

Memorandum of Understanding
between
The United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees
and
The World Organization
of the Scout Movement

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The Challenge

In camps and temporary settlements all over the world, millions of people face a grim future: they are the world's refugees. Fleeing war, persecution and violence, they have left their countries, their homes, their possessions and often their loved ones, for a temporary, makeshift existence.

Roughly one in every 125 people on earth has been forced into flight. None of us can remain indifferent to the plight of these millions.

None of us is immune from the possibility that we too might have to flee for our lives in the middle of the night, with nothing but the clothes on our backs. This is a challenge for every man and woman with a sense of solidarity, and thus for all Scouts.

The Partners: UNHCR and World Scouting

UNHCR: Today the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees protects and assists more than 27 million people: many have had to flee their own countries and others have been forcibly displaced within the borders of their own country.

UNHCR's first priority is to protect those forced into flight from being forced to return to countries where they might be in danger. In addition, UNHCR provides material assistance with food, water, shelter, health care, and skills training.

The number of people of concern to UNHCR has risen from 17 million in 1991 to 23 million in 1993, and to more than 27 million as 1995 began. The rise of xenophobia over recent years makes UNHCR's task of protection more and more difficult. A better awareness and understanding of the situation of refugees and of their reasons for flight is crucial in the fight against these racist trends.

WORLD SCOUTING: In the World Organization of the Scout Movement, there are more than 25 million Scouts - boys and girls - in 217 countries and territories. More than half are in developing countries. Since its birth in 1907, Scouting has never stopped growing... and it continues today.

Scouting is education for life. Its purpose is to help young people learn skills and values to become responsible, active citizens.

All Scouts make a commitment to help others. Discovering the needs of others and taking action is a fundamental part of Scouting.

A survey carried out in 1994 by the World Organization of the Scout Movement showed that Scouts in quite a few countries are already active in helping refugees; many national Scout organizations indicated that they would be interested in becoming more active.

Our faster-changing, "shrinking" world means that our future is shaped by events beyond our borders. Environmental, political and social changes in one country impact on life in other countries. Young people are particularly sensitive to this: Scouting tries to help to balance a respect for other cultures and societies with young people's own concerns about what kind of world they will inherit. Scouting provides a way for young people to take action to improve themselves, and their communities - locally, nationally and internationally.

What Can Scouts Do?

Based on information from national Scout organizations on activities already undertaken by Scouts with refugees, and based on feedback from UNHCR field staff about their needs, the following information is offered to stimulate thinking on the question "What can Scouts Do?".

In every country, Scouts can do something to help refugees. Activities will vary:

- from country to country
- from learning about needs to actively working in refugee camps or centres
- according to the ages of the Scouts

At the national level Scouts should:

1. Contact the UNHCR office in their country to discuss possible ways of working together. (A list of UNHCR addresses is being sent to national Scout organizations and a list of national Scout organizations is being distributed within UNHCR.)

Discussions should consider not only present needs, but planning for possible future emergencies.

2. Read and distribute the new UNHCR-WAGGGS-WOSM brochure.
3. Consider ways of making information available to other levels in the organization for consideration and possible local action.
4. Examine possible actions both in the country itself, and/or internationally.

A key step: Sensitization

Before people can feel motivated to help refugees, they need to try and imagine themselves as refugees. What does it feel like to be forced to abandon everything and everybody one knows and loves? With more understanding of a refugee's plight there is more motivation to look for ways to help

Choosing activities

Any activity for Scouts must take into consideration at least these basic factors:

- the personal safety of those involved
- the educational purpose of Scouting
- the fact that Scouting is voluntary, non-political, and non-governmental

Three areas of activities

There are basically three areas in which Scouts can help refugees:

- I. General sensitization, with no direct contact with refugees. Use UNHCR awareness materials.
- II. Activities in contact with refugees, but outside camps. This should be done in close coordination with UNHCR.
- III. Activities within refugee camps, refugee centres and in emergencies. These must be carried out under the guidance and responsibility of UNHCR or of its implementing partners.

Some possible activities for Scout groups

I. Sensitization

- a. Use UNHCR sensitization materials, or those developed by your organization.
- b. Play the simulation game "Passages" introduced at the 18th World Scout Jamboree in the Netherlands. Copies will be made available to each national Scout organization.
- c. Discuss ways in which your Scout group might be able to help; develop a plan of action. Get the support you need to implement it.
- d. Find ways to help others understand the needs: parents, neighbours, school classmates. Distribute literature, put on exhibitions, host round table discussions.
- e. Help make Peace Packs. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts has a specific programme with UNHCR to collect and package materials for Peace Packs. These Packs contain small items to help make the lives of refugee children a little easier.

II. Supporting refugees outside camps

- a. Learn about refugee problems in your town/area/country. Talk to community leaders; talk to refugees; talk to other organizations already involved - or who may like to work with you.
- b. Invite refugees or former refugees to attend one of your activities.
- c. Help with a project in a UNHCR office.
- d. Help teach refugee children and parents about the language and culture of your country. Teach literacy, and other skills which can help refugees find jobs.
- e. Welcome refugee children into your group.

III. Within refugee camps, refugee centres and in emergencies

- a. Organize activities for children.
- b. Identification of unaccompanied children.
- c. Assist in looking after children, particularly, unaccompanied children.
- d. Help with food distribution.
- e. Help distribute information.
- f. Assist in health education and primary health care.
- g. Help teach literacy, vocational skills.
- h. Help provide for the special needs of the elderly, sick and disabled.
- i. Assist in other community development projects which help with literacy, health, job skills, nutrition, the environment and habitat.
- j. Start Scout groups in a refugee centre or camp within the context of Scout activities in that country of asylum.

The Memorandum of Understanding

In view of these mutual interests, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement hereby sign this memorandum of understanding.

I. UNHCR and World Scouting

1. Will share this agreement with their respective national members and staff worldwide, to encourage local, national, and regional cooperation.
2. Will communicate and publicize this agreement in their respective publications and relevant meetings.
3. Will exchange address lists of national contacts in order to facilitate communication between representatives of the two organizations at the national and regional level.
4. Will work together to develop publications and other support materials to help promote projects of cooperation.

II. UNHCR

1. Recognizes that World Scouting is an educational, voluntary, non-political, non-denominational, non-governmental organization and that these qualities must be recognized in any activity involving Scouts.
2. Will encourage its representatives, and its implementing partners, to contact national Scout organizations to determine areas of possible cooperation.
3. Will give supporting resources to help ensure the success of projects of cooperation. Resources may include publications, expertise, financial and logistical support.

III. World Scouting

1. Recognizes that Scouts in every country can do something to help refugees.
2. Recognizes that awareness of refugees' problems and taking action to address them, can be part of the education process of Scouting.
3. Will encourage its national Scout organizations to work with UNHCR to develop programmes of action which may include:
 - General sensitization, with no direct contact with refugees.
 - Activities in contact with refugees, but outside camps.
 - Activities within refugee camps, refugee centres and in emergencies.
4. Stresses that Scouting is open to all, regardless of race, creed, or sex, in accordance with its purpose, principles and method.



Sadako Ogata
United Nations
High Commissioner for Refugees



Jacques Moreillon
Secretary General
World Organization of the Scout Movement

Signed at the 18th World Scout Jamboree
Dronten, The Netherlands
3 August 1995