



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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Serving Refugees in West Michigan

By ELIMU, School Impact Program

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West Michigan

By
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Who are Refugees?



A refugee is someone 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 to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country."

UNRC (U.N Geneva convention, 1951)



Refugees Come to America...



- Afraid
- Anxious
- Excited
- Bewildered

Flee their native countries because of...

- Hunger
- War and Torture
- Religious Persecution
- Political Oppression
- Constant Violence



Refugees have experienced...



- **Constant hunger and violence**
 - **Never-ending fear and frequent movement to hide or to be safe**
 - **Little or no education and disruption of productive lives**





Refugee Camps

Many refugees have spent most of their lives in refugee camps where:

- Everything is scarce
- Safety is not guaranteed
- Schools may not exist



They have typically left behind...

All of their belongings

Family members

Friends and neighbors

Heirlooms

Religious artifacts

Familiar environment,
weather, and lifestyle

Personal documents

Family history



ELIMU (SCHOOL IMPACT) PROGRAM

Helps refugee children, youth, and parents acclimate to the U.S. school system by offering...



- Orientation Sessions
- Support Groups
- Cultural Awareness Training
- ESL Classes
- Tutoring
- Interpretation



When refugees are enrolled in local schools...



- Everything is new and different
- The experience can be overwhelming



Imagine...



It is time for lunch in the cafeteria and

- You do not recognize the food
- You have no idea how to pay for the food
- You do not understand the language
- You do not know any of the students
- You do not know where to sit



It is often hard for refugee students to understand the constant activity in American Schools



- Where is everyone going?
 - How do they fit in?
- Why are there so many teachers?
- What are the teachers talking about?





Refugee students adapt more quickly if...

- They learn key words in English
- They develop confidence
- They learn social skills
- They make friends
- Teachers/School Staff are patient with them



Refugee students can be...

- Hopeful
- Quick learners
- Eager to learn
- Thrilled to be in an American school



What can confuse refugee students?

- Classroom rules
- Punctuality
- Working in groups
- Cafeteria routines
- Sports and clubs
- Moving from class to class
- Organization and study skills



What can frighten refugee students?

- Fire and lockdown drills
- Health exams
- Police officers in schools
- School buses
- Changing clothes for physical education



How can you help?



- Research refugee cultures.
- Reach out to parents and Refugee Centers.
- Make a referral to ELIMU for educational support.

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