

Faces of Resettlement Video Lesson Plan for Community Members

Session Title: Who is a Refugee?

Session Description

The purpose of this activity is to help participants identify some short- and long-term goals in the U.S.

Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ identify who refugees are
- ✓ identify who helps refugees resettle in the United States

Lesson Time

30 minutes

Materials

- ☐ *Who is a Refugee? Reflection Questions* (samples included), 1 per group of 4-5
- ☐ Flipchart paper (or a board) and markers
- ☐ *About Refugees Handout* (sample included), 1 per participant (optional)
- ☐ Computer, Internet, projector, and screen (or some other way to show the video to the group)
- ☐ *Faces of Resettlement* video available online at www.culturalorientation.net/learning/learning-videos/faces-of-resettlement

Session Preparation

1. Prepare the *Who is a Refugee? Reflection Questions* by printing and cutting the pages so there is one question on each slip of paper.
2. Write the *Who is a Refugee? Reflection Questions* on a piece of flipchart paper.
3. Review the *About Refugees Handout* for background information on refugees.

Session Warm-Up

1. Write the words *fear* and *flight* on a piece of flipchart paper. Conduct a “think-pair-share” exercise by asking participants to think about the following questions:
 - What thoughts come to mind when you see these words?
 - How do these words relate to refugees?

Ask participants to turn to someone near them and share their thoughts about these questions.

Bring the full group together and ask for highlights from the partner discussions.

2. Provide some basic background information about refugees by telling participants the following:

According to the Convention relating to the Status of 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 himself of the protection of that country.” This definition includes people who have experienced persecution because of political beliefs or religious activities or because they are members of a particular ethnic group. The definition does not include people who are fleeing economic hardship or are victims of earthquakes, famines, floods, and other kinds of natural disasters. These people may be deserving of humanitarian assistance or they may be admitted to the United



States as immigrants, but they are not considered refugees.

When refugees first arrive in the United States, they are assigned to a resettlement agency which helps them with their initial services. Resettlement agencies also work with other service providers in the community who assist refugees.

If needed, refer to the *About Refugees Handout* for more information about refugees.

Viewing Activity

1. Before showing the video, display the flipchart paper with *Who is a Refugee? Reflection Questions* so it is visible to all participants. Read the questions aloud.
2. Ask participants to keep these questions in mind when viewing the video, along with the earlier discussion on *fear* and *flight*.
3. Show the *Faces of Resettlement* video.

Activity and Discussion

1. Divide participants into small groups of four or five people. Ask each group to elect a spokesperson to share highlights from their small group discussions.

Distribute one *Who is a Refugee? Reflection Question* to each small group. Ask participants to discuss the questions.

If there are more than four groups, one question can be discussed by two or more groups.

2. Bring the full group together and ask spokespeople from each group to share brief highlights from their discussions.
3. Debrief the session by asking participants the following questions:
 - Who is considered a refugee?
 - Who helps refugees when they first arrive in the United States?

Variations

Distribute the *About Refugees Handout* to participants. Encourage participants to visit the Cultural Orientation Resource Center website (www.culturalorientation.net, links provided in the handout) to learn more about refugees.

Who is a Refugee? Reflection Questions

1. What reason did each person in the video give for leaving his/her country of origin?
2. Imagine that it was no longer safe for you to live where you are now. What would you have to consider as part of your decision to leave?
3. Imagine that it was no longer safe for you to live where you are now and you had to move. What would you worry about?
4. Imagine that it was no longer safe for you to live where you are now and you had to move. What would you look forward to?



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For more information about resources available from the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, visit www.culturalorientation.net.

About Refugees Handout¹

Who is considered a refugee?

In casual conversation, people use the word refugee to refer to someone who has fled his or her home, whether to escape war, natural disaster, economic hardship, or political persecution. But in the world of refugee assistance, the term has a precise legal definition. Whether a person is granted refugee status depends on why he or she fled the home country.

According to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, held by world governments in Geneva in 1951, 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 himself of the protection of that country.” This definition includes people who have experienced persecution because of political beliefs or religious activities or because they are members of a particular ethnic group. The definition does not include people who are fleeing economic hardship or are victims of earthquakes, famines, floods, and other kinds of natural disasters. These people may be deserving of humanitarian assistance or they may be admitted to the United States as immigrants, but they are not considered refugees.

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees established the legal standards for refugee protection, and the United States has signed the agreement. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), established in 1951, is the branch of the United Nations charged with the international protection of refugees. The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 authorizes the admission and resettlement of refugees to the United States.

Where do refugees live in the United States and who helps them resettle?

The United States is a land of great diversity, and refugees can be found in communities all across the country. Refugees may be resettled in small towns, big cities, or suburban communities. A refugee with close relatives already in the United States will probably be resettled where the relatives live. Otherwise, a resettlement agency will decide the best placement site based on the availability of jobs, housing, and social services.

The resettlement agency is the most important source of information and assistance during the refugees' first months in the United States. The agency does many things: It ensures that refugees are welcomed at the airport; arranges for their housing, furniture, and basic household supplies; conducts orientation; and prepares a resettlement plan. As part of the plan, the agency connects refugees with social services and employment programs.

Do you want to learn more about refugees?

For more information about refugees, visit the Cultural Orientation Resource (COR) Center website at: www.culturalorientation.net/learning/about-refugees and the U.S. Department of State website at: www.state.gov/j/prm/ra.

For detailed information on specific refugee populations, check out the COR Center's Refugee Backgrounders at www.culturalorientation.net/learning/backgrounders.

¹ The information provided in this handout comes from the COR Center website, www.culturalorientation.net/learning/about-refugees.

