



AUSTRALIA



Catholic Schools
Parramatta Diocese

A MILLION STORIES

REFUGEE WEEK 2026

15 JUNE - 21 JUNE



REFUGEE WEEK

2026

A MILLION STORIES

2026 Theme for Refugee Week



As Europe recovered from the devastation of World War II, Australia responded to an international call to offer a future to people with nowhere to call home. Since that initial agreement in 1947 to receive 4000 refugees from Central Europe, **Australia has issued one million permanent humanitarian visas.**

That's **one million people** who fled danger and found safety here. **One million journeys** of courage and hope. **One million new beginnings** in Australia.

But this isn't just about a number. Behind each visa is a person with a story – someone who left everything behind to find safety, who showed incredible strength, and **who has helped build the Australia we know today.**

Each story is unique. Each one is powerful.

Think about it: **one person's arrival creates a ripple effect.** They have children. Those children have children. They start businesses, become doctors and teachers, create art, play sport, and contribute to their communities. One person's story becomes many stories, woven together like colorful threads in a beautiful tapestry.

REFUGEE WEEK

2026

A MILLION STORIES

2026 Theme for Refugee Week



This week is about celebrating those one million stories. This week, you will:

- Learn about journeys to safety
- Celebrate the contributions refugees and people seeking asylum make to Australia
- Take action to build a more inclusive community

The story doesn't end with one million. There are more stories still to be written – stories of welcome, of courage, of belonging. **And you are part of this story too.** The choices you make, the welcome you offer, the kindness you show – these all become part of Australia's ongoing story.

This week, we'll journey through one million stories. And together, we'll begin writing the next chapter.

REFUGEE WEEK

CELEBRATING AT SCHOOL

MONDAY

15 JUNE

STORIES OF
THE JOURNEY

TUESDAY

16 JUNE

STORIES OF
STRENGTH

WEDNESDAY

17 JUNE

STORIES TO
CELEBRATE

THURSDAY

18 JUNE

STORIES OF
WELCOME

FRIDAY

19 JUNE

STORIES WE
WILL WRITE
TOGETHER

SATURDAY

20 JUNE

**WORLD REFUGEE
DAY**

ABOUT JRS



Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation, working in 58 countries around the world, with a mission to **accompany, serve, and advocate** for refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations.

Here in Australia, many people seeking asylum have limited or no access to government support. This means that they may struggle to afford food, rent, healthcare, and other basic needs. Some face homelessness or unstable housing, financial hardship, visa restrictions that limit their ability to work, or difficulty accessing healthcare and essential services.

Even though they show incredible resilience, people seeking asylum are often let down by government policies that make it hard to live safely and independently.

That's where JRS Australia steps in.

With the help of supporters like you, JRS Australia provides practical support, connection, and hope for individuals and families who are trying to rebuild their lives with dignity.

ABOUT JRS

Our vital services include:



Foodbank and Material Aid: Providing essential food and personal items for individuals and families who have nowhere else to go.



Specialist Finding Safety Project: Supports women on temporary visas who have experienced violence to navigate pathways to safety and justice.



English Classes: Helping people to improve their English skills, so that they can participate in the community, access opportunities, and build their confidence



Employment Support: Helping individuals navigate barriers to employment, develop job-ready skills, and find meaningful work and pathways to financial independence.



Specialist Casework: Support for people facing legal, medical, housing, or social challenges



Emergency Financial Relief: Providing short-term financial assistance for urgent needs like rent, medical bills, and transport

ABOUT JRS

IN 2024, JRS AUSTRALIA...



Served over **3,600** people and families in need



Provided over **8,700** food parcels to an average of **150 households** per week



Assisted over 180 people through the **employment program**, connecting 58 of those with a digital device



Provided **225 families** with over **3,100 instances of specialised casework support**, including support to address housing needs or homelessness, physical health, mental health crises, emergency financial relief



Supported over **160 women** at risk of or experiencing violence

A SNAPSHOT OF JRS...



Free Vision Clinic



Floristry workshop



International Women's Day



Clients receiving their Certificate II in Retail Services



Students learning about forced displacement



Sewing Classes



The JRS Foodbank



Computer and Digital Skills Class

MONDAY

STORIES OF THE JOURNEY

15 JUNE

Today, we open Refugee Week by reflecting on **'Stories of the Journey'**.

Around the world, **more than 117.3 million** people have been forced to leave their homes due to war, violence, persecution, human rights abuses and natural disasters.

Many of the people who seek safety in Australia come from countries affected by conflict and instability. Their journeys are often long, dangerous and uncertain. They leave behind their homes and loved ones – not because they want to, but because they must.

Today, we pause to understand why people are forced to flee and what those journeys really mean.

YOU WILL EXPLORE:

- What does **'forced displacement'** mean?
- What does it mean to be a **refugee**?
- What is the difference between a **refugee** and a **person seeking asylum**?
- What circumstances **force people to leave their homes** and seek protection elsewhere?
- Which **countries** are people **fleeing from** today, and why?
- Which **countries host** the most forcibly displaced people?
- How do people seek protection in **Australia**?

FORCED DISPLACEMENT, SEEKING ASYLUM AND INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

WHAT IS 'FORCED DISPLACEMENT'

Forced displacement means people are forced to leave their homes or even their country because it is no longer safe to stay. This can happen when there is war, political violence or persecution, or natural disasters like floods or earthquakes. At the end of 2024, around 123 million people were forcibly displaced around the world – **that's roughly 1 in every 67 people on Earth.**

What is the difference between a person seeking asylum and a refugee?

