

# ENGAGING WITH REFUGEES A VOLUNTEER GUIDE



**EXODUS**  
world service



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER OVERVIEW</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Volunteer Opportunities</li><li>• Volunteer Goals</li><li>• Key Expectations</li><li>• Benefits of Volunteering with Refugees</li><li>• Qualities of an Exodus World Service Volunteer</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>WHO ARE REFUGEES?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definition of a Refugee</li><li>• How Refugees Differ from Others</li><li>• Who Enter the United States</li><li>• How do Refugees Get Here?</li><li>• Security Screening of Refugees</li><li>• Admitted to the United States</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 3</b>	<b>WHO HELPS REFUGEES?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who Helps Refugees?</li><li>• What Help Do Refugees Receive?</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 4</b>	<b>WHAT IS CULTURE?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What Is Culture?</li><li>• Every Culture Is Different</li><li>• People In Every Culture Think Their Way Is Best</li><li>• Collision Course—What Happens When Two Cultures Meet</li><li>• The Cultural Adjustment Model</li><li>• Comparison of U.S. and Other Cultures</li><li>• Comparison of Cultures</li><li>• Culture Shock and Comfort Zones</li><li>• Six Key Attitudes For Communicating Across Culture</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 5</b>	<b>MEETING YOUR REFUGEE PARTNER</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Six Tips for Good Conversation</li><li>• Discussion Starters</li><li>• Suggested Activities</li><li>• Frequently Asked Questions</li></ul>
<b>SECTION 6</b>	<b>REFUGEE MINISTRY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Ministry of Presence</li><li>• Receiving and Giving</li><li>• Dohn Wants a Car</li><li>• Your Faith and Volunteering with Exodus World Service</li><li>• Seven Biblical Principles for the Care and Nurture of Refugees</li><li>• Seven Key Principles Describe God’s Abiding Concern for Refugees</li><li>• Closing</li></ul>



# Welcome

Thank you for partnering with Exodus World Service!



You are about to embark on a truly unique experience. By befriending refugees, you will meet people from different countries. You will grow in your understanding of different customs and cultures. You will not only offer hospitality, you will receive it. You may even learn a few words of a new language. But most of all, you will be enriched as you get to know people who have traveled a difficult path with remarkable courage and resiliency.

Through this experience, you will also discover more of God and His deep love, care and concern for refugees. Matthew 25:35 tells us that when we welcome the stranger, we are welcoming Christ. Through compassion, respect and a caring heart, you will bring welcome and hospitality to people who desperately need it. And you will find that Christ is present in these encounters.

The Exodus World Service staff and I are here for you throughout your volunteer experience. May God bless you as you form caring friendships with refugees in our communities.

With appreciation,

Susan Odom  
*Executive Director*



# SECTION 1

## VOLUNTEER OVERVIEW



“...you are to  
*love those who are  
foreigners,*  
for you yourselves  
were foreigners  
in Egypt.”

DEUTERONOMY 10:19



## Volunteer Opportunities

Exodus World Service brings together volunteers and refugees from around the globe and provides practical opportunities for volunteers to respond to God's call to welcome refugees who are new to their community. Exodus provides opportunities for volunteers and refugees to build bridges of understanding, cross-cultural learning, and friendship.

Volunteers are people from the local community who are willing to spend time on a regular basis with a newcomer. They do not need any special skills or talent. Volunteers bring an open heart and a willingness to learn and grow. They share their knowledge of the local community and their friendship.



Refugees have fled their homeland because of persecution or a fear of persecution. They made the difficult decision to leave behind friends, family, possessions, career, home, and country, because that was their only hope for freedom and safety. They were invited by our government to begin a new life in the U.S. Most refugees arrive with nothing more than the clothes they are wearing and a few bags of personal possessions. They face the difficult challenge of rebuilding their lives in a place far from home. But they bring their knowledge of the culture they left behind and their hope for the future.

Both volunteers and refugees benefit from the new relationship that grows over time. Getting to know someone from another culture helps volunteers to learn more about God, other people and themselves. Meeting someone from the local community helps refugees get established in their new home.

## Volunteer Goals

**1**

To respond to God’s call to welcome the “stranger in our midst.”

Numerous Bible passages describe how God wants us to treat refugees—the strangers and sojourners in our midst. God makes it clear that He takes extraordinary interest in refugees and He expects His people to do the same.

**2**

To build bridges of understanding, cross-cultural learning, and friendship.

### Understanding

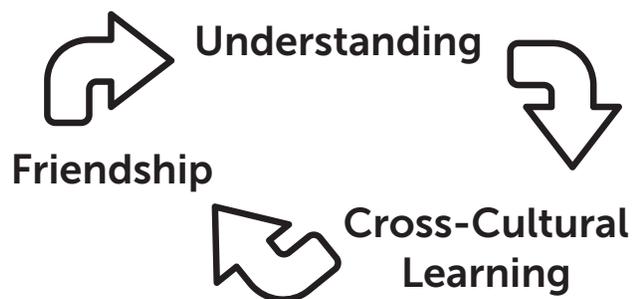
You will help refugees who are new to the community adjust to life in the United States. You will have the opportunity to share your knowledge of American language and culture and introduce your refugee partner to the community.

### Cross-Cultural Learning

The learning will go both ways. In addition to sharing what you know, you will learn from your refugee partner about the similarities and differences between the United States and his/her former country and culture.

### Friendship

You will meet with your refugee partner on a regular basis. Through these shared activities, opportunities for deeper understanding and friendship can develop and deepen.



## Key Expectations

### The role of the volunteer is to “be there” for your refugee partner.

Refugees face many challenges as they build new lives in the United States. In most cases, refugees begin their new life with a lower standard of living and more limited job opportunities than the volunteers. Exodus World Service does not expect volunteers to solve all of their refugee partners’ problems or to help their refugee partners create a life that is just like the volunteers’. Your role as a volunteer is simply to walk with your refugee partner—listening, supporting, and encouraging—through the struggles and joys of building a new life.

### Relationships will be mutually beneficial.

Both volunteers and refugee partners have gifts to share and needs to be met. Exodus World Service expects that the relationships that evolve will flow two ways. Volunteers and refugees will both give and receive, as well as teach and learn.

### Relationships will be based on respect.

Every participant, both volunteer and refugee partner, is a uniquely created child of God. Exodus World Service expects that volunteers and refugee partners will recognize and respect the special qualities that both partners bring to the friendship.

