

UNICEF UK SCHOOLS CAMPAIGN NETWORK

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS: FEBRUARY – MAY 2017

Campaign aim: to reunite unaccompanied refugee children in Europe (especially in Italy and Greece) with their family in the UK

Background information

Unicef UK continues to campaign for unaccompanied refugee children in Europe to be reunited with their family in the UK. Many of these children are escaping bullets and bombs, or recruitment into armed forces and rebel groups in their home countries. They have travelled through great danger to get to Europe, yet the challenges and dangers children face do not disappear once they reach Europe, and their rights continue to be violated.

While progress has been made, not enough has been done to protect these vulnerable children. If safe and legal routes to the UK are not made available to children, they will continue to fall into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.

In recent months we have seen an estimated 800 children transferred from France to the UK, compared to a tiny number at the beginning of 2016 and none in 2015. We've seen in Calais that the UK Government can listen to the voices of the public and Parliament. The government has shown that it can be proactive in identifying and processing children with a right to be in the UK.

It is fantastic that some progress has been made in France, but very little has been achieved in Greece and Italy, with around eight children thought to have been transferred to the UK from Greece and Italy. **Unicef UK is calling on the government to extend the political will they demonstrated in Calais beyond the borders of France, to Italy and Greece.**

Greece

There are an estimated 2,300 unaccompanied children in Greece, who now face winter alone. The number of places available in children's shelters is nowhere near sufficient and nearly half (1,100) of the identified unaccompanied children are on a waiting list for a place. Many children, including unaccompanied children and children with disabilities, are currently living in squalid, crowded conditions on the Greek islands and in camps on the mainland. With incredibly cold temperatures, they are forced to live in unheated tents, and use dirty toilet facilities, exposing them to increased risks of disease.

Working with the Greek authorities and NGOs, the Home Office has begun to identify children for whom it is in their best interests to relocate to the UK. This is a welcome development, but now this process needs to be systematically extended beyond the children's shelters.

The UK can do more to fund and work with local and national organisations and government structures in Greece to ensure that all vulnerable children are assessed. At the same time, it must ensure transfer schemes are understood and operate effectively.

Italy

There have been more arrivals of unaccompanied children in Italy in 2016 than ever previously recorded, and in the first 11 months of 2016, 88% of children who arrived in Italy were unaccompanied. In spite of this, so far no children have been transferred to the UK. This is a worrying situation, particularly given the acute vulnerability of children who are trafficked through this route. Many children have moved on from Italy due to the lack of a reliable process, travelling through Italy to France and risking the creation of new camps similar to that of Calais.

As in Greece, the UK can play a far more proactive role in identifying and processing children with a legal right to be safe in the UK. By collaborating with the Italian authorities to identify children who would be eligible for refuge in the UK, the UK Government can support efforts to address modern slavery and trafficking and end the dangerous journeys taken by too many children.

Call on your pupils to take action in their school and local community

We were able to make real progress for refugee children in Calais thanks to the support of our campaigners demonstrating strong public support for unaccompanied refugee children to be reunited with their family in the UK. Now we must raise the profile of the situation for refugee children in Italy and Greece so that the UK Government extends the political will they demonstrated in Calais beyond the borders of France.

Pupils can help protect and promote the rights of refugee children by raising the profile of the situation in Italy and Greece in your local area. A key way your pupils can help to do this is to **spread the campaign message through the local media** – this is also another route to reach your local MP who has the power to raise this issue with the Home Secretary.

Now is the time to ensure people in your school community are talking about the situation for children in Italy and Greece. **Please ensure your pupils take action by May 2017.**

Supporting children affected by this topic

Thinking about how rights are implemented or violated can evoke strong feelings in both adults and children. Sharing your feelings about the information – for example, that it made you feel sad or surprised – could help to initiate a supportive conversation. When discussing these issues, be sensitive to the possibility that there may be young people in your class who are refugees and may have experienced some of these circumstances. Depending on what you know of their experiences, this could be an opportunity to acknowledge their achievements in learning a second language and becoming part of a new country.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Work through the learning activities to ensure your pupils understand the campaign issue, develop their own views and generate some ideas on how to engage with the local media and their local community.

