

What Causes Influxes of Refugees and How We Can Help

The refugee problem is a global problem, and its main causes are because of war and conflict, but also because of politics, religion, race, etc. The chaos brought upon by wide-ranging influences has caused much trouble for the international community, creating global and regional issues that challenge governments and the social fabric of the entire world.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, there has been all kinds of news about the war in various media and newspapers. Photos of destroyed buildings, dead people, and weaponry firing have filled the news. What disturbed me the most is that a large number of women, children, and elderly people have been displaced from their homes, with bitter tears and dismal expressions, full of fear for the unknown future.

Refugees are like birds scattered in panic when a tree falls. They lived peacefully not long ago, living a relatively comfortable life, and now because of war, have become displaced and homeless. They packed their bags, held their children tightly, and embarked on the road of escape. But they do not know how bumpy the road ahead is, or how long it will take to return to their previous life. They don't even know if they can return to their home country eventually, or whether they will become foreigners forever.

The sudden bursts of tensions in Russia and Ukraine are one of the main causes of this refugee problem. There are no absolute winners but definite losers in the war, and the same is true for Russia and Ukraine. It is indeed a tragedy that two countries are fighting each other. Ukrainians and Russians are both Slavic races. The two countries are not only connected by mountains and rivers, but also share common ancestors and cultures. It's truly sad to see them fight, when already, there are many troubles in the world aside from war.

As of 3/17/2022, according to the United Nations refugee agency, more than 3.1 million Ukrainians have fled the fighting and sought asylum in neighboring countries. It is estimated that there could be more than 4 million refugees. This will be "Europe's biggest refugee crisis this century".¹ The influx of refugees will undoubtedly increase the economic pressure and hidden dangers of social governance in the receiving countries.

The welcoming reception shown by many governments and communities in EU countries to those fleeing Ukraine is encouraging, including the decision by EU member states to activate temporary protected status and award residence permits for them. The solidarity shown by the Ukrainian refugees is a "light in a situation of despair and sadness".²

However, not everyone is welcoming. Some people believe that a large influx of refugees will bring a heavy economic burden and security risks to the recipient countries. Many people have protested refugees coming to their countries-sometimes with violence. While their concerns may have some form of truth to it, refugees often bring economic growth to the countries they flee to.

Many examples in history have proved that the arrival of a large number of refugees has not only not caused social disasters as some expected, but has effectively promoted local economic prosperity and social development. An example of this happening is when Cuban refugees arrived in Miami to escape the oppression of a dictator.

The first Cubans came to Florida because it was close to Cuba and because of civil war and unrest in Cuba. They believed that they could soon go back to Cuba after

¹ "Ukraine Refugee Situation - UNHCR data portal." 15 Mar. 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>. Accessed 17 Mar. 2022.

² "For Ukraine's Refugees, Europe Opens Doors That Were Shut." 3 Mar. 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/26/us/politics/ukraine-europe-refugees.html>. Accessed 17 Mar. 2022.

order was restored in the country.³ However, circumstances continued to worsen and more people fled to Florida. Eventually, around five hundred thousand Cubans migrated to Florida.⁴ At first, the Cubans were thought of as nothing more than an economic burden. The views on Cubans changed however, when people discovered that the immigrants brought financial gain to the people of Miami.⁵ This brings me back to my point which is, a great way to handle refugees assimilating them into community life. That way, the immigrants get a relatively normal life, while everyone shares the economic benefits.

Nowadays, whenever there is a refugee problem, most countries simply open their borders to the refugees. Although this is a workable solution in the short-term, the problem needs to be solved on a long-term basis. The long-term goal should be to work for no country borders and a fairer society. Another goal to work for is world peace. That way, people wouldn't get displaced from their home. Then, no refugees wouldn't need to flee! Without fleeing refugees, there would be no protests or complaints, making it a win-win for all sides.

There is also a local layer to the refugee issue: how communities welcome refugees. After experiencing trauma and heartbreak, anyone would want to be welcomed in a new place. There are many ways to welcome a refugee. One way is to simply be there and be kind. To talk and let the refugee(s) express themselves. Another is to help the refugee get used to the area they are in by showing them the way around. Just fourteen days after the war started, I have already seen a Ukrainian refugee in my school. When I saw her standing alone in a corner, I went and talked to her. Instantly,

³ "Cuban Exiles in America | American Experience | Official Site | PBS." <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/castro-cuban-exiles-america/>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2022.

⁴ "Cuban migration to Miami - Wikipedia." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_migration_to_Miami. Accessed 12 Mar. 2022.

⁵ "The 350,000 Cubans in south Florida make a remarkable success" 29 Sep. 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/09/29/archives/miami-si-cbua-no-the-350000-cubans-in-south-florida-make-a.html>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2022.

she became happier, because she knew that people cared about her. As usual, the most effective way was the simplest way: to be kind and friendly.

So, let the doves of peace fly, may the refugees live in peace; light the candles of blessing, may the refugees have no suffering; wipe away the tears of the children, may their dreams not be destroyed; heal the wounds of the disaster, and may the future be more magnanimous. With all the good wishes, we can always take small steps at being kind. Every single act of kindness adds up, and together, we can make our community more diverse and more accepting.