### Involvement requires commitment.

The relationships formed are based on regular, shared interactions. Exodus World Service expects that volunteers and refugee partners will make a deliberate, informed, and intentional commitment to participate and will fulfill that commitment to the best of their ability.



### Reflection

What expectation(s) might you let go of when entering into this new friendship?

What does it mean to you to “be there” for a friend?

## Benefits of Volunteering with Refugees

As a volunteer with Exodus World Service, involvement with a refugee partner is an opportunity to:

- Learn more about God, other people and yourself
- Communicate God's love by sharing your time and talents
- Learn about another culture
- Help someone adapt to life in the United States
- Gain a new perspective on international events
- Develop an appreciation for the freedom and opportunities in the United States

## Qualities of an Exodus World Service Volunteer

You do not need to speak a foreign language or have overseas experience to be a volunteer. You do need to be:



- Willing to serve others
- Approachable
- Respectful of others
- Flexible
- Able to laugh
- Strong sense of identity
- Open to making new friends
- Able to make and keep commitments
- A good communicator and listener

Strive to attain or strengthen these qualities. They are the ones you will draw on to make this a meaningful and growing experience.

### Reflection

What special qualities do you bring to friendship?

How will you share these qualities with your refugee partner?

## SECTION 2

# WHO ARE REFUGEES?



“The foreigner residing among you  
must be treated  
as your native-born.

*Love them  
as yourself...”*

LEVITICUS 19:34



## Definition of a Refugee

The international community agreed to a common definition of “refugee” in 1951 with the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. The United States Congress legally adopted this definition when it passed the Refugee Act of 1980. This definition states that:

A refugee is a person who has been forced to leave his/her homeland and is unable to return because she or he has experienced persecution or has a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution can be related to race, nationality, religion, political opinions, or membership in a particular social group.



### Reflection

If you had to flee your home and your country, what would you bring with you?  
Why?

## How Refugees Differ from Others Who Enter the United States

A variety of different words are used when discussing newcomers to our country. Although the words are often used interchangeably, each term has a distinct meaning:



© UNHCR/Basam Diab

**Refugees** are people who have been forced to leave their own country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees are outside the borders of the United States when they request an opportunity to begin a new life in our country. Unless the situation in their country changes, refugees are unable to safely return to their homeland.

**Asylees** also flee their own country because of persecution. Asylees are also unable to safely return

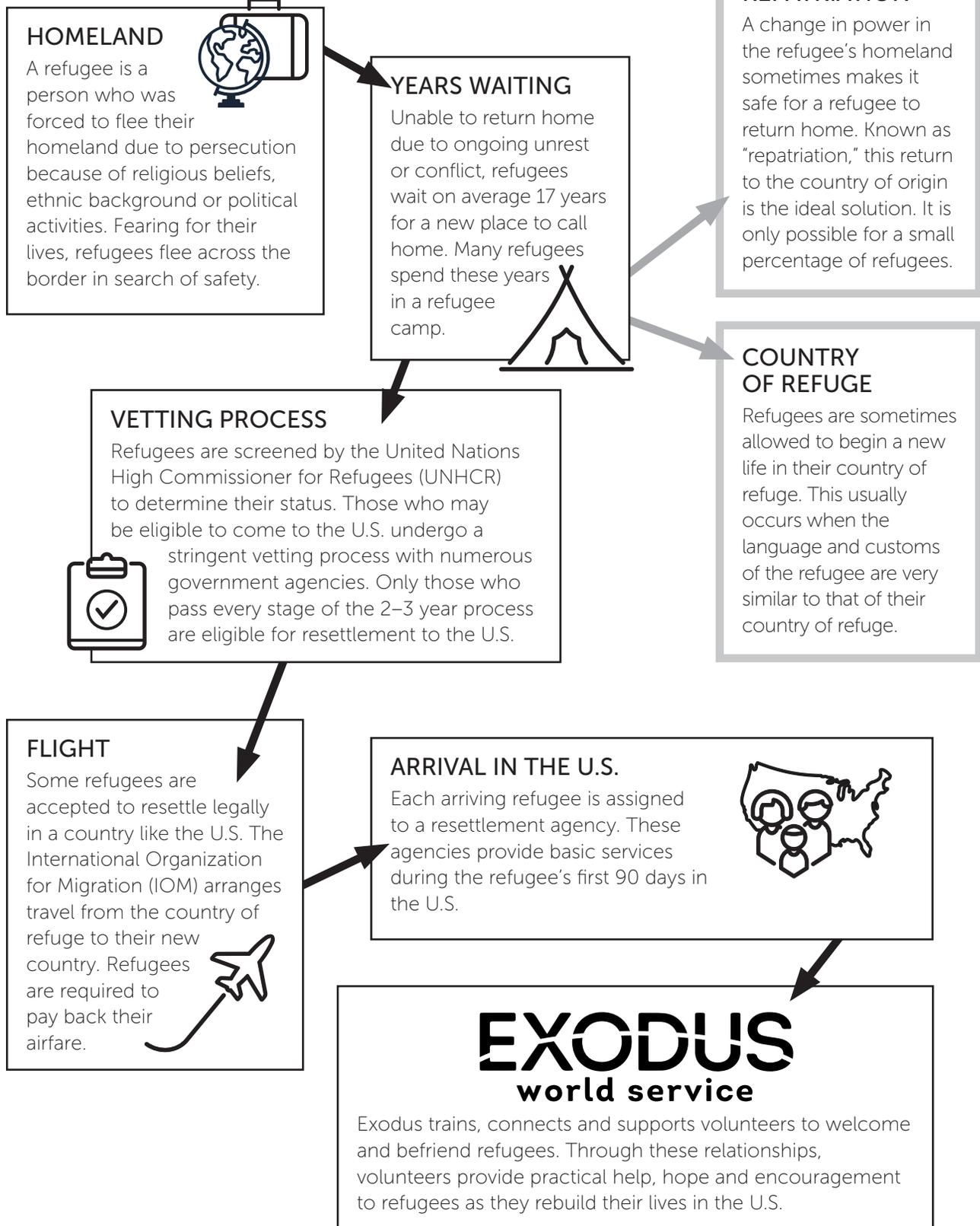
to their homeland. Unlike refugees, however, asylees are already within the borders of the United States when they request permission to stay. Asylees usually enter the U.S. with a temporary visa (visitor, tourist, etc.) and then request permission to remain permanently.

