

# SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

## Leadership Guide

Mobilise your church to respond to one of today's largest humanitarian crises



Three children in an informal tented  
settlement for Syrian refugees in Lebanon  
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## HOW TO USE THIS LEADERSHIP GUIDE

Set aside an hour to gather the leaders in your church and walk through this material together. It's designed to help you more thoroughly understand the refugee crisis and prepare to engage your congregation.

To dive deeper into one of the most tragic crises of our time, visit

[www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update)

Dear friends,

Thank you for your interest in World Vision's work with vulnerable children in Syria.

The conflict in Syria has caused suffering on an almost unimaginable scale. **More than 10 million people, half of whom are children**, have been forced to leave their homes to seek safety and support to meet their basic needs for food, water and shelter.

World Vision is working with Syrian children and their families inside Syria and as refugees in neighbouring countries to both meet their urgent needs and provide long term support.

Children are innocent victims of the violence. A whole generation of children have grown up knowing nothing but war, and the effects will last long after the war is over. Millions of children are missing out on their education and the nurture and security that we believe every child should receive. Many will also face abuse and exploitation.

In the midst of this suffering, I believe the local Church can make a difference in standing with the world's most vulnerable children, as a sign of God's unconditional love. Our founder Bob Pierce prayed "Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God." This prayer continues to inspire our work to this very day.

My prayer is that you will join us in seizing this moment and respond to the remarkable opportunity we have to demonstrate the love of Christ to His children.



Tim Pilkington

Tim Pilkington, CEO,  
World Vision UK



*The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.*

—Psalm 9:9 (NIV)

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## Why the Church must respond to the Syrian refugee crisis

In Lebanon, 6-year-old Aiya and her siblings wake up screaming in terror. They're still haunted by the memory of their father, a humble farmer in Syria, being killed by a rocket blast. Like millions of others, this family fled their home with little more than the clothes on their backs. "I'm terrified for our livelihood," says Aiya's mother. "We have nothing."



Aiya (centre) aged 6 and her siblings, refugees in Lebanon.  
©2014 Nicholas Ralph / World Vision.

**65 million people globally are displaced, just like Aiya.** We are witnessing the greatest displacement of people in recorded history, and the Church cannot stay silent. The refugee crisis is unlike any other poverty issue – it is suffering of a different kind. Following the example of Jesus, who entered into suffering for our sake, we as Christian leaders must come alongside the hurting and help the distressed.

**For refugees – especially the children – life is full of trauma, desperation, and heartbreak.** These children have been ripped from the lives they once knew. They have little stability, and virtually no resources. Most can no longer go to school, and because of their uncertain circumstances, they face the further tragedies of early marriage, child labour and recruitment into armed groups. Childhood is being lost. It's happening right now, and *an entire generation is at risk*.

**Whatever the reason, people forced from home need our help.** Refugees are running from war and violence; natural disasters; religious persecution; political oppression and ethnic injustice; food crisis, drought, and famine. They run in fear for their lives – either within their own country (*internally displaced people*) or to another country (*refugees*).

