DISCUSSION GUIDE
Imagine you are forced to leave everything behind. Your home, your friends, your belongings. Perhaps even your culture and language.

Around the world, more than 68 million people are displaced and coping with the challenges of leaving home. Leading a discussion about Brave Girl Rising is a good first step toward better understanding the life of a refugee. It’s also a good way to begin learning about the challenges that uniquely affect refugee girls.

Girls who are displaced are more susceptible to child marriage, trafficking and gender violence. They also face barriers to going to school like having to care for younger siblings. And yet, the data tells us that educating girls is one of the most effective ways to solve society’s biggest problems, including mass displacement.

We wanted to find a way to give voice to the millions of refugee girls who aren’t being heard, and went in search of a story behind the crisis. We hope the film Brave Girl Rising and these discussion questions make your gathering more meaningful.
Brave Girl Rising tells the story of Nasro, a 17-year-old girl living in one of the world’s largest refugee camps, whose courageous drive to continue her education is inspired by the magical dreams of her mother and the sisterhood of her friends.

Nasro is the most recent in a remarkable group of girls whose stories Girl Rising began to tell in 2013. Brave Girl Rising tells Nasro’s story, but by extension, the film is about the millions of young women and girls around the world who have been forced to flee their homes because of conflict and face similar challenges.
Nasro was born in Somalia. Her mother died giving birth to her, and her father was killed in the Somali conflict. She was just seven years old when she and her grandparents fled the war and famine in Somalia to make the journey to a refugee camp in Kenya.

Ten years later, Nasro still lives in the camp alongside tens of thousands of other refugees. Although conditions are difficult, she makes a life for herself and builds a “family” with other girls who share both her privations and goals. Nasro refuses to let her losses define her. Her defiant courage shows us how hope, love, and friendship can propel us beyond even the bleakest of circumstances.
More than 68 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are approximately 17 million girls. There are now more people displaced by conflict or persecution than any time since World War II.

Life in a refugee camp is unimaginably challenging. Often, there is no running water or electricity. Jobs are few or nonexistent and, in many countries, government restrictions prevent refugees from being able to travel outside of their camp. The deprivations of the camp can breed violence and danger, especially for women and girls like Nasro.

With little means of livelihood, refugees must depend on humanitarian aid agencies and the host countries for basic life necessities, like food. This means simple acts of freedom, such as deciding what you will eat for dinner, are lost because you eat whatever food rations are doled out. Difficult as it is, refugees often see life inside camps as safer and more secure than what they left behind. In many cases, the “temporary” camp becomes a permanent home, sometimes for several generations.

*Download the fact sheets on the Toolkit page or visit the Learn page for more information.*
In low- and middle-income countries, cultural tradition and gender discrimination hold girls back from reaching their potential. Girls are often the ones who care for younger children or older relatives, fetch water, and tend to household chores. Lack of economic opportunity upon graduation can also reinforce gender-limiting traditions. For example, when a family cannot afford to send all of their children to school, they often favor their sons.

These barriers can be even harder to overcome for girls who are refugees. The threat of sexual violence is even more present. The opportunity to stay in school is even slimmer.

One in five refugee girls will be victims of sexual violence (UN Women).

At the secondary level, 23% of refugee adolescents go to school, compared to 84% percent globally. In low-income countries, a mere 9% of refugees are able to go to secondary school. (UNHCR)

Refugee girls are only half as likely as their male peers to enroll in secondary school. (UNHCR).

Watching Brave Girl Rising is a first step toward understanding the barriers that hold girls back in refugee camps; discussing the film and those barriers is the first step toward breaking them down.
What is your initial reaction to Nasro’s story? What line in the script or which scene in particular resonated with you?

“No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.” Why do you think the writer, Warsan Shire, used this metaphor?

Nasro says that Dadaab is another word for “purgatory” and “limbo.” What does she mean by this?

When Nasro makes the journey from Somalia to the refugee camp, she fears that border guards will not recognize that she is human. What makes you feel “human” and how could this feeling be taken away?

How does the threat of sexual violence influence the decisions of Nasro and her friends?

At the end of the film, the girls pledge allegiance to their “daily acts of courage.” What do they mean?

Nasro’s mother, via a dream, inspires her daughter to discover her inner strength. Who in your life has helped shape your aspirations?

In what ways does Nasro remind you of yourself or others in your life?

Nasro asks, “If the war had never happened, if my skin were a different color, would life be so hard? Would hunger and thirst still feel like a birthright?” What are your reactions to her questions?

Do you know how to contact your government representatives to prioritize life skills and education programs for refugee girls? What are strategies to engage your policymakers?

The International Rescue Committee is a non-profit organization that helps refugees around the world. Do you know the non-profit organizations that are serving refugees in your community?

In addition to non-profits, some of the resources in refugee camps are donated by private companies. Do you think the business community can play a role in helping refugees? What are ways the private sector can help?

After watching the film and this discussion, do you think about your life differently? Why or why not?