**Immigrants** are people who come to the United States for family or economic reasons. Immigrants choose to leave their own country and can usually return safely at any time. Immigrants are allowed to permanently live and work in the United States if they have close family members already living here who are willing to sponsor them or if they have job skills that are in demand in the United States. The term "immigrant" is also used broadly to refer to anyone who has come to reside in the United States from another country.

**Undocumented Immigrants (sometimes referred to as illegal aliens)** are people who come to the United States for a variety of reasons, including fear of persecution, economic necessity, or to be close to family members. The difference between undocumented immigrants and other immigrants, refugees, or asylees is that undocumented immigrants enter the United States illegally, without official authorization to live and work here.

These terms refer to newcomers who intend to reside permanently in the U.S. Another category of newcomers are those who enter the United States with a temporary visa to visit friends and relatives, travel, or study. Most temporary visitors cannot legally work in the U.S. and must return to their homeland when their visa expires.

# How do Refugees Get Here?



## Security Screening of Refugees Admitted to the United States\*

Refugees seeking resettlement in the United States must pass through a series of rigorous checkpoints aimed at ensuring they will not pose a security risk to the United States.

CHECK  
**1**  
POINT

### An Individual Registers as a Refugee with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

UNHCR collects identifying documents, biographic information, and biometric data (such as an iris scan for Syrians), and in most cases, interviews the applicant to determine if they qualify as a refugee under international law.

CHECK  
**2**  
POINT

### A Refugee Who Meets One of the Criteria for Resettlement is Referred to the U.S.

UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or a Non-Governmental Organization will refer the refugee for resettlement to the U.S. Under legislation passed by Congress, Iraqi nationals who have worked for the U.S. government, a U.S. contractor, or a U.S.-based media organization or NGO, and their family members, as well as Iraqis with family members in the U.S. can apply directly to the resettlement program without being referred by UNHCR.

CHECK  
**3**  
POINT

### Resettlement Support Centers Interview the Refugee

Contracted by the Department of State, these centers compile a refugee's personal data and background information for the security clearance process and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in-person interview.

CHECK  
**4**  
POINT

### The Department of State Checks the Refugee's Name Against the U.S. Watch List Through Its Consular Lookout and Support System

\*U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

CHECK  
**5**  
POINT

## Certain Refugees Undergo an Additional Security Review Called the Security Advisory Opinion

These cases require a positive clearance from a number of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies in order to continue the resettlement process.

CHECK  
**6**  
POINT

## The National Counterterrorism Center Conducts an Inter-Agency Check on the Applicant Within a Designated Age Range

This is a “recurrent vetting” process. USCIS will be notified of any new derogatory information identified after the initial check and up until the applicant’s travel to the U.S.

CHECK  
**7**  
POINT

## Syrian Refugees Referred to the U.S. for Resettlement are Flagged for Additional Security Screening

**Before USCIS schedules an interview with the applicant abroad, a Refugee Affairs Division officer at USCIS headquarters reviews Syrian applications.** If USCIS finds certain criteria to be met, the case is referred to the agency’s Fraud Detection and National Security Division for further review. This review includes open-source and classified research, which is compiled into a report for use by the USCIS interviewing officer.

CHECK  
**8**  
POINT

## USCIS Conducts an In-Person Interview with the Refugee Abroad at their Location

A highly trained USCIS officer conducts a detailed, face-to-face interview with the applicant as well as accompanying family over age 14. The officer collects the applicant’s fingerprints and photographs. The officer evaluates the applicant’s credibility and considers whether their testimony is consistent with country conditions. Based on the interview and the refugee’s case file, the officer will determine whether the individual qualifies as a refugee and is otherwise admissible under U.S. law.

CHECK  
**9**  
POINT

**If the Necessary Criteria are Met, the USCIS Officer Conditionally Approves the Refugee's Application for Resettlement and Submits it to Department of State for Final Processing**

CHECK  
**10**  
POINT

**USCIS Coordinates 3 Biometric Checks**

**FBI Screening**

The applicant's fingerprints are run through the FBI's Next Generation Identification System.

**DHS Screening**

The applicant's fingerprints are screened against the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Automated Biometric Identification System, which includes watch-list information as well as data on previous immigration encounters in the US and abroad.

**DOD Screening**

The U.S. Department of Defense screens fingerprints of refugees within a certain age range against its Automated Biometric Identification System. ABIS contains a variety of data, including fingerprint records from Iraq.

CHECK  
**11**  
POINT

**The International Organization for Migration or a Physician Designated by the U.S. Embassy Conduct Applicant Medical Screenings**

This screening ensures that the applicant does not have any communicable diseases that could pose a public health threat, and, as such, prohibit his or her admission to the U.S.

**Refugee Approved for Resettlement**



Refugees are matched with a sponsor agency

Refugees are offered cultural orientation while waiting for final processing

Refugees are admitted to the U.S. upon arrival at a U.S. airport

## SECTION 3

### WHO HELPS REFUGEES?



*“Do not forget to show  
hospitality to strangers,  
for by so doing  
some people have shown  
hospitality to angels without knowing it.”*

HEBREWS 13:2



## Who Helps Refugees?

Starting over is difficult. Most refugees arrive in the United States with little more than the clothes they are wearing and a few small bags of personal possessions. They suffered the trauma of persecution and the loss of their home, possessions, friends, neighbors, and sometimes family members. They survived the difficult journey from their homeland to freedom in the United States. Now they face the many challenges of building a new life.

Many individuals and organizations work together to help refugees get started. Each group has an important contribution to make:

### The Refugees

Refugees are survivors. They have successfully escaped persecution and terror in their homeland and arrived safely in the United States. Although refugees have been forced to leave most of their material possessions behind, they bring important personal qualities with them to the United States:

- Courage
- Hope
- Resiliency
- Strength



### Reflection

What do you think it would be like for you to adjust to a new culture?

## Federal Government

The federal government is responsible for United States Refugee Policy.