**Half of all refugees have been in exile for over 10 years.**

**On average, 24 people were displaced from their homes every minute of every day during 2015.**

**Half of the world's refugees are children.**

**One of every 113 people in the world is now a refugee.**

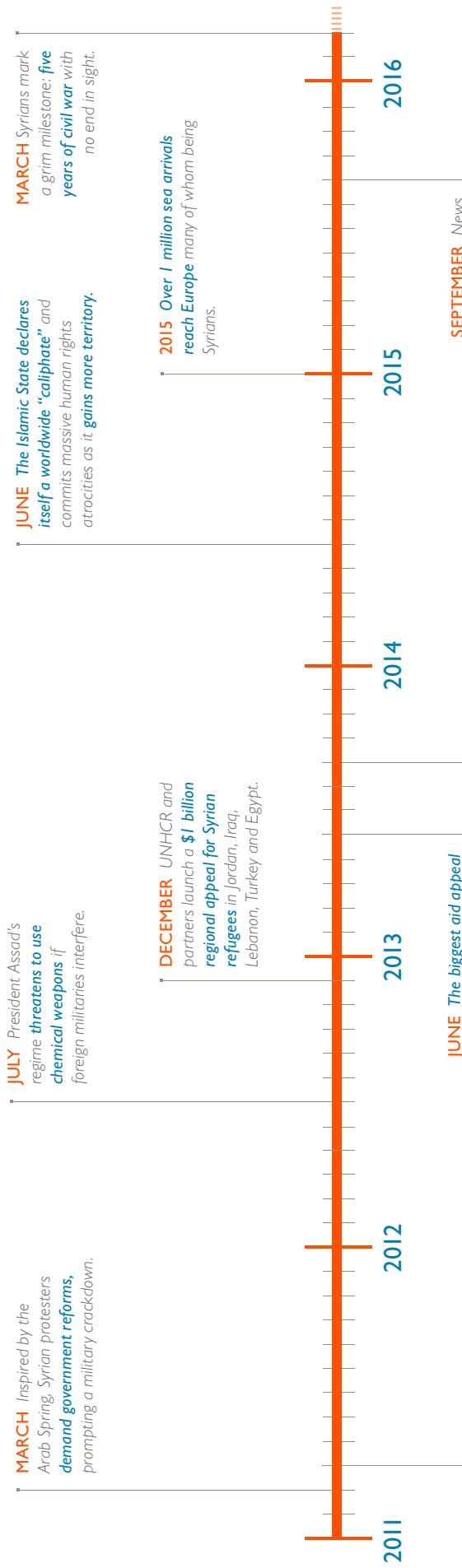
**One in every five displaced people worldwide is from Syria.**

**10 million people** have been forcibly displaced with **4.8 million Syrian refugees leaving the country and 6.3 million displaced within**. More than half are children. That's like every person in London and Manchester becoming homeless. Before the conflict, many Syrian families had lived like us. Now parents and children are leaving their homes and all their belongings to flee in search of peace, while their homes are being destroyed by fighting.

*See the next page for a quick background on the six-year conflict in Syria and its humanitarian impact. »*

## THE REFUGEE CRISIS – AND OUR ROLE

# SYRIA TIMELINE » From protests to international war



Syrian refugee family warms themselves by a fire in a ditch in front of their tents, burning garbage to stay warm. Lebanon. @ 2015 Jon Warren / World Vision.



Bullet holes from an intense battle scars a building in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon. @ 2015 Jon Warren / World Vision.



Barakat, 80, (left) with his nieces, Amira, 10, Aziza, 2, and, Ahlia, 3. Refugees in Iraq. @ 2014 May Kate / World Vision.

## A biblical mandate: What the Bible says about refugees

God's love prompts us to break the silence – and show His mercy

Throughout Scripture we see that God's heart of compassion is with the poor and the outcast. His ear is tuned to the stranger and foreigner in the midst of their lament. *The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow . . . (Psalm 146:9, NIV).*



Beginning with Hagar, who was displaced when she was expelled from Abraham's household, **we see this theme of God helping and protecting refugees, foreigners, and the dispossessed.** So it's no surprise that God revealed to Moses instructions for their treatment. *You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt (Exodus 23:9, ESV).* The basis for the command rests in the Israelites' own suffering at the hands of the Egyptians: *You know how it feels to be a sojourner.*

And Leviticus 19:33-34 (NIV) instructs Israel, *When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.* This was unprecedented in its time and even today: **Treat the foreigner like you would treat your native-born – like your family.** Love them. Help them out. Offer kindness. Don't take advantage of them. Show compassion. Be merciful. Care about what happens to them.

