasks include legal protection, furnishing material aid (food, water and shelter) in emergency situations, managing the refugee camps, assisting those who wish to return to their home country and informing the general public on the plight of refugees.





In 1995, at the 18<sup>th</sup> World Scout Jamboree in the Netherlands, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). In its operational section, it covers three main contributions that Scouts can make in this field: 1) sensitisation, 2) supporting refugees outside camps and 3) supporting refugees in refugee camps, refugee centres and in emergencies.

### CROSS-REFERENCE

This kit proposes several workshops that deal with this subject from a variety of angles. Workshop No. 4 broaches the problem of minorities, while No. 5 focuses on North-South economic relations and the trade imbalance.

The content of this workshop concurs with the objectives of at least three of the eight "peace treasures": democracy, tolerance and solidarity, and respect for human rights.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Anyone in the world (for no particular fault or responsibility of his own) can become a refugee at some point in their life.
- The common denominator of the refugee experience before, while and after becoming a refugee is anxiety. (See Implementation, below.)
- Refugees are not a threat to the society that receives them; they are themselves threatened. In most cases, they are not only law-abiding citizens of their new state but also competent and resourceful members of society.





#### PURPOSE/AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The awareness game is presented in two versions: "Passages" is intended for teenagers and adults, while "Junior Passages" is intended for children 9 to 12 years old. The booklet (see Sources, below) presents the variations suitable for both versions.

The aim is the same: to create a better understanding of the real experiences confronted by refugees. The simulation game works through the creation of a simplified but dynamic scale-model of reality. In doing so, the game is a useful educational tool particularly suited to helping create awareness, arouse emotions and broaden people's knowledge of the refugee question.



#### METHOD AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTIVITY

##### Preparation

The game can be played indoors or outdoors. Ideally, the successive stages of the game take place in different areas. For instance, the scattering could take place in a courtyard, the border crossing at an entrance door and the refugee camp in a room or entry hall.

The booklet (see Sources, below) deals with the preparation in a very detailed way, including a list of required material, cards to be prepared and so on.

For the psychological preparation of game leaders, see "Remarks to leaders".





### Implementation

The game is presented in 8 stages plus the debriefing.

1. In the introduction, participants are made aware that they are going to experience situations which will allow them to feel some of the emotions connected with the refugee situation.
2. Participants are divided into families (groups) of 5 to 8 persons and adopt a role (child, father, etc.) that they will play until the end of the game.
3. Simulation of a situation of persons fleeing bombings. Blindfolded, scattered and mixed together in the four corners of the playing area, the participants will try to find each other and to regroup their families.
4. The participants have a few minutes to decide within the family what objects they will take along with them.

5. Participants flee the "bombing zone" and find a shelter: small, overcrowded and uncomfortable. They have to wait there without knowing for how long.
6. The families must cross a border. They are stopped by an unfriendly border official who does not understand their language and gives them forms, written in an unknown language, for them to fill in. Finally, they manage to cross the border.
7. They are taken to a refugee camp and put in a very cramped space. They have to wait for humanitarian aid to arrive and experience lack of water and food.
8. After some time, a representative from each family is interviewed to present the family's case in order to be admitted for resettlement in a third country.

The simulation game as such is finished. During the assessment or debriefing, the participants express what they have felt during the game and the leaders help them establish the connection between the game and the reality of the refugees' experience.





### REMARKS TO LEADERS

Given the nature of the game, intellectual and psychological preparation of the leaders is very important.

The booklet suggests three steps:

- Meeting with refugees and/or persons who work with refugees.
- Psychological preparation: carry out exercises intended to familiarise you with the feelings of refugees: the notion of time (particularly being blindfolded), the deprivation of autonomy: no one listens to you, you are no longer allowed to make decisions for yourself; the feeling of loss: family members, pets, cherished objects, etc.
- Getting information about organisations that assist refugees in your country/area.

### SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP

As we have indicated, awareness of the refugee's plight is the cornerstone of all action. An understanding of the problem leads to finding ways to help.

Depending on the situation in your country, you can:

- Support refugees in refugee camps and centres. For example, help organise activities for children, help teach literacy, vocational skills, help provide for special needs of the elderly, sick and disabled; assist in health education and primary health care, etc.
- Support refugees outside camps. For example, get in touch with community leaders and other organisations which are already involved with refugees at local level; welcome refugee children into your Scout group; invite refugee children to attend one of your group's activities such as a summer camp; help teach refugee children and parents about the language and culture of your country; teach skills which can help refugees find jobs, etc.





### SOURCES

The game "Passages" was conceived and prepared by Chantal Barthélémy-Ruiz, Benoit Carpier and Nadia Clément (Argine Consultants, Paris) and the Public Information Section of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The version used for this publication is the April 1997 version © UNHCR

The printed version of the game is available from the World Scout Bureau, Geneva

**e-mail:** [worldbureau@world.scout.org](mailto:worldbureau@world.scout.org)

Or HCR

**e-mail:** [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)

In addition to this game, the UNHCR has produced a variety of educational material and learning tools on refugees, to be used both in formal and non-formal educational settings.