

HOW TO VOLUNTEER TO SUPPORT REFUGEES

YOUNG
CHAMPIONS



Roll up your sleeves and volunteer to help refugees and asylum seekers!

You have a part to play in ensuring refugees and asylum seekers are included in your community. Even after reaching safety, refugees face many challenges in host countries. Volunteering is a great way to help out and a little bit of your time can go a long way! Volunteering also gives you the chance to interact with refugees in a more direct way, learn about their culture, and make new friends! Use this toolkit to find how you can volunteer locally to support refugees in your community.



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Interested in volunteering to support refugees?

Here is a list of ways you can help:

- Teach your local language
- Help refugees with administrative procedures
- Volunteer at a centre for asylum seekers or in a refugee camp in your country
- Organize a donation drive and distribute food and goods to refugee communities
- Show new refugees around your city
- Plan social activities to bring people together
- Support a local NGO with logistics, communications or other work

Here are some steps you can take if you are interested in volunteering to help refugees:

01

What are your skills?/ How can you help?

As you can see, there are so many different ways you can volunteer to support refugees.

Start by thinking about your different interests and skill sets, and how you can use them to make an impact. Are you an artist? Maybe you can offer to lead a weekly art workshop. Do you have experience tutoring? Maybe you can provide extra language practice for refugee students after school. Do you like sports? You can organize a football tournament. Are you organized? Many nonprofits need help coordinating their work.

You can also leverage what you are studying. For example, law school students can volunteer at free legal clinics, and medical students may be able to give free health checks through an established structure.

02

Reach out to organizations working with refugees in your community.

There are many great organizations working with refugees, some of which are all-volunteer, and others that rely on volunteers to expand their reach.

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Depending on where you live, the situation of refugees in your country can be very different.

Do you live near a refugee camp or settlement? Does your country have a resettlement program? Are you near a border where people make asylum claims?

Get online and search for organizations working with refugees in your area! Try looking for:

- Resettlement agencies
- City-led refugee programmes
- Legal aid groups
- Language programs
- Schools with many refugee students
- NGOs running activities in camps or settlements
- Community kitchens or food distributions

Many of these organizations will have established volunteer programmes and information about how you can help on their website. Read about what they do, then reach out to introduce yourself and why you are interested in volunteering for their organization.

You can also reach out to youth@unhcr.org to be connected with your local UNHCR office. UNHCR usually doesn't take volunteers, but we can connect you with partner organizations working with refugees.

Tip: Whenever you are working with refugees, remember not to post pictures or information without permission, because it could put someone at risk. Please also make sure to abide by our Code of Conduct while volunteering.

03

Take initiative on your own

You can also take initiative outside of an established organization. If you have identified a need, organize yourself and your peers to help!

- Identify specific issues in your community. Try not to make assumptions and talk to refugees directly if you can, to better understand their needs. Then, create a plan or idea for how you can support!
- Gather your team. Recruit your fellow Young Champions, other students and supporters. Clearly let them know who, what, where, when, and why you plan to help.
- What resources do you need? Do you need any materials or space for your initiative? Be sure to plan beforehand.
- Think about partnerships. Consider if it would be beneficial to partner with local organizations, such as universities or businesses. They might help spread the word or provide space and resources.

Welcome refugees in your community

In Poland, 17-year-old Young Champion Heidi and her friends have been distributing helpful brochures with key information to newly arrived Ukrainian refugees at the train station. Watch this [TikTok video](#) to know more! Photo © Heidi



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04

Reflect & Learn

After your volunteering period is over, take some time to reflect on your experience. What did you learn from refugees? What was new? How did you work through challenges? What did you learn about your own skills and strengths? These are important insights that you can share with your fellow Young Champions!

05

Let us know what you're up to!

We love to see the amazing work Young Champions are doing to support refugees. Email youth@unhcr.org and let us know what kind of volunteering work you are doing! We may be able to feature your story on UNHCR's social media platforms.

Food distribution



Syrian volunteer Hamad laughs as he doles out hot tea for refugees trying to stave off dropping temperatures in Austria. © UNHCR/Gordon Welters

Language classes



In Buffalo, USA, a resettlement agency pairs volunteers with refugees who can't attend English classes. © Buffalo News / International Institute of Buffalo

Collective cleanups



Volunteers, including refugees, UNHCR staff and local Egyptians remove bags of waste from the River Nile in Cairo. © UNHCR/Pedro Costa Gomes

Connect refugees with legal services



21-year-old Zihan, a Young Champion, uses his free time to help people apply for asylum and connects them to the right legal professionals. © UNHCR