The federal government:

- Determines how many refugees are invited to resettle in the United States each year and from which regions of the world they will come
- Interviews refugees overseas and selects those who are invited to come to the United States; prepares them for arrival in the United States
- Grants refugees legal immigration status and permission to work in the United States
- Provides funding to resettlement agencies and state governments for refugee services
- Assigns each refugee to a resettlement agency to receive help when they first arrive in the United States

## State and Local Governments

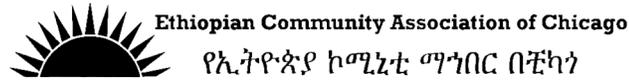
State and local governments use funding from the federal government and state and local funds to:

- Distribute financial and medical assistance to refugees (through the state Public Aid program)
- Fund local service agencies (such as resettlement agencies, mutual aid associations, and other community organizations) who help refugees find jobs, learn English, and adjust to life in the United States
- Provide primary and secondary education to refugee children

## Resettlement Agencies

National nonprofit agencies have a contract with the federal government to provide services to refugees for the first 90 days after they arrive in the United States. Each national agency works with affiliate offices in local communities throughout the United States.

**The Chicago area agencies are:**





### **The resettlement agencies:**

- Arrange housing
- Supply furniture, clothing, and other necessities
- Provide financial assistance for the first month (until funds are available through Public Aid)
- Offer orientation to the community and basic health and safety information
- Refer refugees for medical care
- Assist refugees in finding employment
- Enroll children in school and adults in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- And more

In addition to funds received from the federal government, many resettlement agencies receive funding through the state.

### **These funds are used to:**

- Provide more intensive employment and job placement services
- Teach ESL classes
- Offer additional help adjusting to the community

The refugee program was designed to be a public/private partnership. The government funding that resettlement agencies receive is not nearly enough to meet the needs of all refugees. Resettlement agencies, therefore, rely on the help of the local community. Most agencies work to gain additional support and assistance for refugees from volunteers and donors.

<sup>1</sup> Illinois Immigrant Policy Project. A joint collaboration of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the Latino Institute. 1996.

## Exodus World Service

Exodus mobilizes the Christian community to welcome and befriend refugees. Exodus World Service:

- Develops awareness of refugee needs and our Christian calling to serve refugees
- Recruits, trains, and supports volunteers
- Works with local resettlement agencies and community leaders to connect volunteers with refugee families
- Introduces innovative educational materials and service opportunities

Volunteers have a very important role to play in the lives of refugees. Volunteers:

- Provide the personalized attention and assistance refugees need during time of acclimation in United States
- Help refugees learn and practice English
- Offer orientation to the local community
- Explain and interpret American culture

## The Ethnic Community

Many refugees (but not all) will benefit from contact with others from their homeland after they arrive in the United States. Some refugees are reuniting with friends or family members who arrived in the United States before them.

The ethnic community is an important source of support for new refugees. Whether informally or formally (some ethnic communities have organized self-help agencies known as “mutual aid associations”), the ethnic community can:

- Offer help through a network where the language and culture are familiar to the refugee
- Provide current information on the refugee’s homeland
- Keep alive the language and traditions of the refugee’s homeland



## Reflection

What are some ways you can encourage your refugee friend to acclimate into their new community?

## What Help Do Refugees Receive?

### Finding an apartment

Resettlement agencies arrange for housing for refugees when they first arrive in the United States. Refugees who have family members already living in the community sometimes share an apartment with them until they become financially stable. Finding housing that refugees can afford can be very challenging, so resettlement agencies welcome housing leads. In some cases, placing a refugee in temporary housing may be necessary.

### Obtaining financial support

In most cases refugees receive financial assistance from their resettlement agency for the first 30 days after they arrive. After one month they are eligible for assistance in the form of food stamps and cash from the local Public Aid Office. This assistance is temporary and is meant to support refugees during the time it takes for them to become established in the community and find employment.



### Getting jobs

Refugees are eager to work and begin supporting themselves and their families. They receive authorization to work in the United States as soon as they enter the country. A “job developer” from the resettlement agency is assigned to each refugee upon arrival. Job skills and employment background are evaluated, and the refugees are given advice about job possibilities in the United States. Job developers are always looking for employer leads, and they help match refugees with entry level positions. Many refugees will need to improve their English skills before they can enter the job market—this is where your role is crucial. After getting their first job, refugees will try to move up to jobs with better pay or increased benefits.

## Learning English

Adult refugees take classes called English as a Second Language (ESL). These classes are funded by the federal government and are often run by community colleges, resettlement agencies, or other community organizations. ESL classes focus on teaching basic English skills with an emphasis on employment. In areas with a high density of new refugees, there are often waiting lists to enroll in classes. Refugees also need opportunities to practice their English skills outside of class.

Resettlement agencies help school-age children enroll in the local public school. ESL programs are available for children through the school system, but children also need opportunities to practice their English skills outside of the classroom.

## Accessing health care

All refugees are screened for serious health problems or communicable diseases before they are allowed to enter the United States. The resettlement agency is notified prior to arrival of any serious health concerns. All refugees receive an initial health screening at a U.S. Public Health Clinic within the first month of their arrival in the United States. In case of illness or hospitalization, refugees are covered by Medicaid for up to one year or until they are able to find employment with health benefits for themselves and their families.

## Accessing mental health services

Refugees sometimes need professional help in coping with the trauma they have suffered or in dealing with other emotional problems. Every culture has a distinct way of addressing mental health issues. American-trained mental health professionals will not be helpful or appropriate for all refugees. Linguistically and culturally appropriate mental health services are available for some refugee populations. Contact Exodus World Service for more information.

## Repaying travel expenses

The International Organization for Migration arranges flights for refugees to the United States. Refugees receive funds from a revolving loan fund to pay the cost of their airfare. They are expected to repay that money after they find work. The resettlement agencies administer the refugee travel loan program.



## SECTION 4

### WHAT IS CULTURE?



“Then the King will say to those on his right,  
‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father;  
take your inheritance,  
the kingdom prepared for you

since the creation of the world...  
*I was a stranger  
and you invited me in.’”*

MATTHEW 25:34-35



## What Is Culture?

The word “culture” refers to the “way of life” that is comfortable and familiar for you or your refugee partner. Everyone is part of a culture. We all have learned a set of behavior patterns that govern how we live. Our culture affects our manners, customs, beliefs, values, ideas, ideals, and accepted ways of behaving. In many cases, because we have been learning these behaviors from the time we were infants, we are not even aware of our culture. It is simply who we are and how things are done.

There are several important things to keep in mind about culture:

### Culture is learned.

It is not something we are born with. We learn culture by observing what people around us say, do, or think.

### Culture is a group identifier.

It describes how people in a society or community function together. There are, of course, individual differences within the group.