Jesus picks up this thread while answering the timeless question from the “expert in the law”: *Who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:29)*. The story serves as an illustration of how **we're called to rise above cultural differences and serve one another as fellow humans.** The Samaritan helped the Jewish man, despite their differences in culture and beliefs. *Go and do likewise,* Jesus then commands in Luke 10:37.

**These marching orders remain true for us.** We are to offer help freely to those who need it. We are to care for those hurting and beaten on life's road – no matter who they are.

**Together, let us answer God's call to serve the oppressed and suffering.** Let us help refugees and others displaced by conflict, oppression, and other tragedies. We have a mandate to show God's love to children and families in horrifying circumstances. This brings honour to our Saviour and Teacher.

“The refugee crisis is more than a political issue. It's an issue that serious-minded Christ-followers cannot ignore. Christians, especially the leaders amongst us, must engage and figure out solutions to serve those in great need with the love we receive from Christ.”

– Bill Hybels, Founder and Chairman of the Board, Willow Creek Association

## Ways to discuss the crisis with your leadership team

As leaders in the Church, it's on us to start talking about this crisis. We've seen the facts and we've heard the stories, but now we need to decide what to do about them. It's our responsibility to cast a vision for how our churches – individually and together – are going to live out God's command to love and serve the sojourner. With your team, take the time to read Father Daniel's story on page 10. Afterwards, use these questions to explore with your team how you'll respond.

1

What part of Father Daniel's story (Page 10) stood out to you? If you were to find yourself in his situation, how would you and your leadership team react? How do you think your church would react?

2

Take some time to think about your church's view of the refugee crisis, both in Syria and around the world. Has it been on your heart? Has it been on others' hearts? How does this view compare with what the Bible says about responding to refugees and foreigners? (To start the conversation, review Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, and Matthew 25:35.)

3

What are some ways you (and your team) could bring greater attention to the crisis in both your church and your community?

4

What barriers might you encounter, both inside and outside the church, when talking about the refugee crisis?

5

If you haven't already, think about what kind of global impact you would like your church to make, and begin casting a vision together. How can serving and praying for refugees tie in with that vision?

6

What do you think might happen to the children of Syria – and other displaced children around the world – if we fail to respond to this crisis?

More information at [www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update)

*“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you invited me in ...”*

—Matthew 25:35 (NIV)

*A cross erected on a steep hillside above Zahlé city, Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.  
© 2016 Jon Warren / World Vision.*

## Lead your team in a time of prayer for refugees

Seeking God's heart for refugees leads us to respond with action and assistance – and with an outpouring of prayer. Use these prayer points for yourself and with your team, lifting up the plight of refugees to God.

- » Pray that God will aid families who have fled their home country and guide them to safe communities.
- » Pray for families to get critical resources like shelter, food, water, and healthcare.
- » Pray that children whose educations have been disrupted will be able to resume classes and prepare for a brighter future.
- » Pray specifically for churches and pastors in host countries in the Syria region to be welcoming and supportive of refugees by meeting their ongoing physical and spiritual needs.
- » Pray for government leaders around the world to show compassion to refugees by providing both immediate aid and support for long-term solutions.
- » Pray for the global Christian community to show the fullness of God's love through compassion, prayer, and material support.

## SYRIAN REFUGEES: FAST FACTS

An enormous humanitarian crisis

The violent civil war has left 13.5 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance.

4.8 million Syrians are refugees and 6.3 million are displaced within Syria; half of these are children.

Most displaced Syrians remain in the Middle East – in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and other parts of Syria; less than 10 percent have fled to Europe.

More than 2.5 million children are missing out on school.

This crisis has created a generation of children who know nothing but war.

Children are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation in unfamiliar and overcrowded conditions. Without adequate income to support their families, and fearful of their daughters being molested, refugee parents – especially mothers on their own – may opt to arrange early marriage for girls, some as young as 13.

Many of these children have to work and support their families. Often they labour in dangerous or demeaning circumstances for little pay.

In 2015 more than one-third of children were killed in Syria while at or en route to school.