A PERSON SEEKING ASYLUM...

is a person who has been forced to leave their country because of war, violence or persecution, and who is seeking protection in another country. **Persecution** means being treated unfairly or cruelly because of who you are, what you believe, or where you are from.

In other words, they are saying: "Please keep me safe - I could be harmed if I go back home."

Under international law, it is legal to seek asylum. Everyone has a right to seek asylum and be protected from danger.

A REFUGEE...

is someone who has asked for international protection, and has been officially recognised as needing protection. All refugees were once people seeking asylum – once their case is accepted by a country or by the United Nations, they are granted refugee status.



8 FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

1 117.3 million people in the world are forcibly displaced

That is 4.25 times the population of Australia. This number has doubled in the last 10 years.



2 2 in 3 refugees come from only five countries



67% of all refugees worldwide come from just five countries. Venezuelan refugees now account for the largest refugee population in the world with 6.5 million. This is followed by Syria (5.5 million), Ukraine (5.3 million), Afghanistan (4.8 million) and Sudan (2.5 million).

3 3 in 4 refugees are hosted in low and middle income countries



Low- and middle-income countries host 71% of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection. Only 29% of the world's refugees are hosted in high-income and developed countries.

4 Millions are displaced within their own countries



While 36.4 million refugees have fled their countries, there are 73.5 million internally displaced people who have fled within their own countries. The countries with the largest populations of internally displaced people are Sudan, Colombia, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

8 FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

5 2 in 3 refugees are caught in protracted crises



66% of the world's refugees are estimated to be in situations of long-term forced displacement. An estimated 25 million refugees and other people in need of international protection had been displaced for more than five years at mid-2024.

6 40% of the world's forcibly displaced are children



While children account for 30% of the world's population, at the end of 2024, 40% of all forcibly displaced people were children. Between 2018-2024, 2.3 million children were born as refugees.

7 Most refugees live in urban areas, not camps



More than half of the world's forcibly displaced live in cities and urban areas. For example, 90 % of the Syrian refugees and most Venezuelans are hosted in urban settings. While camps are only intended as temporary solutions in emergencies, many refugees still end up spending decades in temporary shelters around the world due to the lack of alternative solutions

8 It is a human right to seek asylum



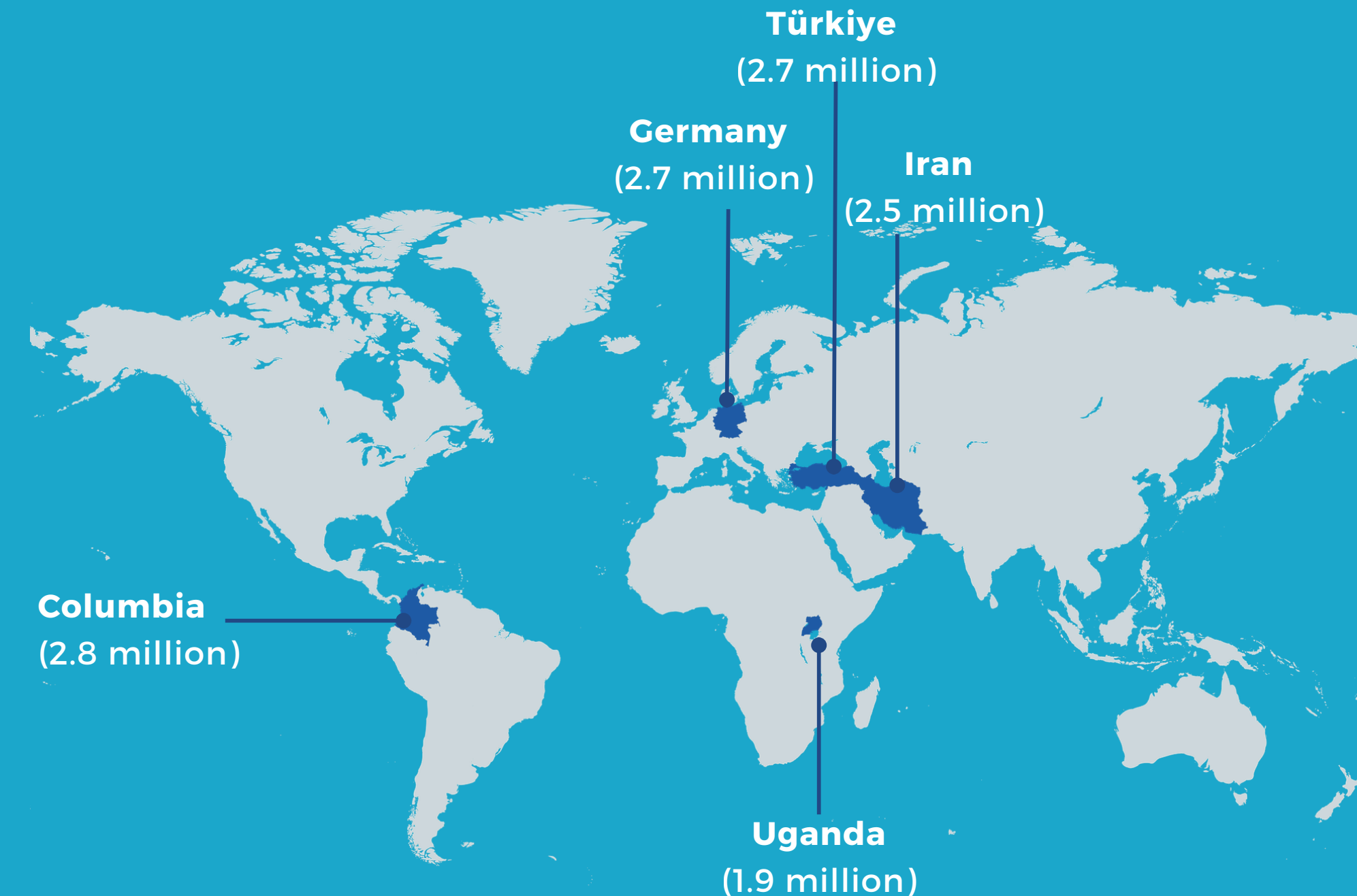
Seeking asylum is a human right and every person in the world has the right to seek asylum if they are fleeing conflict or persecution. They must not be expelled or returned to situations where their lives or freedoms would be in danger. This is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, human rights law and customary international law.