For schools who are just starting work on this campaign, please see the [OutRight 2016 school packs](#) and the [In Search of Safety](#) school resource for more learning activities. For further information about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, [please visit our website](#)

Task 1

Learning objective: Pupils learn about some of the reasons why children are forced to leave their homes, and that this concept isn't new. Your pupils will make a creative display to share their learning with the rest of the school

Materials needed: Access to YouTube to watch a short video, post-it notes, pens and paper

- [Watch Unicef UK's short video](#) focusing on the experience of two refugees whose stories are very similar but 80 years apart (please watch this video in advance to determine its suitability for your pupils)
- Ask your pupils to write down some key words on post-it notes which describes how they feel after watching the film. Write the words "Refugee Crisis" on a large sheet of paper and invite the pupils to stick their post-it notes around the words
- Now ask the group to form smaller groups and discuss the film - what are the similarities between the two stories? What are the differences between the two stories? What do they know about the refugee crisis? Ask the groups to share some of their answers with the whole class
- Ask your pupils to draw a picture or write a letter that they would like to share with a refugee (like Ahmed in the video) and to add this work to the creative display
- Finish the session by discussing as a class how this display can be shared with the rest of the school to raise awareness of the refugee crisis

Task 2

Learning objective: Pupils learn about the UK Government's efforts in France, and focus on the slow progress being made in Italy and Greece for unaccompanied refugee children

Materials needed: Copies of Omar's story (below), background information, pens and paper

- Hand-out a copy of Omar's story and ask pupils to read through this carefully
- Ask the pupils if they had heard of the refugee camp in Calais, France (they may have read about it in the news or on social media last year). Explain that the refugee camp in Calais is now closed but it did have many unaccompanied children – like Omar – stuck in the camp who were trying desperately to reach their family in the UK. Explain that because there was significant amounts of press attention and lots of campaigners writing to their MPs and signing petitions, the Home Secretary was pushed to reunite children in Calais with their family in the UK much more quickly than they had been doing
- Using the background information provided explain the situation for unaccompanied refugee children in Italy and Greece and the fact that very few children have been reunited with their family or brought to safety in the UK
- Split the class into smaller groups and challenge them to come up with ideas on how they could raise awareness of the situation in Italy and Greece. They should consider

- how they reach their school community, online community (e.g. with social media) and decision-makers (e.g. MP and Home Secretary) with the campaign message
- Finish by asking pupils to share their ideas with the whole class and encourage them to put some of their ideas into action

OMAR'S STORY

In September Omar – a Syrian boy who fled war – finally found safety when he was reunited with his family in north-west London. Despite having a legal right to be with his uncle and cousin, like hundreds of children Omar was left by the authorities for six months in Calais France, struggling to survive in the squalid camp.

Reflecting on his time there, Omar said “*everything is bad; there is a lot of violence*”. After sleeping alone in a makeshift hut, on a wooden bed piled with blankets, Omar said “*the first thing I want to do is take a shower and sleep in the home. After that, I want to finish study, to go back to school and to learn English.*”

Omar became the 50th child to be legally reunited with his family. Since then, more than 700 refugee children have been brought to the UK from Europe to reunite with family, thanks to campaigners calling on our government to act on its legal and moral obligations.

Omar's cousin Abdullah was the first family member to see him in over a year. “*We were always so worried about him. It's such a relief to have him here, so much better. We are relaxed, now, to have him here,*” said Abdullah. “*His parents are so happy he's here now, with his family.*” His parents and siblings are still in Syria. Unable to pay to bring the whole family to Europe, they were forced to send only their eldest son.

Omar's story first appeared in The Guardian.

Task 3 (please adapt for primary audience)

Learning objective: To encourage your pupils to think about the power of the media and how their local media can help shape local public opinion

Materials needed: Access to the internet to [download some news articles on refugees](#) – please choose a mixture of different types of articles with different angles – to find the articles search “refugees” on google and select the “news” tab (please pre-read the articles before sharing with your pupils to judge if they're age appropriate or use [articles on First News](#)), pens and paper

- Explain to your pupils that you're going to be exploring how refugees are depicted in the media
- Ask the class to split into smaller groups of pupils and hand out copies of news articles. Ask the class to identify the tone of the article, some of the key words that come up regularly and the way in which refugees are spoken about (is it positive or negative or a bit of both?)
- Bring the groups back together to share what they've found with the whole class
- Now invite the class to create their own piece of journalism (either written article, or acting out a TV/radio interview) to highlight the importance of reuniting unaccompanied refugee children in Italy and Greece with their family in the UK

- Finish this final session by explaining that pupils will be taking action for Unicef UK's campaign by engaging with the local media – talk them through the guidance included below and encourage them to think of creative ideas that will help ensure their campaigning efforts are featured in their local media

LOCAL MEDIA GUIDANCE

Local media outlets can help spread the word in your local community and galvanise support for your campaign. For example, your local MP might read about your schools campaigning efforts and contact the Home Office regarding the situation in Italy and Greece as they see it as a concern felt in their constituency.

