



# Building Community for Climate Refugees

Mohamad Al Jounde, Gharsah  
Syria / Sweden

## ☀ Call to Action

**Support the school Mohamed created for Syrian children in Lebanon: donate through Gharsah Sweden. [gharsahsweden.org/the-school](http://gharsahsweden.org/the-school)**

## ☀ Values

- Generosity
- Initiative
- Cooperation
- Persistence
- Community Building

## ☀ Lessons Learned

**Community makes us stronger.** Build, develop, and strengthen those around you, and you will change the world.

**The Earth nurtures us.** If we respect the planet, it will provide everything we need for life.

**If you want to build solutions to global problems, support and educate individual communities.** A new world can be built one community at a time.

**Mohamad Al Jounde grew up in a family of revolutionaries: both of his parents protested in the Syrian revolution.**

Mohamad's mother planned protests in the main room of their apartment, and there were always activists coming and going in their home. In 2013, after Mohamad's mother was arrested a second time, they had to flee to Lebanon. But government regulations did not permit Syrian refugees to attend Lebanese schools. One day, when Mohamad volunteered with his mother at a nearby refugee camp, he came up with the idea to build a school. With this project, he discovered a new home, and a new style of activism. In 2017, Mohamad won the International Children's Peace Prize. He started an NGO, Gharsah Sweden, to support the refugee school in Lebanon. Even with global recognition, Mohamad is still working hard to preserve the values most important to him.

## ☀ Language Arts

**How did climate change play a role in Syria's descent into civil war?** How did the lack of access to water for farmers affect the political climate in Syria? Write a research essay in which you discuss this issue. Support your position with research from at least two independent sources.

**Using only photographs, create a series of posters** about Lebanon and the challenges Syrian refugees face there (education, living conditions, health, basic human rights).

**Create a presentation about young human rights activists in the Middle East.** Choose five of them to profile: who are they, where are they from, what is their cause, and how can people get involved in helping them?

## STEM Activities

**How much water do you use on an average day (for drinking, bathing, cleaning, etc.)?** Where does your water come from, and is it a sustainable source for the next 10 years? If not, how will that affect your daily life?

**In this [activity](#)<sup>1</sup>, identify resources and industries that are vulnerable to climate change in Syria and the Middle East generally,** and analyze the relationship between environmental changes and sociopolitical events in the region.

**Research the number of Syrian refugees who entered Lebanon the previous five years.** Calculate the average rate of growth over the past year. Then, assuming constant growth, calculate the expected average rate of growth in the coming years. Plot the points as a scatter plot and find the regression line, where the independent variable is the month and the dependent variable is the number of refugees in Lebanon. At what rate are Syrian refugees leaving Lebanon? How would this information affect the average increase of Syrian refugees in Lebanon? Source: [Refugee population in Lebanon World Bank](#)<sup>2</sup>.

## Sustainability Innovations

**Mohamad began to make an impact on his community by creating a school for climate refugees.** [Refugees International](#)<sup>3</sup> is one of the world's largest nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): it is helping to bring attention to some of the important refugee, humanitarian, and human rights issues that have resulted from climate change.

**Climate refugees have greatly benefited from the work of Mohamad and many others who have prioritized the health and education of children.** The global pandemic has created opportunities for organizations like [International TEFL Academy](#)<sup>4</sup> to promote teaching English as a foreign language. Virtual education brings layers of safety and has its advantages, but also comes with issues such as access to technology and electricity. Learn about the work of this organization. Is Syria one of the Middle East countries with access to the program? If not, should they be? How could similar programs assist Mohamad's efforts?

**In addition to climate refugees and other issues created as a rise in global temperature, Syria has been affected dramatically by its civil war.** This [article](#)<sup>5</sup> addresses the environmental impact of the ongoing conflict in Syria, including issues of air pollution, deforestation, soil and vegetation degradation, and water depletion. It concludes by suggesting green solutions and potential strategies for post-conflict relief.

## Sustainability Career Pathways

**Teacher or School Administrator.** Providing children with an education, as Mohamad has done, is one of the best ways to create a better future. Teaching is a noble profession and there are never enough passionate teachers, especially ones who have an appreciation of nature and sustainability awareness. Already convinced this is the path for you? [Here's a good guide to becoming a teacher](#)<sup>6</sup>. Want to weigh the pros and cons? [Start here](#)<sup>7</sup>.

**Social Entrepreneur.** Mohamad, like so many other young heroes, first identified a societal challenge and created a solution--a school for refugee children. Then he created a supporting organization to help sustain it. A social entrepreneur is like a business entrepreneur; but he or she creates something-- a nonprofit, business, or other initiative -- in order to solve a societal problem. Interested in becoming a social entrepreneur? Start with this article on ["What It Means to be a Social Entrepreneur."](#)<sup>8</sup>

**Refugee Aid Worker.** Tragically, as climate change triggers more disasters and more conflicts, there will be a growing number of refugees worldwide. Working with refugees, or in international aid operations, can be a difficult, but also a rewarding career. Knowing languages is essential, as is an ability to live in very basic conditions; but the reward is assisting people who are in the greatest need of help. Here is a set of [tips for becoming a refugee aid worker](#)<sup>9</sup>.

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1 <https://cmes.uchicago.edu/sites/cmes.uchicago.edu/files/Lesson%20Plan-%20Climate%20Change%20in%20the%20Middle%20East-Revised.pdf>

2 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POPREFG?locations=LB>

3 <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/climate-displacement-program>

4 <https://www.internationalteflacademy.com/>

5 <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-environmental-impact-of-syrias-conflict-a-preliminary-survey-of-issues/>

6 <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/become/>

7 <https://medium.com/teachers-on-fire/so-youre-thinking-of-becoming-a-teacher-818cb87cceb9>

8 <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281214>

9 <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/magazine/basic-tips-for-becoming-a-humanitarian-aid-worker/>