WHAT COUNTRIES HOST THE MOST REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM?

Globally, most refugees find safety not far from home – often in **neighbouring countries**.

71% of refugees are hosted in **low and middle-income** countries rather than wealthy nations.

34% of forcibly displaced people in the world are hosted in these 5 countries:



By comparison, Australia hosts a much smaller number of refugees and people seeking asylum. In 2023, Australia recognised and resettled **29,892 refugees** - representing **1%** of all refugees resettled globally that year. Globally, Australia ranks 26th for the number of refugees recognised or resettled. However, when compared proportionally, Australia ranks 39th per capita and 62nd relative to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

WHERE DO MOST REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM IN AUSTRALIA COME FROM?

Most people seeking asylum and refugees who are attempting to seek protection in Australia come from **Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Myanmar**.



WHERE DO MOST REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM IN AUSTRALIA COME FROM?



Afghanistan

Afghanistan has experienced war and political instability for nearly 50 years. In 2021, the Taliban regained control of the country, leading to the loss of many basic rights and freedoms. Women and girls have been banned from attending secondary school and university, and are restricted from working in many jobs. Ethnic minority groups, such as the Hazara community, have faced ongoing violence and discrimination. Journalists, former government employees, and people who have spoken out for human rights are also at risk of persecution. With limited access to education, employment, and safety, many families have been forced to leave their homes and seek protection elsewhere. Australia has welcomed many Afghan refugees. In 2023-24, Afghanistan was the top country of origin for people resettled through Australia's humanitarian program.



Syria

In 2011, pro-democracy protests erupted throughout Syria. The Syrian government responded with violence, which escalated into a long and devastating civil war. Over time, the conflict became more complex, involving multiple armed groups, including extremist organisations such as ISIS. The impact of years of conflict on the lives of Syrians has been devastating. Entire cities were bombed and destroyed. Families lost access to hospitals, schools, food and jobs. Many people were killed, seriously injured or forced to flee their homes. Even today, many Syrians cannot safely return home due to ongoing danger, harsh government control and a collapsed economy, leaving many with no option but to seek protection in another country.

WHERE DO MOST REFUGEES AND PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM IN AUSTRALIA COME FROM?



iraq

Iraq has faced decades of conflict and instability. The 2003 US-led invasion led to ongoing violence and deep divisions between different religious and ethnic groups. In 2014, the rise of ISIS caused further devastation, particularly for minority groups such as Yazidis and Christians, who were targeted with extreme violence. While the situation has improved in some areas, many parts of Iraq remain unsafe due to ongoing militia activity, political instability, and human rights concerns. Women, journalists, and activists can face significant risks. Many people who fled their homes have been unable to return, often due to destroyed infrastructure, lack of services, or continued insecurity.



Myanmar

Myanmar has experienced political unrest and conflict for many years. In 2021, the military seized control of the country, overthrowing the democratically elected government. Ethnic minorities, particularly the Rohingya people, have faced severe persecution, discrimination, and violence, forcing many to flee the country. Ongoing conflict between the military and various ethnic groups, along with human rights abuses and limited freedoms, continues to drive displacement and create unsafe living conditions for many people.

SEEKING ASYLUM AND PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, people can receive protection in a few different ways.

1 Resettlement

Through the **Humanitarian Program**, Australia selects some refugees living in other countries (often referred to by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and supports them to start a new life in Australia.

2 Arriving in Australia with a valid visa

Some people travel to Australia by plane using a visa, such as a tourist or student visa. Once here, they apply for protection. Their claim is then assessed by the Australian government. If they are found to be a refugee, they may be granted a Protection Visa and allowed to stay.

3 Arriving in Australia without a valid visa

Some people arrive by boat without a visa. Since 2013 the Australian government has not allowed people attempting to seek safety by boat to arrive in Australia. However, there remain a few thousand people who still have unresolved status. Many in this cohort were subject to policies such as lack of access to permanent protection or offshore processing, where they were sent to Nauru or Papua New Guinea.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: MONDAY

ACTIVITY 1: DEFINING KEY TERMS

Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the following terms:

- Refugee
- Person seeking asylum
- Migrant
- Internally displaced person
- Stateless person

Get each group to research and write a clear, simple definition of their assigned term in their own words, and then present their definition to the class

After each group has shared their definition to the class, provide the formal definitions to clarify understanding and address any misconceptions.

To help illustrate the difference between a migrant and a refugee, you may choose to show this short video [here](#).