### Culture makes sense to the people living in it.

It is a system of attitudes and feelings that fit together in an integrated, logical way.



## Reflection

How would you describe U.S. culture?

## Every Culture Is Different

Every culture has been developed to meet the same basic societal needs:<sup>2</sup>

- Food
- Family organization
- Arts
- Clothing
- Social organization
- Knowledge/Science
- Shelter
- Government
- Religion
- Security

Different cultures, however, meet these needs in different ways. In general, cultures have not developed “right” or “wrong” solutions to these needs. They have developed **different** solutions that make sense for that culture.

Here are some ways that varying cultures develop different solutions to the same needs:

### Food

Traditional foods are usually those foods that are available in abundance in the local area. The U.S., for example, has plenty of grazing land and grain available to raise cows, pigs, and sheep. In the U.S., meat is an important part of our diet and is served at most meals. In other parts of the world, meat is difficult to get and therefore very expensive. In those cultures, common forms of protein may be beans, high-protein grains, or even insects (unthinkable to most Americans!).

### Family Organizations

The U.S. is a very mobile culture. Family members often relocate far apart. As a result, the basic family unit is usually considered in its smallest form—parents and their children. In other cultures that are more agrarian, family members live close to one another and there is a much broader understanding of the basic family unit, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

### Government

The U.S. places a high value on individualism. Americans tend to believe that although losing is regrettable, it is not shameful. Majority rule is therefore an efficient and often effective way of making decisions. In other cultures, collectivism (acting as a group in solidarity) is preferred to individualism. Losing or being out of solidarity with a group is considered shameful. In these cultures, majority rule can be schismatic and disruptive of harmony because it creates winners and losers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Survival Kit for Overseas Living. L. Robert Kohls. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Cross-Cultural Conflict—Building Relationships for Effective Ministry. Duane Elmer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

## People In Every Culture Think Their Way Is Best

Every culture is alike in one way—every culture is “ethnocentric.” That means people in each culture think their solutions to the basic societal needs are the best solutions and the solutions that make the most sense. Members of every group think that their way of doing things is the most natural and logical way to do things and that other ways of doing things are not as good or are downright wrong. We are sometimes not even aware of how our cultural values affect our judgments. As a result, outsiders from a different culture are frequently viewed as inferior.

To be able to learn from and appreciate one another, you and your refugee partner will need to move beyond the natural reaction of thinking your way is best. When you encounter differences—in behavior, in expectations, in values—try to suspend judgment. Don’t become frustrated because your refugee partner doesn’t do things in the “right” or “expected” way. Instead, step outside yourself and try to understand why your refugee partner behaves that way. Ask questions, listen, and observe. Remember, all cultures make sense to the people living in them. Look for the underlying logic or values that help explain the differences. You may still feel more comfortable with your own way of handling a situation—but you will also begin to understand and accept other approaches.

People from many cultures consider themselves “clean” and others “dirty.” Here are some different concepts of “cleanliness”:<sup>4</sup>

- Americans soak, wash, and rinse their bodies in the same bath water. The Japanese think their way is cleaner. They use different water for each step.
- Americans find it objectionable to spit or blow one’s nose into the street. People from other cultures don’t understand why Americans blow their nose into a tissue and carry it around with them for the rest of the day.
- An Orthodox Hindu from India thinks it is cleaner to eat with his own fingers than to use “dirty” knives, forks, or spoons.

*“Imagine my astonishment when I went to the supermarket and looked at eggs. You know, there are no small eggs in America; they just don’t exist. They tend to be jumbo, extra large, large or medium. Small eggs just don’t exist because, I guess, they think that might be bad or denigrating.”*

Visitor from  
the Netherlands<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Survival Kit for Overseas Living. L. Robert Kohls. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1996.

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

## Collision Course—What Happens When Two Cultures Meet

When two different cultures meet, misunderstandings occur. These misunderstandings can be minor or major. They are the result of trying to connect two very different ways of looking at the world. Don't be surprised when you find yourself frustrated or irritated or downright angry because of something your refugee partner has said or done. Don't be surprised if you offend your refugee partner in some way. This is a normal part of cross-cultural communication. What is important is not that misunderstandings occur. What is important is how you respond. The diagram on the following page illustrates two different ways to respond.

### Taking the time to learn and understand is hard work!

Some cultural differences are harder to understand and accept than others. It might not be difficult to learn to appreciate fiery hot food if your refugee partner offers it. But what if this occurs:

Bill invited his refugee partner, Thanh, to attend a special sporting event. Thanh agreed. Bill asked if he would be ready at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, and Thanh said yes. But when Bill arrived, Thanh was not at his apartment. Thanh's daughter said he went out with friends and would not be back until much later that evening. Bill knew Thanh spoke excellent English and understood what time to be ready. Bill felt angry—he had spent money on the event tickets and had gone out of his way to pick up Thanh. Why wasn't Thanh there, as he had promised?

This situation is a little harder for Bill to handle. Bill believes that if you say you are going to do something, you do it. Telling the truth is very important in his culture. He is upset, because he feels that Thanh lied to him. But if Bill can suspend judgment and try to understand, Thanh's behavior will begin to make sense. In Thanh's culture, relationships are very important. Thanh does not want to do anything he thinks will cause stress or bad feelings in his relationship with Bill. Even though Thanh does not want to go to the sporting

event, he is afraid he will offend Bill by telling him so directly. Instead, Thanh chooses an indirect response. He agrees with Bill verbally, but communicates his disinterest nonverbally by being unavailable when Bill arrives. (Thanh may have even said "no" in nonverbal ways that Bill missed, at the same time he said the word "yes.") Thanh acted in the way he felt was most respectful and courteous to Bill.

*"The American seems very explicit; he wants a 'Yes' or 'No'—if someone tries to speak figuratively, the American is confused."*

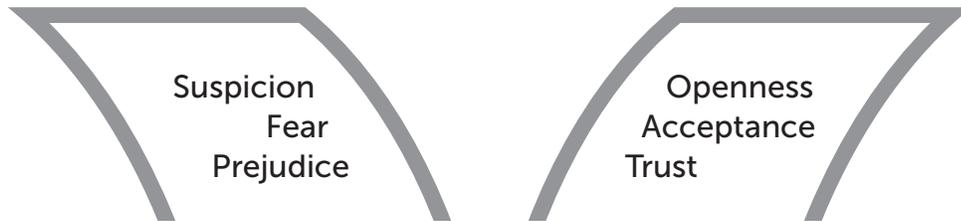
Visitor from Ethiopia<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> ibid.