Over 750 medical personnel have been killed in attacks on medical facilities since the war began.



*Khouloud, 1 year old refugee girl, holds her mother Mahal's hand. Lebanon.  
© 2015 Jon Warren / World Vision.*

Middle Eastern churches are serving refugees:

## FATHER DANIEL'S STORY

In Iraq, Father Daniel oversees a camp of hundreds of displaced Iraqi Christians, most of whom fled their villages in the summer of 2014. It's a heavy responsibility, especially for someone who's only 26.



*Father Daniel with displaced children in northern Iraq*

It isn't something he would have imagined doing only a few years ago. Before becoming a priest, he studied to become a doctor in Ukraine. When Muslim classmates asked him questions about his faith, he wanted to respond thoughtfully and thoroughly, so he took online theology classes. As a result of those studies, he decided, as he says, "to become a spiritual doctor instead of a regular doctor."

It's an appropriate comparison, especially since Father Daniel's flock is hungry for healing. "What happened to them was a big trauma," he says. "They need to be educated on how to deal with this loss. It's really big. They worked for so many years. They have nothing."

As many as 1,600 people were cared for in the first year. Today, with refugees moving to and from different communities, about 700 still live here – and Father Daniel knows every child in the camp by name. When he walks through the camp, they gravitate toward him, holding his hand and basking in his smile. World Vision works with him to provide their families with crucial resources like food vouchers, healthcare, and safe places for the children to play and learn.

It's going to take time, but he knows that these children – and all the displaced – can recover. When the children first came to the camp he asked them to draw their feelings. They drew guns, bombs, and war. But six months later, he repeated the exercise. "'Now draw your dream,' I said. I saw pictures of doctors, teachers, singers, and dancers ..."

Father Daniel's heart for these children and families is obvious to anyone who's met him. In Iraq, he stands as a shining example of what it means to lead with a heart that mirrors God's.

As pastors and leaders, we too can reflect God's heart for those forced from their homes. It's our responsibility to share this heart with our congregations, and lead them to serve God by serving those in need. Christ is working in and through Father Daniel. Will you invite him to work in and through you and your church?

## FROM A CHURCH LEADER: A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

By Philip Jinadu

*Philip Jinadu is one of the senior leaders of the Woodlands group of churches in Bristol, and heads up their city centre congregation.*

Nothing can prepare you for Azraq Refugee Camp. Over an hour's drive from civilisation, across an unfinished motorway threaded through the desert, you finally get to Azraq - a huge, sprawling camp in the middle of nowhere. Row upon row of white metal huts stretch into the distance, even and sterile.

Walking through the camp you get a sense of lives on hold, a purgatory existence where 30,000 people are kept safe from harm, but going nowhere. Perhaps that's why so many Syrian refugees have chosen to leave and take their chances living in regular Jordanian communities. Azraq could take many more, but few want to stay here.

Yet for the 80 per cent of refugees who live in host communities, life is bleak in other ways. Last week I met families unable to work, struggling and uncertain about the future. They were people I could so easily identify with, people who had regular jobs and houses and cars...right up until they found themselves in the middle of a conflict they had no say over. Most of them stayed for as long as they could until shellings and starvation forced them to find a way out.

"We're not terrorists," one man told us. "We just want a future for our children."

It seems the refugees face a stark choice between the soulless camps and a hand-to-mouth existence on the margins of society.

Yet, speaking to refugee families inside the camp and in the communities, I came away with a very real sense of hope. And it's because of the nature of the work that World Vision is doing in Jordan.

We saw World Vision's work in schools, giving both Syrian and Jordanian children the opportunity to catch up with schooling they've missed. It's hard for Syrian children to register with schools struggling to meet the vast need.

And any child that falls behind by three years is automatically excluded from the educational system for good. World Vision's after-school classes enable excluded children to get educated and catch up. The children I met were full of optimism, dreams for their future and hope about what they could achieve.