ACTIVITY 2: FACTS AND FIGURES

Ask students to find the answers to the following questions in the [UNHCR Mid-Year Trends Report 2025](#):

- How many people were forcibly displaced worldwide in mid-2025? What proportion of the world's population does this represent?
- Which five countries accounted for the majority of people needing international protection? Why are these countries major sources of displacement?
- Which countries were the largest hosts of refugees in mid-2025?
- What percentage of refugees live in low- and middle-income countries? What does this suggest about where displaced people tend to find safety?
- How many people remained internally displaced inside their own countries? Why might many displaced people not cross international borders?
- How many refugees and internally displaced people returned to their home countries in the first half of 2025?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: MONDAY

ACTIVITY 3: LISTENING TO STORIES OF THE JOURNEY

Share a age-appropriate story of someone's journey to safety.

Ask students to listen for:

- Why did they leave their home?
- How did they travel to safety?
- What dangers did they face?
- What hopes did they carry?

You may choose one of the following stories to share with your students:

- ["A Beautiful Animation of a Harrowing Story"](#)
- ["Ali and the Long Journey to Australia"](#)
- ["A Refugee's Story: Migration: a Human Story":](#)
- ["Desperate Journey: Europe's Refugee Crisis"](#)
- ["A Refugee's Journey from Survival to Belonging, Clement Nsenga Kigugu TEDx"](#)

ACTIVITY 4: WHAT WOULD YOU PACK?

To understand the emotional and practical challenges of displacement by considering what it means to leave home suddenly and travel to an unknown place, present the following scenario to students:

You have been told that you must leave your home within 10 minutes. It is not safe to stay. You do not know when, or if, you will return. You may take only one small backpack.

Ask students to write a list of 5-10 items they would pack.

Discussion questions:

- Why did you choose these items?
- What would you be the most upset to leave behind?
- How would it feel not knowing if you would return to your home?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: MONDAY

ACTIVITY 5: WHERE DO REFUGEES COME FROM?

Watch the Video '[Where do Refugees come from?](#)'

Discussion questions:

- Why do people become forcibly displaced?
- What countries do you think most refugees and people seeking asylum in **Australia** come from?
- What is it like to live in these countries?
- How do refugees travel to another country to get to safety?
- Can refugees go back to their country?
- What would happen if a refugee returns to their home country?

ACTIVITY 6: WHERE DO REFUGEES GO?

Watch the Video '[Where do Refugees go?](#)'

After watching, ask students to **write down five countries that they think most forcibly displaced people go to when they flee their homes**. Compare their answers to the countries that host the most refugees and people seeking asylum, listed on **page 12**.

Discussion questions:

- Why would most forcibly displaced people remain in countries close to home?
- If you were forced to flee Australia, what factors would influence where you go?
- Who should share responsibility for supporting forcibly displaced people globally? Governments? The international community? Individuals? International organisations?



TUESDAY STORIES OF STRENGTH

16 JUNE

YOU WILL EXPLORE:

- What is resilience?
- What are the roadblocks that prevent people from thriving in their new community?
- How does not having work rights or access to Medicare impact a family's daily life?

Today, we reflect on **Stories of Strength**.

Behind every journey of displacement is a story of extraordinary courage. Refugees and people seeking asylum have often endured conflict, loss, uncertainty and separation from loved ones.

Even after reaching safety in another country, the journey is often far from over. Many people face long periods of waiting, complex legal systems, language barriers, financial hardship and unwelcoming policies. The Australian Government has severely restricted the rights and services available to people seeking asylum in Australia, with many people not having access to work rights or benefits such as Medicare.

And yet, their stories are not defined only by hardship. They are stories of strength – of parents rebuilding stability for their children, of young people learning new languages and excelling at school, of community leaders advocating for justice, of families creating belonging in unfamiliar places.

Today, we honour the courage it takes not only to flee danger, but to start again – to build a new life, often from the ground up, in a new country and culture.

As we listen to these stories, we are reminded that resilience is not just about surviving. It is about the remarkable human capacity to rebuild, to care for others, and to shape a future beyond hardship.

MEET BATOUL

Hello, my name is Batoul, and I am just a girl from Gaza.

My family and I sought refuge in Sydney in November 2023. We were lucky, because my brother was living here in Sydney, and was able to sponsor us to come to Australia.

I often say I am “lucky,” though it is a word I hesitate to use. I am luckier than many others who remain in Gaza without a relative to help them escape. I am luckier than most people in Gaza, because I have not yet lost any of my immediate family or close friends.

I had always dreamed of travelling and maybe living somewhere else one day. But I never thought it would be like this. I never thought I would be forcibly removed and displaced from my home, my friends, and everything I know. **I never thought I might not be able to go back.**



LEAVING MY HOME

Since my family and I evacuated in the first few days of the genocide, we did not have the chance to take any of our belongings with us. When we fled our home, we had only five minutes to leave. I rushed to my room, grabbed my childhood photos and my laptop, and then we ran. We brought nothing else with us, except our clothes.

Leaving wasn't something we wanted, it was something we had to do. My brother was already here in Sydney, and through him, we managed to get visitor visas. But the process was long, uncertain, and exhausting.

We had to go through Egypt first, which was incredibly difficult; crossing borders, waiting endlessly, not knowing what would happen next. We waited an entire day just to hear my dad's name called so he could come with us. But in the end, it was for nothing. He had to go back to Khan Younis while we got on a bus at 11 PM for a 10-hour bus trip to Egypt. I could not sleep at all. All I could think about was my dad, my best friend Nour and how ridiculous life is.

We could only stay in Egypt for 48 hours before being fined, so we had to travel immediately, and board a flight to Australia. In just two days, we spent 10 hours on the road and 18 hours in the air. The exhaustion was indescribable, but we knew this was our path to safety.

ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA

I arrived in Sydney in November 2023. It was my first time in an English-speaking country. Communication was a bit of a challenge, and adapting to everything: culture, routine, even the way people spoke, was overwhelming. It was even worse for my parents.