# The Cultural Adjustment Model

## Approach

Everyone who encounters a new culture comes with preconceived expectations. These determine the starting point, but not the end result.



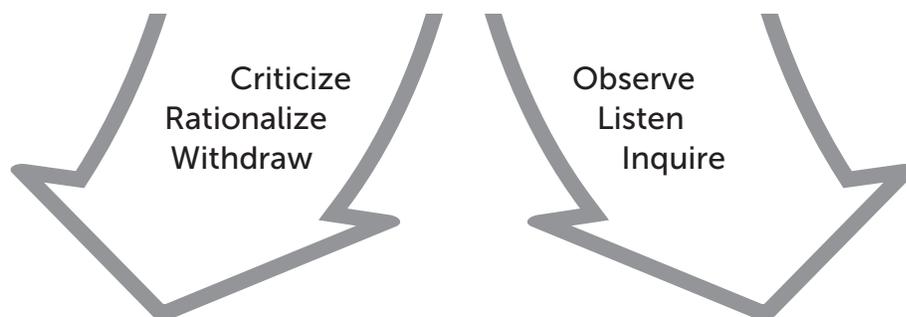
## Cultural Difference

Cultures are different. That makes things exciting. It also means there will be misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and tense moments. It can't be helped. It comes with the territory.



## Choices

Culture clash is inevitable, but people choose how they will respond. They can open up or close down. They can take the posture of a learner or sit in judgment.



**Alienation and Isolation**

## Results

With time, and the right attitude, people can adjust successfully—and experience the joy of strong friendships, new insights, and shared understandings.

**Rapport and Understanding**

The Cultural Adjustment Model was originally produced by the faculty of Missionary Internship, Colorado Springs, CO. A more detailed presentation of the model is available in the book *Christianity Confronts Culture* by Marvin Keen Mayers, 1987, Academy Books, Grand Rapids, MI.

## Comparison of U.S. and Other Cultures

The most important skill in managing cross-cultural relationships is learning to recognize what your own cultural values are and how they are different from other cultural values. Until we are confronted with cultural differences, we are often not even consciously aware of our own culture. One of the greatest challenges, and joys, of spending time with your refugee partner is the opportunity to step outside your culture and see things from a new perspective.

The chart on the next page examines differences between closure cultures, such as that of the U.S., and non-closure cultures, as well as potential misunderstandings that can occur because of those differences.

Keep in mind several important things as you review the chart:

The chart on pages 4-8 and 4-9 describes two end-points on a continuum. The values or behaviors of actual people may be at any point along this continuum.



The chart describes the general cultural values of a group of people. Specific individuals living in that group may or may not accept these general cultural values. For example, minority communities in the United States often have their own cultural characteristics.

Cultural values can change. Because culture is something that is learned—not something we are born with—we can learn to do things in new ways. In fact, one of the benefits of relating to people of other cultures is that we are exposed to new ways of thinking and behaving. Instead of reacting automatically from the cultural perspective we were raised with, we can choose how to react.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

**Closure Culture (U.S. Culture)**

As the name implies, a “closure” culture is a culture in which people are most comfortable when things are finished or settled. People in a closure culture are quick to draw conclusions about people, issues, or ideas. They do not like ambiguity. The most important value in a closure culture is “goals”—setting goals, tasks or objectives and working to achieve them.

**Non-closure Culture (Culture of Many Refugees)**

A “non-closure” culture is a culture in which people are very comfortable when things are open-ended. People in a non-closure culture do not draw quick conclusions. They have a high tolerance for ambiguity. The most important value in a non-closure culture is “relationships”—establishing deep, warm, and harmonious relationships with others.

*“The atmosphere at a sorority party looks very intimate, but if the same people met on the street, they might just ignore one another. Americans look warm, but when a relationship starts to become personal, they try to avoid it.”*

Visitor from Indonesia<sup>8</sup>

## Comparison of Cultures

Time Oriented	Event Oriented
<p><i>Closure Culture—U.S. Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time is a resource, used to accomplish goals</li> <li>• It is important to have control of time</li> <li>• The focus is on quantity of time</li> </ul>	<p><i>Non-Closure Culture—Culture of Many Refugees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time is used to establish a warm, harmonious atmosphere</li> <li>• It is important to have close human interaction</li> <li>• The focus is on quality of time</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Culture Clash—</b>  <i>New Neighbor volunteer Sheila has a very tight schedule. She is trying to squeeze in a meeting with her refugee partner, Azra, between work and getting to her daughter’s softball game. She has exactly two hours available. Sheila is therefore very frustrated when she arrives at Azra’s apartment and Azra is not home. After waiting 20 minutes and worrying about everything else she needs to do that evening, Sheila is ready to leave. Just then, Azra walks up. Azra had been visiting with her neighbor. She was expecting Sheila that evening, but she wasn’t worried about the exact hour. She knew it was some time after dinner. Unlike Sheila, Azra has no fixed agenda for their visit. She is simply expecting a relaxed, unhurried conversation.</i></p>	

Competition	Cooperation
<p><i>Closure Culture—U.S. Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on accomplishing goals</li> <li>• Relationships are something that can help accomplish goals</li> <li>• Success is an objective standard that people strive to achieve</li> </ul>	<p><i>Non-Closure Culture—Culture of Many Refugees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on relationships and interactions with others</li> <li>• Relationships are an end in themselves</li> <li>• Success is a subjective standard and is therefore not as important</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Culture Clash—</b>  <i>New Neighbor volunteer Robert is very excited about the opportunity to meet with his refugee partner, Hassan. Hassan knows very little English, and Robert feels he can really be of help to Hassan if he can teach him to speak better English. At the end of their first three months together, however, Hassan’s English skills are still at the same basic level. Robert wonders whether he should continue in the New Neighbor Program. He does not feel his time with Hassan was very productive or successful because he did not accomplish his goal of helping Hassan learn English. Hassan, however, is very pleased with the time he and Robert had together. Hassan thinks Robert is a very nice man and is glad he and Robert could spend time together. Hassan is looking forward to continuing to meet with Robert.</i></p>	