To speak out in your community about your school's campaigning and raise awareness of the campaign issue contact your local newspaper. Perhaps you have some budding radio presenters at your school? Why not phone your local radio station to see if your pupils could go and talk about the situation for unaccompanied refugee children in Italy and Greece.

Here are some tips:

- **Be prepared.** Sometimes people who work in the media can be very busy, so it's a good idea to write down what you want to say and keep this in front of you when you call
- **Don't leave it too late.** The sooner you can get in touch the better, as they are more likely to have a space for you
- **Be enthusiastic.** The person you are calling should want to find out lots more about what you are doing and why you're raising your voice for unaccompanied refugee children
- **Take photos.** You can send pictures of your campaigning activity to your local newspaper along with the template press release we've included for you – just make sure you have everyone's consent before sharing the photos with the local media

What makes a good story?

- **Something unique:** Is your school doing something no-one else has done?
- **Something interesting:** Is your school doing something quirky or impressive that will inspire readers?
- **A connection to the cause:** Does your school or any pupils have a personal connection to the cause? The local community would love to hear about a story in the news from a close and credible source

PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Press Release

[Date]

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME] JOINS UNICEF UK'S CAMPAIGN FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

On [INSERT DATE OF ACTIVITY] pupils at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will be [INSERT ACTIVITY] as part of Unicef UK's campaign to reunite unaccompanied refugee children in Europe with their families – especially children in Italy and Greece.

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME] is one of many schools across the country to be speaking out on refugee children's rights and [INSERT DETAILS OF ACTIVITY]

Last year saw an unprecedented number of children being forced to leave their homes in search of the safety in Europe and, despite having family members living in the UK, many were left stuck in the Calais camp at risk of trafficking and exploitation. Months of relentless campaigning led the Government to pledge to reunite children from Calais with their family in the UK and an estimated 800 children have now been transferred from France to the UK.

Despite this progress in France, only around eight children are thought to have been transferred to the UK from Greece and Italy. That's why pupils at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] are calling on the UK Government to change this by providing the resources to identify unaccompanied children in Italy and Greece with family in the UK and help them through the legal process.

Pupils at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will also develop their understanding of children's rights and will speak out for the rights of refugee children with their school and local community.

[Insert Name, Job title] said "QUOTE FROM STAFF MEMBER ON WHY THE SCHOOL IS INVOLVED, WHY THEY FEEL THIS IS IMPORTANT"

[Insert student name, age] said "OVERVIEW OF WHAT THEY HAVE DONE AND WHY THEY THINK IT'S IMPORTANT"

Hayley Cull, Unicef UK Head of Campaigns and Advocacy, said: "Hundreds of vulnerable children have been brought to safety in the UK from France over the last few months, but we must be clear that the job is not finished. If children do not have safe and legal routes to the

UK, they will continue to make dangerous journeys and fall into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.”

Unicef are on the ground in Greece - supporting more than 6,000 refugee and migrant children with psychosocial support and referral to specialised child protection services - and in Italy, working with the Italian Coastguard to support the identification and protection of children during rescue operations and training staff running children’s shelters and outreach services for children who may be sleeping rough.

--ENDS--

For further information on this event at _____ *[name of school]*, please contact:

Name: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

For further information on Unicef, please contact:

Unicef UK Press Office

Tel: 020 7375 6030

Email: media@unicef.org.uk

Notes to editors

About Unicef UK’s Rights Respecting Schools Award

The Unicef UK Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) supports schools across the UK to embed children’s rights in their ethos and culture. The award recognises achievement in putting the UN Convention on the Right of the Child (UNCRC) at the heart of a school’s practice to improve well-being and help develop every child’s talents and abilities to their full potential. Over 4,000 primary and secondary schools in the UK are involved, and many have reported a positive impact on behaviour, relationships and well-being, leading to better

learning, improved academic standards and a reduction in bullying. Read more at www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa.

About Unicef

Unicef promotes the rights and well-being of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. Unicef UK raises funds for Unicef's emergency and development work and advocates for lasting change for children everywhere. We are a UK registered charity, supported entirely by voluntary donations. We do not receive any money from the UN. For more information, please visit unicef.org.uk