It takes a lot of strength to start again, without any of the evidence of your life's work. We had no furniture, no kitchenware, no bedding, no souvenirs, no photo albums – **none of those essentials that make a house a home.**

For the first three months, my family and I lived here on a **visitor visa**, which meant **no access to work, education, or healthcare.** People on temporary visas experience lots of challenges like this when they first come to Australia. It makes it even harder to settle in to life here and become part of the community.

I was introduced to JRS during this time, and honestly, that was a **turning point for me and my family**. From the moment we joined the community, we were welcomed into so many of their classes and activities, which helped us feel more connected and supported here in Sydney. The people involved with JRS have this incredibly warm and genuine way of making you feel seen and included, and that made a huge difference during a time when everything in our lives felt new and uncertain.

The support, encouragement, and sense of belonging they provided have played a big role in helping me feel welcomed in Australia.

Of course, adjusting to a new country comes with challenges: language, culture, and the heaviness of what we left behind, but the JRS community consistently helped ease those barriers. They created a space where I could grow and feel hopeful again. And, I remind myself that I am lucky to have experienced both the good and the difficult parts of moving to another country.



RESTARTING MY CAREER

Once we were able to switch to a temporary visa that **allowed full-time work and study**, I began searching for my first job. I was studying dentistry when I left Gaza, so this was my first time ever looking for a proper job. **I was extremely nervous.**

While I was searching however, **another lucky thing happened**: my brother had a bad toothache, and he was referred to The Dentists @ Belmore where they provide free dental care for people from Gaza. By chance, my brother asked if they needed a dental assistant, and they did! **That is how I started my first job** in Australia. I learned so much there and remain deeply grateful for this opportunity.

But ten months on from my arrival here, I felt overwhelmed by the reality that I might never finish my degree. I had already completed four years of a Bachelor of Dentistry at Al Azhar University in Gaza. If the genocide didn't happen, I would be graduating by now. It hurt me to have dedicated years to a dream that now seemed shattered.



OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO STUDY

I sought ways to finish my degree here in Australia, but I could not find any. I could not receive any credit for all my years of prior learning. Most universities in Australia asked me for either a completed undergraduate degree, or extremely high marks, before I would even be considered to study Dentistry.

The most difficult part was that, as an “international student” due to my temporary visa status, it was too expensive for me to study without a scholarship.

With guidance from an educational adviser at the Asylum Seeker Centre, I explored alternatives and discovered the Bachelor of Oral Health Therapy – a field that aligns with my passion for dentistry.

I also heard about the University of Newcastle’s Scholarship for Asylum Seekers Program. I applied, and after a long wait, **I received an offer** along with the scholarship I had hoped for.

As I write this, I am just about to **complete my first year of Oral Health Therapy**, with two more years to go.

I think of my life here, and how different it is to the lives of my friends and family still in Gaza. My friends are a huge part of my life, and even though we're far apart now, they remain deeply present in everything I do. We grew up together and shared so many memories, so leaving Gaza meant leaving a piece of myself behind.

I miss them every day, but staying in touch with them gives me strength and reminds me of who I am and where I come from.

Their encouragement from afar motivates me to keep moving forward, and carrying their love and support with me makes the challenges of starting over in a new country feel a little lighter.

My hope is that people in Australia keep using their voice to speak up for the people of Gaza.

I do this myself through JRS Australia's leadership program, where I share my story at school and community events, and advocate for the rights of all refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: TUESDAY

ACTIVITY 1: LISTENING TO STORIES OF STRENGTH

Read **Batoul's story**. In pairs, small groups, or as a class, discuss:

- What challenges did Batoul face when seeking asylum in Australia?
- How did Batoul demonstrate resilience?
- What qualities helped Batoul rebuild her life in Australia?

Creative Task: Batoul shares how having a place to study and work, and people who believe in her, made a real difference.

Invite students to design a **Community Blueprint**. On a large piece of paper, draw a map of a welcoming neighbourhood. Include places such as schools, libraries, places of worship, community centres, homes, and workplaces. Around the map, add ideas for how each place can support people who are new to the community.

For more stories of strength, explore the following resources:

- ["The Ukrainian refugees fleeing war and seeking asylum in Australia"](#)
- ["A refugee's journey from survival to belonging"](#)
- [Shahm Maskoun's Story](#)
- ["You Can't Ask That"](#)



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: TUESDAY

ACTIVITY 2: THE UNEQUAL RACE

Set Up

Place a sign at one end of the room that says “A Secure Future.” Students line up at the opposite end of the room.

Divide the class into two groups:

- **Group A** (Citizens)
- **Group B** (People seeking asylum on bridging visas)

Read aloud the following scenarios. When situations are difficult or uncertain, Group A can rest, but Group B must do jumping jacks, representing the extra stress and effort required just to get by.

Scenarios

1. Going to school

You are a young person who wants to go to school and build your future. If you are a citizen, you have guaranteed access to education. If you are seeking asylum, access to education can be costly and difficult to navigate.

- **Group A:** Take 5 big steps forward (education is accessible and supports your future)
- **Group B:** Take 1 small step forward (you can move forward, but with barriers)



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: TUESDAY

ACTIVITY 2: THE UNEQUAL RACE

2. A medical emergency

You or someone in your family becomes very sick. If you are a citizen, you can access Medicare and affordable healthcare. If you are seeking asylum, you may not have access to Medicare, or may face difficulty accessing adequate healthcare because of low income. The cost and stress can set you back.

