

# REFUGEE SCHOOL ADOPTION PROGRAMME

Like all children, refugee children have the fundamental right to life, survival and development to the maximum extent possible. However, living in exile, refugee children are often denied normal childhoods. Security fears make everyday activities, like playing outdoors, difficult. Refugee children in Malaysia also do not have access to formal education.

- ❖ In Malaysia, there are some **18,500 refugee children below the age of 18** registered with UNHCR.
- ❖ **Some 13,800 of these children are of school-going age.** However, it is estimated that only approximately 40% of these children have access to any kind of education. This means **over 60%** of refugee children of school going age are **not in school**.
- ❖ Unable to access formal education, **refugee communities establish community-based schooling for their children**, and these are often held under resource-scarce conditions.

The ‘**REFUGEE SCHOOL ADOPTION PROGRAMME**’ is an opportunity for concerned individuals and organizations in Malaysia to explore avenues of supporting educational programmes for refugee children, through financial and non-financial support, directly to these schools.

## WHO IS A REFUGEE?

*“A refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”*

*~ 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1(a)(2)*



## WHO ARE THE REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA?

As of end January 2011, there are some 92,200 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia.

- ❖ 92% or 84,800 are from Myanmar, comprising ethnic Chins, Rohingyas, Myanmar Muslims, Mon, Kachins and other ethnic groups from Myanmar.
- ❖ There are some 7,400 refugees and asylum-seekers from other countries, including those from Sri Lanka, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

70% of refugees and asylum-seekers are men, while 30% are women.

# REFUGEE CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

The refugee children who have access to education in Malaysia attend either education projects run by UNHCR and NGOs, or community-based education classes that are organised by the refugee communities themselves.

UNHCR partners with Non Governmental Organisations to run structured education projects for refugee children. There are eight of such projects and only 20% of refugee children in school benefit from these projects.

Therefore, this means that 80% of refugee children who access any kind of education programmes are attending **community-based schools** which are often run in resource-scarce conditions.



## COMMUNITY-BASED REFUGEE SCHOOLS

**Community-based schools** are education classes that are run by the refugee communities themselves, with some support from the public. These community-based schools are located within the refugee population, wherever there are refugee communities with a large number of children of school-going age.

- ❖ According to information gathered from the refugee communities, at least 70 such schools are located in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Some 4,000 refugee children attend such schools.
- ❖ The scope and reach of these classes are largely restricted by a lack of resources, including qualified teachers. Classes are usually held in rented flats or shop houses, where rooms are converted into classrooms, and are largely overcrowded, lacking in basic teaching facilities and with no space for children to play.
- ❖ Children accessing these schools are from the lower primary school age group. Most adolescent children drop out of school to work in order to supplement their family's income.

**Education remains one of the most important concerns for refugee parents. It is the hope they have that their children will have a chance for a better life.**

## THESE SCHOOLS ARE IN NEED OF YOUR SUPPORT

The scope of UNHCR's funding is limited and unable to reach all aspects of needs faced by these community-based schools. UNHCR therefore also relies on partners to meet the needs of refugees.

For years, individuals and organisations in Malaysia have been channeling assistance to these schools in the form of volunteers, technical support, financial and in-kind contributions. Hundreds of refugee children have enjoyed basic education thanks to the support of these individuals.

The **REFUGEE SCHOOL ADOPTION PROGRAMME** is a structured way for concerned individuals and organisations to help in the area of refugee education.



### ADOPT A REFUGEE SCHOOL : WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

**ADOPTING A REFUGEE SCHOOL** means a donor supports a particular community-based school in one or more area of need for a specified duration of time.

- ❖ Concerned donors, corporate entities, social organisations and individuals are invited to extend their expertise, services or resources to address the unmet needs of refugee children in the area of education.
- ❖ Support can be in the form of **financial contributions** or **in-kind resources**.
- ❖ Donors can choose to **support any existing community school** of their choice from the list of schools known to UNHCR, or even **extend help towards the setting up of new community schools** in under-served areas.
- ❖ The types and extent of assistance will be decided following agreement made among the donor, the refugee school and UNHCR. This support is **delivered directly by the donor** to the community-based school.
- ❖ Donors may choose to support **one entire school** and as many of its needs as possible, or a **specific area of need in several schools**.
- ❖ UNHCR recommends that a commitment of support for a **minimum duration of one year** be considered by donors.

# ADOPT A SCHOOL : AREAS TO SUPPORT

Each individual school has varying levels of need for assistance. The areas of support generally required by these schools include:

❖ **Financial sponsorship**

Financial donations of up to RM12,000.00 or more can be channeled through UNHCR towards the development of new community-based schools or to boost support to existing schools. This will be coordinated through UNHCR's Social Protection Fund.

❖ **Support for the physical infrastructure or needs of the schools**

Including:

- Renovation and the improvement of school facilities
- School furniture such as tables, chairs, whiteboard
- Stationery for the students
- Computers and software
- Cost-sharing of rental fees
- Setting up a library including books and shelves and reading/story corner and other audio-visual learning aid
- Cost-sharing for transportation for the students to attend school

❖ **Teacher support**

Including:

- Cost-sharing of teachers' stipend
- Teacher training in subjects for the class
- Teacher training in languages
- Teaching aid equipment
- Providing support in terms of volunteers to help teach, and conduct other activities for the students

❖ **Youth and Child development programmes**

Including:

- Nutrition programmes in school to provide one healthy meal for the students during the school day and health education for students
- Tutoring and mentoring programmes for young people
- Language and skills training
- Computer training
- Non-school activities for refugee children and youth such as outings, art, sports, theatre, music.



The lack of basic education among refugee children will become a handicap for them as they grow up. It inhibits their opportunities to better their lives, creating a generation of an illiterate/unskilled community.

The objective of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives, so they may aspire for a life different than today.

### **THIS IS THE GIFT YOU CAN PROVIDE FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN.**

To know more about how to adopt a refugee school, contact UNHCR now.



## **CONTACT US**

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