*Philip and his wife Kate at  
Azraq Refugee Camp.  
©2016 / World Vision*

(cont.)

(From a church leader, cont.)



A group of young boys played on a hill overlooking the Azraq refugee camp, Jordan  
© 2016 Christopher Lee / World Vision

In the camps I heard about school feeding programmes, encouraging children to come to school each day. And I found 'fun' spaces, like the amazing football pitch built by World Vision, a bright beacon of green Astroturf in the middle of the rocky desert. A place that not only serves children, but where men, unable to work, can feel what it's like to be normal, enjoy life, form a community and build relationships.

"This is the height of their joy every week," the coach there told us.

The Syrian refugee situation is a humanitarian crisis on a scale we've not seen before. But I came away convinced more than ever that what World Vision does as part of this response is vitally important.

It's about more than just the mechanics of housing and feeding, processing and monitoring. It's about restoring dignity, care and hope – sometimes through the little things that don't make it onto a government spread sheet. It's about putting the human back into humanitarian.

## What are World Vision UK doing to help?

In the face of the world's worst refugee crisis, we launched a massive response in May 2011 to reach as many displaced Syrian families and children as possible. We work in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. We provide a wide range of services in all countries that span a wide range of sectors. We're helping children and their communities through the provision of essential items like food, clean water and sanitation solutions such as rubbish collection and rehabilitation of damaged water infrastructure, household and winter supplies, hygiene kits and baby supplies. We also support the fractured healthcare services so that they continue to offer health and protection services to affected populations. We're also running child protection activities in schools and Child Friendly Spaces, which are safe places where children can find some normality in the chaos they live in, receive emotional support, and feel like children again.



*Three boys play on the outskirts of Rajab, an Informal Tented Settlement in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley that houses Syrian refugees.  
© 2016 Jon Warren / World Vision.*

*"The Church has a clear call to do all that it can to welcome refugees into our country, our communities and into our lives. We do it for Jesus who was once a refugee fleeing terror in Bethlehem when he was only a small child. And we do it for Jesus because he made it very clear that our response to strangers in need is one of the clearest evidences of our profession of Christian faith. When we do this for the least, the last and the lost in society – we do it for him."*

– Krish Kandiah, Founder Director, Home for Good

More information at [www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/syria-update)

## What can your church do?

In light of the greatest forced migration of people in our lifetime, we believe the Church can stand in the gap, by demonstrating the love and compassion of Christ, to help the millions of child refugees fleeing violence in Syria.

### PRAY

Pray as a church for refugees around the world using the prayer points on page 8, and as God leads you.

### GIVE

Children urgently still need our support as the humanitarian need continues to grow, becoming more desperate than ever.

#### How your giving can help:

**£52**

Could provide school supplies, hygiene kits, blankets and notes of encouragement to 3 children so they know they are not forgotten.

**£78**

Could provide life-saving food to a refugee family for a month.

**£175**

Could provide a child with nutritious food, clean water, medical care, education and a safe place to stay for a month.

**£885**

Can provide a survival pack for a refugee family for a month, including: food, water, rent assistance, health care and education.

**£2,400**

Will rehabilitate a dangerous building, ensuring that a family fleeing the conflict have a safe place to live rent free for 6-12 months.



*Scene from an informal tented settlement for Syrian refugees, near Zahle' in Bekaa, Lebanon. Jon Warren ©2016 World Vision*

### CONTACT

World Vision seeks to inspire and equip the Church to be a beacon of love, light and hope in the world's darkest places.

We pray that this resource will inspire your church to help make a difference in standing with the world's most vulnerable children.

If your church is interested in exploring together how we can bring hope to the world's most vulnerable children - we would be delighted to hear from you.

Please contact us at [churches@worldvision.org.uk](mailto:churches@worldvision.org.uk)





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World Vision is the world's largest international children's charity. Every day we bring real hope to millions of children in the world's hardest places as a sign of God's unconditional love.

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