- **Group A:** Stay where you are and rest (you are supported by the system)
- **Group B:** Take 3 steps back and do jumping jacks (the cost and stress sets you back)

3. Looking for a job

You want to work to support yourself and your family. If you are a citizen, you have full work rights and fewer barriers to employment. If you are seeking asylum, visa conditions and uncertainty can make it difficult or impossible to find stable work.

- **Group A:** Take 5 big steps forward (you can earn money and plan your future)
- **Group B:** Stay where you are and do jumping jacks (you do not have work rights and struggle to earn money, despite your best effort)

4. Finding a place to live

You are trying to rent a home. If you are a citizen, you are more likely to have stable income, rental history, and documentation. If you are seeking asylum, without steady income or references, it can be very difficult to secure housing.

- **Group A:** Stay 1 step forward (you are housed and secure)
- **Group B:** Take 3 steps back and do jumping jacks (housing insecurity sets you back)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: TUESDAY

ACTIVITY 2: THE UNEQUAL RACE

5. Support from community

JRS Australia offers support, such as food, casework, or help finding a job. For people seeking asylum, this support can make a significant difference in their ability to move forward

- **Group A:** Stay where you are (you already have government support systems in place)
- **Group B:** Take 5 big steps forward (community support acts as a safety net for you and your family)

6. Waiting for a visa decision

You are waiting to hear if you will be granted protection in Australia, and can stay in the country. This process can take months or even years. If you are a citizen, your future is secure. If you are seeking asylum, you are living with uncertainty every day.

- **Group A:** Stay where you are and rest (your future is not at risk)
- **Group B:** Stay where you are and do jumping jacks (you are stuck in uncertainty)

7. A Welcoming Community

You are welcomed into a community - at school, in a neighbourhood, or at an event. Acts of kindness and inclusion can help everyone feel a sense of belonging. Both groups: Take 5 big steps forward!

Reflection: Group B worked harder – did that help them get ahead, or was the ‘track’ unfair? What does fairness look like? How can we, as a school, help create a more equal and welcoming community?

WEDNESDAY

17 JUNE

STORIES TO CELEBRATE

Today, we celebrate the **richness that refugees and people seeking asylum bring to our communities.**

Every person who has arrived in Australia carries a **story**, a **culture**, a **talent**, and a **perspective** that adds to the **vibrant tapestry** of our society. From contributions in **arts, sports, science, and business**, to the **everyday ways** people make our schools, parishes, and neighbourhoods stronger and more compassionate, refugees and people seeking asylum enrich our lives in countless ways.

As we explore these stories, we recognise the value of **diversity**, the **strength in inclusion**, and the **achievements** of people who have overcome immense challenges to contribute to the world around them.

YOU WILL EXPLORE:

- How refugees and people seeking asylum enrich our community
- The diverse cultures, skills, and perspectives people bring with them
- Why diversity makes our schools and communities stronger
- How we can celebrate and learn from different cultures and experiences



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: WEDNESDAY

ACTIVITY 1: CULTURAL SHOWCASE

Your school may host an event to celebrate multiculturalism in your school community. This could include:

- A **lunchtime “Cultural Showcase”** - Students and teachers may bring in a signature dish from their culture to share, or share stories of their family history or traditions!
-
- A **flag display** representing the heritage of the school community
- A **mufti day** where students and teachers are encouraged to wear something that represents their culture

You could even decide to turn this event into a **fundraising initiative!**

ACTIVITY 2: MAPPING OUR DIVERSITY

Display a **large world map** in a common area (library, hall or classroom). Invite students to place a **pin** or **sticker** on countries connected to their family heritage. Students can write a short reflection to accompany their pin, such as:

- “One tradition my family keeps is...”
- “One thing I value about my culture is...”

Over the course of the day, the map will visually demonstrate the richness and diversity within the school.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: WEDNESDAY

ACTIVITY 3: REFUGEE ROLE MODELS

In small groups, students are to research a person who came to Australia (or another country) as a refugee or person seeking asylum, and prepare a short presentation (poster, slideshow, speech or video) that responds to the following questions:

- Why did this person flee their home country?
- What challenges did they face in moving to another country?
- What have they contributed to their community or country?
- How has their community benefited from welcoming them?



ACTIVITY 4: DISCOVERING CULTURES IN OUR COMMUNITY

Divide students into small groups and assign each group with a country represented within Australia's refugee or migrant communities. Students should research:

- Key cultural traditions
- Food, music, art or celebrations
- Family or community values
- Languages spoken

Reflection Questions:

- What is one thing that you learnt that surprised you?
- What similarities and differences are there between the culture that you researched and your own culture?
- What can we learn from cultures different to our own?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: WEDNESDAY

ACTIVITY 5: WHAT MAKES A STRONG COMMUNITY?

Class Discussion or Think-Pair-Share Prompts:

- What makes a community strong?
- How does cultural diversity enrich our school?
- What would Australia be like without migration?
- What skills, perspectives and values do newcomers bring?



ACTIVITY 6: THE GIFTS WE BRING

Invite students to reflect on what they would bring with them if they moved to a new country. Students complete the sentence: **“If I moved to a new country, I would bring...”**.

Encourage reflection on:

- Skills and talents
- Traditions and culture
- Values and beliefs
- Hopes and Dreams

Students can write or draw their responses. Display these as a **“Wall of Gifts”** in the classroom or around the school. Use the display as a starting point for discussion about the **value that refugees and people seeking asylum bring to our community**: they bring knowledge, resilience, culture, creativity and ambition, enriching the communities they become part of.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: WEDNESDAY

ACTIVITY 7: CULTURAL DIVERSITY BINGO

How to Play:

- Move around the room and find a **classmate** who fits the description in each square
- When you find a **match**, get your classmate to sign the square. Each student can only sign another student's bingo card **twice**.
- If you get five squares in a row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) call out "**BINGO!**". The **first person** to yell "BINGO!" wins!