Linear Logic	Contextual Logic
<p><i>Closure Culture—U.S. Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values thinking, reasoning, presenting and arguing</li> <li>• Emphasis is on problem solving and achieving goals</li> <li>• Low tolerance for ambiguity—likes things settled and clear-cut</li> </ul>	<p><i>Non-Closure Culture—Culture of Many Refugees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values gaining input from all view-points and reaching consensus</li> <li>• Emphasis is on maintaining relationships, not accomplishing goals</li> <li>• High tolerance for ambiguity—willing to accept uncertainty or openendedness</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Culture Clash—</b>  <i>New Neighbor volunteer Cindy is trying to help her refugee partner, Sabine. Sabine has been struggling financially. Cindy realizes that Sabine’s current job does not pay enough to support her family, so Cindy makes contacts with an employer she knows in the suburbs. The new position pays more, is very stable, and will solve Sabine’s financial problems. Cindy even locates an available apartment within walking distance of the new employer. Cindy is surprised and hurt when Sabine does not take the job. Sabine, however, talks to several friends and relatives before making her decision. They all express concerns about Sabine moving so far away from them. Sabine’s extended family is very important to her. She decides not to take the new job so she can stay close to her relatives. She is worried about finances, but something will turn up. She doesn’t know yet what she will do, but somehow it will work out.</i></p>	

Directness/Openness/Honesty	Indirectness/Ritual/"Face"
<p><i>Closure Culture—U.S. Culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values straight, clear, and direct communication</li> <li>• Approaches conflict directly and with an active voice (ex. “He did this”)</li> <li>• Guilt culture—worst thing people can do is fail to follow the rules or live up to expectations</li> </ul>	<p><i>Non-Closure Culture—Culture of Many Refugees</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directness is considered crude, harsh, and disrespectful</li> <li>• Approaches conflict indirectly and with a passive voice (ex. “This was done to her”)</li> <li>• Shame culture—worst thing people can do is to cause another person to be shamed, lose face, or be dishonored</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential Culture Clash—</b><i>New Neighbor volunteer Pete calls his refugee partner, Enver, from work to finalize plans for their next visit. Because he needs to keep his personal calls to a minimum and because he knows he will have more time to talk with Enver when they get together, Pete gets straight to the point. He says hello, confirms the place and time where they are going to meet, and says goodbye. Enver is confused by Pete’s attitude on the phone. Pete does not ask about Enver’s health. He does not ask about Enver’s family members. He does not use any of the traditional greetings Enver is familiar with. Instead, Pete goes directly to business. Enver wonders if Pete really wants to visit him, or if Pete is indirectly telling him by his curt manner on the phone that he does not want to get together.</i></p>	

## Culture Shock and Comfort Zones

### Culture Shock and Your Refugee Partner

Your refugee partner will suffer from “culture shock” when he or she arrives in the United States and confronts a completely new and different culture.

Culture shock is the name given to the many uncomfortable emotions and reactions that people experience when they move into a culture that is very different from their own. Culture shock is caused by the disorientation of being in a new culture. It is a reaction to being in a situation—especially over a prolonged period of time—where many of normal, natural, and automatic ways of responding no longer fit. It is a result of being cut off from the cultural cues that were depended on in the past. Kalvero Oberg, the man who first diagnosed culture shock, says:

*“These signs and clues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, and how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not...”*<sup>9</sup>

#### Culture Shock Occurs Gradually

- When first encountering a new culture, people are aware of the many obvious differences. They notice the new foods and cooking smells, the unusual clothing styles, or the different ways of greeting one another. They often enjoy the differences and find them attractive or quaint.
- After a while, people look past the differences and focus on how much other people are really the same. They are excited to learn that they can communicate with someone who is different from themselves. They



discover that people in the new culture also love their children and families, want to help and support them, and enjoy a good laugh.

- Eventually, however, the differences themselves loom larger and larger and can become overwhelming. Newcomers realize that people in the new culture are very different from them in how they think, what they value, or how they relate to one another. They begin to question whether they can really understand one another. It is at this stage that culture shock sets in.

<sup>9</sup> ibid.

Culture shock is also a reaction to encountering new and different ways of doing, organizing, perceiving, or valuing things that challenge and threaten our basic belief that our way of doing things is “right.”

A person experiencing culture shock begins to feel helpless and anxious. Although some experience almost no difficulty, common reactions include moodiness, irritability, insomnia or oversleeping, withdrawal, bitterness, homesickness, or depression.

Eventually, the new culture becomes more understandable and comfortable. The newcomer begins to sort out the similarities and differences between the new culture and his/her own. As the newcomer begins to feel less helpless and anxious and more in control, the reactions of culture shock gradually fade.

*“The (American) wife of my English professor in Indonesia once asked me why I never invited her to my house. I frankly could not give her a direct answer. There was no reason why I should invite her, since there were no parties being held by my family, or if she really wanted to come to the house, she was always welcome at any time. I know now that in America you cannot come freely to anyplace unless you are invited.”*

Visitor from Indonesia.<sup>10</sup>

## Confronting Your Comfort Zone as a Volunteer

Although you will probably not experience the intense emotions of your refugee partner, don't be surprised if you also suffer some culture shock. This is because you will be traveling outside your comfort zone.

Your comfort zone is the protective space of familiar activities, environments, and people that surround you. You feel confident and comfortable in that zone because you know and understand how to function in that setting. In fact, you are so comfortable in your comfort zone that you are probably not even aware of it until something pushes you outside of it.

As an Exodus World Service volunteer, you will experience awkward moments. You may travel to areas of the city where you have never been, try new foods that look and smell different, or wait uncomfortably through long pauses in the conversation. On a deeper level, you may feel that your personal space is infringed upon, feel uncertain how to interpret comments or criticisms from your refugee partner, or feel out of place in your refugee partner's home.

<sup>10</sup> ibid.



These experiences outside your comfort zone can be frustrating. They may create feelings of anxiety, nervousness, insecurity, or ambiguity. The best way to manage these experiences is to develop the key attitudes listed in the next section, “Learning to Communicate Across Culture.” With time, as you and your refugee partner get to know one another better and become more familiar with your distinct cultural perspectives, the feelings of discomfort and frustration will fade.

Many refugees experience severe trauma as a result of persecution in their own countries and the difficulties of their subsequent journey to the United States. There are mental health services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for refugees. If you feel these services are necessary, please contact Exodus World Service at 630-307-1400.