Can say "Hello" in two languages.	Is a different religion to you.	Knows a traditional dance or song.	Has helped a new student feel welcome.	Likes to listen to music from other countries.
Can name a country in Africa and Asia.	Speaks a language other than English at home.	Knows how to say "Thank You" in another language.	Has a friend from a different culture.	Has participated in a parade or festival celebrating their culture
Has lived in another city or country.	Can name a famous athlete from another country.	FREE SPACE	Celebrates a special holiday with their family.	Has family in another country
Was born in another country	Has tried a food they can't find in a supermarket.	English isn't their first language	Can name a famous singer from another country.	Their family came to Australia from another country
Has a passport from another country	Knows how to say "Welcome" in another language.	Has a piece of clothing from another culture.	Knows someone who is a refugee or person seeking asylum	Plays a traditional game, sport or instrument from their culture

THURSDAY

18 JUNE

STORIES OF WELCOME

YOU WILL EXPLORE:

- What does it mean to welcome?
- Why does belonging matter?
- How do small acts make a big impact?
- What is my role in creating a Culture of Welcome?

Today, we focus on the **power of welcome**. For refugees and people seeking asylum, arriving in a new country can be both **exciting** and **daunting**. A friendly smile, a helping hand, or simply being included can make a world of difference.

Building a **welcoming community** means creating spaces where everyone feels **safe, valued, and respected** – where differences are celebrated and everyone has the chance to belong.

Today, we explore what it means to **welcome others**, how small acts of kindness can have a big impact, and how each of us can contribute to a community where everyone feels at home.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: THURSDAY

ACTIVITY 1: BUILDING A WELCOMING SCHOOL

Step 1: Discussion

Start with a class **reflection**:

- What makes you feel welcome?
- When have you felt like you didn't belong?
- What actions create inclusion, not just politeness?

Invite students to complete the sentence: "A truly welcoming community is one where..."

Step 2: Packing a 'Welcome Suitcase'

Imagine arriving in a new country where you don't speak the language and don't know anyone. What would you need in your first month?

Students work in small groups to pack a '**Welcome Suitcase**' (a drawing or a list), making sure to remember:

- **Emotional Needs:** Feeling safe, noticed, and respected
- **Practical Needs:** Maps, food, knowing where things are
- **Social Needs:** Friends to sit with at lunch, help understanding instructions, invitations to join activities

Step 3: The 'Welcome Detective'

Students explore their classroom or school as '**Welcome Detectives**', looking for ways the school supports the emotional, practical, and social needs they identified in their Welcome Suitcases.

Are there signs to help people navigate the school? Is there a 'friendship bench' or a space for someone who may need a friend? Are there quiet spaces for prayer or reflection?

Students take notes on what is already welcoming and identify areas where the school could improve to make everyone feel included.

Step 4: Your Idea for Welcome

Each group chooses one **practical improvement** they could implement to make their school more welcoming. Groups present their ideas to the class.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: THURSDAY

ACTIVITY 2: THE WELCOME WEB

For this activity, you will need a ball of yarn or string. Ask students to stand in a circle. One student begins by holding the end of the yarn and sharing one way they can help a newcomer feel welcome (for example, “I can show them where the library is” or “I can invite them to sit with me at lunch”).

Keeping hold of their piece of the yarn, they then toss the ball to someone else across the circle. Each student repeats the process, sharing an idea and holding onto the yarn before passing it on.

As the activity continues, a web will begin to form, connecting everyone in the circle. Once complete, invite students to observe the web. **What happens if one person lets go? The web becomes weaker.**

This activity shows that creating a welcoming community is a shared responsibility – everyone has a role to play, and small actions together can build a strong and supportive community.

ACTIVITY 3: GET CREATIVE!

Invite students to help create a visual installation that celebrates inclusion and belonging within your school community.

This could be a banner with a central message like “You belong here”, or an artwork featuring “welcome” written in the different languages spoken at your school.

The artwork can be displayed in your school to send a powerful message of welcome, or shared with JRS Australia to be displayed in their office.



FRIDAY

STORIES WE WILL WRITE TOGETHER

19 JUNE

Today, we turn our attention to the future, and the role each of us can play in shaping it. We will think about how we can take action, stand in solidarity, and create positive change in our communities. Whether it's raising awareness, advocating for fairer policies, running a fundraiser or food drive for JRS, or simply showing kindness, every action contributes to a more welcoming and just world.

Today, we reflect on what we can do together to ensure that the next chapter is one of hope, opportunity, and belonging for everyone, and we recognise that our work doesn't stop at the end of Refugee Week. By continuing the conversation and taking ongoing action, we can continue to build communities where everyone feels included and valued.

YOU WILL EXPLORE:

- How can I be a changemaker?
- What is solidarity?
- How do we speak up for fairness?
- How can I take action?
- How does kindness create a ripple effect?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: FRIDAY

ACTIVITY 1: THE STORY I WANT TO HELP WRITE

Invite students to reflect on the **role they can play** in shaping a more welcoming future.

Students can respond to one of the following prompts:

- “In Australia, I want refugees and people seeking asylum to...”
- “In my school, I will help create a community where...”
- “The future I hope for is one where...”

Older students can write a short **pledge** or **paragraph**, while younger students may **draw** their vision of a welcoming community.



ACTIVITY 2: RAISE YOUR VOICE!

Advocacy is about speaking up and shining a light on people whose voices are often overlooked. As young leaders, students have the power to influence their school, community, and even decision-makers. Students can raise awareness about the experiences of refugees and people seeking asylum, challenge unfairness, and inspire others to take action by:

- Writing a **letter** to their local Federal Member of Parliament, advocating for more humane policies for people seeking asylum
- Creating a **school statement** of solidarity, expressing a shared commitment to welcome and inclusion
- Recording a **short video** sharing what “welcome” means to them
- Designing an **awareness campaign** (posters, artworks, or displays)
- Hosting a **moment of solidarity**, such as a school assembly, prayer service, or silent reflection.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: FRIDAY

ACTIVITY 3: ONGOING COMMITMENT

Invite students to consider how they can continue to show their solidarity and support for refugees and people seeking asylum beyond this week. Some ideas include:

- Organising a **food drive** or **fundraiser** to support JRS
- Inviting a JRS Refugee Leader to speak at your school
- Starting a Refugee Solidarity Student Group
- Integrating refugee and asylum topics into **classroom learning**



READY, SET,

FUNDRAISE!

Thank you for standing in solidarity with refugees and people seeking asylum. By learning about forced displacement and seeking asylum, and by fundraising for JRS Australia, your school is helping to build a more welcoming and compassionate Australia – one where everyone has the chance to live with safety, dignity, and hope.

Every dollar you raise will make a real difference for people who have been forced to flee their homes and are rebuilding their lives here in Australia. Your support will help JRS Australia continue to provide casework, emergency relief, food and employment support to refugees and people seeking asylum, ensuring everyone feels seen, valued and supported.

We know that fundraising takes planning, teamwork and creativity – and that’s why the next few slides are here to help.

From all of us at JRS Australia, thank you for walking alongside refugees and people seeking asylum.



FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Need some inspiration? Here are some tried-and-tested (and fun!) ways to raise funds & stand in solidarity with people seeking asylum and refugees.

Host a Bake Sale or Sausage Sizzle: Everyone loves a sausage sizzle or sweet treat! Sell food, drinks or sweet treats at recess or lunch to raise money.



Dress-up day: From a pyjama day to crazy hair or sock day, or even a **JRS-themed Blue and Orange Mufti Day**, there are endless options! Ask everyone to donate to participate and turn it into a friendly competition to see who can best match the theme.

Host a Morning Tea, Potluck or Multicultural Lunch: Share dishes from your culture or family traditions, and ask for donations to attend.

Get active for a good cause: Host a fun run, walkathon, or sports challenge and invite participants to collect sponsorships.



Movie or Trivia Night: Turn your school hall into a cinema or quiz arena for an evening of fun! Charge a small entry fee and sell snacks or drinks, with all proceeds going to JRS.



School fete or market: A bigger event that brings the whole school community together! You can start small with a few stalls or go big with live music, games, and face painting. Encourage each class or group to run a stall and donate their proceeds to JRS.



Talent Show: Let your classmates showcase their talents – singing, dancing, performing, or even comedy! Ask for an entry fee or donation per performance.

Art or Writing Exhibition: Invite your classmates to create artworks or write short stories inspired by stories of resilience, belonging and hope. Display them and invite parents and teachers to attend. Ask for an entry fee or encourage donations at the door.

OUR TOP TIPS!

Here's a step-by-step guide to help you plan and promote your fundraiser!



Step 1: Choose your fundraising idea

Pick something that excites your group and suits your school! Check out the **fundraising ideas** on **page 10** for inspiration or come up with your own creative idea.



Step 3: Pick a date and get permission

Check your school calendar and talk to your teacher to confirm your fundraising idea and date. Make sure you allow enough time to plan and promote your event.



Step 2: Form your team and set a goal

You'll achieve more (and have more fun!) when you work together. Gather a small group of friends, classmates, or your school's social justice team. Decide who will be in charge of tasks like promotion, collecting donations, and setting up on the day. You might also want to set a fundraising goal to work towards together!



Step 4: Spread the word

The more people who know about your fundraiser, the bigger the impact! Put up posters, put an announcement in your school newsletter, and announce it at your school assembly. You can find ready-to-use resources on **page 13**.

OUR TOP TIPS!

Step 5: On the Day

- **Prepare your space:** Hang up posters, banners, and decorations
- **Share why you're fundraising:** Take a moment to share why you're fundraising. You could share information about JRS and talk to your school community about the importance of creating a more welcoming Australia. Connecting your fundraiser to a real cause inspires generosity and empathy.
- **Capture the moment:** Take plenty of photos and videos! Please share these with us by emailing schools@jrs.org.au or tagging JRS Australia on social media
- **Most importantly, have fun!** Enjoy seeing your hard work come to life and celebrate the positive impact you're making.

Step 6: Get in Touch with Us!

Email us at schools@jrs.org.au and tell us:

- What fundraising idea you chose
- How the event went
- How much you raised
- Any photos or stories you want to share



Step 7: Donate your Funds

Now that you have collected all your donations, you can pass these on to JRS Australia in three ways: donate on our **website**, **visit our office** and hand your cash donations to us in person, or transfer the donations to our **bank account**.

Account Name: Jesuit Refugee Service

BSB: 062014

Account Number: 00801043

Please include your school name and contact details in the description so we know who to thank!



SPREADING THE WORD

The more people who know about your fundraiser, the bigger the impact.

Hang up posters, put an announcement in your school newsletter or announce it at your school assembly!



Click [here](#) or scan the QR code below for some posters you can use to assist with your fundraiser & for a notice to include in your school newsletter!