## Reflection

Culture shock is inevitable. Learning how to navigate new geography, culture and language is hard. How much does it mean to refugees to have a volunteer, a friend, to walk with them during this disruption in their lives?

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

## Six Key Attitudes For Communicating Across Culture

To be effective at communicating across culture, you do not need to concentrate on when to shake hands, what word means “hello,” or how to use chopsticks. Those things may prove helpful. But the most important thing you can do is to work at developing the following key attitudes:

KEY

**1**

**A willingness to suspend judgment.** Be willing to set aside your ideas about how things ought to be done. When your refugee partner does or says something that seems strange, difficult, or confusing, look for the logical reason behind it. Don't immediately jump to conclusions or make judgments. Keep an open mind and seek to learn. Remember, every culture makes sense to the people living it. Try to discover how the different pieces of his/her culture fit together.

KEY

**2**

**A willingness to listen and learn.** Ask questions. Find out as much as you can about the history, customs, values, and attitudes of your refugee partner and the country he or she left behind. Listen carefully to the answers. Don't simply use the answer as a springboard to talk about how different it is here in the United States. (On the other hand, you will want to answer any questions your refugee partner has about you and your culture.)

KEY

**3**

**A sense of humor.** Don't take things too seriously. Be willing to laugh off the embarrassing moments, confusion, or annoyance you encounter as you and your refugee partner work to understand each other.

KEY

**4**

**A low goal/task orientation.** Americans often focus on accomplishing things. Try not to set unrealistic goals for your time volunteering with Exodus World Service. During your time with your refugee partner, don't focus on certain tasks you will accomplish together. Instead, concentrate on simply spending time with one another.

KEY

**5**

**An ability to take a risk and to fail.** If you are afraid to fail, you will not take the risk of reaching outside your own culture. Be willing to venture out into unknown territory. Don't be afraid to try new things, say new words or reach out in new ways, even if you aren't as “successful” as you would like.

KEY

**6**

**A willingness to share yourself.** Don't be afraid simply to be yourself. Remember that you have special gifts to offer, as well as the opportunity to receive. Be open and honest in your relationships. If you are uncomfortable in a situation, take time to identify your emotions and understand what is causing you to feel that way.



## SECTION 5

# MEETING YOUR REFUGEE PARTNER



“...if you spend yourselves  
in behalf of  
the hungry and *satisfy the needs*  
*of the oppressed*, then your light  
will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.”

ISAIAH 58:10



## Six Tips for Good Conversation

Conversation with limited-English speakers can be challenging. It takes hard work to communicate when you don't share a common language. But the effort will be well worth it as you and your refugee partner begin to learn more about each other and build a relationship.

Here are six communication tips to keep in mind when working with your refugee partner:

TIP

**1**

### Communicating across a language barrier takes time.

There will be pauses in your conversation (sometimes long ones!) as you both work to find ways to express yourself so that you can understand each other. Don't feel responsible to fill every silence with words. Silence can provide you and your refugee partner an opportunity to pause, reflect, and gather your thoughts. Silence is also more common in other cultures and may not be as uncomfortable for your refugee partner as it is for you.

TIP

**2**

### Be creative!

There are many, many different ways to communicate. If your refugee partner does not understand the words you are using, find another way to express yourself. Don't be shy or self-conscious. Focus on getting your message across. Use your hands, pantomime, draw pictures, point to pictures in books or magazines, or look up words in a translator's dictionary.

---

### Example

Exodus World Service volunteer Sue wants to explain to her Cuban refugee partner Elena that she works at a women's clothing store. She could try one (or all) of the following to communicate this idea to Elena:

- Search for the words "clothing" and "store" in the Spanish/English dictionary
- Find a picture of a clothing store on Google
- Take a sweater or other article of clothing and pantomime selling it to an imaginary customer

If none of these methods work, Sue needs to decide how important this information is for Elena. If the information is critical, Sue can try more creative methods or locate a translator. Otherwise, the subject can be dropped for now, and they can try again another day.

TIP  
3**Listen carefully.**

One of the most important aspects of communicating cross-culturally is learning to listen. Careful listening communicates respect for your refugee partner. It also helps you train your ear to understand the accent or limited vocabulary your refugee partner may have.

Concentrate on what your refugee partner is saying and not what you are going to say. If you find yourself dominating the conversation, hold back and wait for your refugee partner to speak. Your refugee partner will learn more English if you resist the impulse to fill in his or her sentences when he or she is struggling to find the correct word. Don't forget to 'listen' for the nonverbal messages too. Nonverbal cues like eye movements, gestures, and posture may communicate more than the actual words.

**Example**

Exodus World Service volunteer Harry invites his refugee partner Oman to go golfing with him. Harry is an avid golfer and thinks Oman might enjoy giving it a try. Oman, however, knows nothing about golf and does not want the embarrassment of trying a new sport in front of Harry. Oman also does not want to offend Harry by directly refusing his kind offer. Oman therefore says "yes," but he communicates nonverbally his real desire not to go. He says the word "yes" slowly and softly, and at the same time he looks away from Harry and slightly shakes his head.



Harry is alert to the nonverbal communication and realizes that, despite Oman's "yes," he does not appear enthusiastic about golfing. To confirm his suspicions that Oman does not really want to go, Harry downplays his initial direct invitation: "Well, maybe we can make plans sometime in the future to go golfing." Oman appears relieved by the vague timeframe, so Harry treats Oman's answer as a "no" and goes golfing with someone else!

TIP

4

### Control the volume.

You might find yourself speaking louder when you are trying to help your refugee partner understand the words you are saying. Rather than raising your voice, concentrate on speaking slowly and clearly and pronouncing your words carefully. You may also need to use simple words and phrases. Remember not to judge your refugee partner's intelligence by his/her language skills.

TIP

5

### Don't sweat the details.

Focus on communicating at the big-picture level. If you explain to your refugee partner that the Chicago Bulls are a sports team, don't worry if you can't communicate the details about how to play basketball. Conversely, if you understand that your refugee partner lived on a farm, don't worry if you miss some of the specifics about what your partner raised.

TIP

6

### Be careful with important information.

For important information, make sure that you and your refugee partner understand each other. Try communicating the same information in several different ways. It also is important for you and your refugee partner to repeat what each understands the other to have said so as to make sure the message came across.

## Example

Exodus World Service volunteer Marilyn wants to explain to her refugee partner Nasra what time she will arrive for their next weekly meeting. Marilyn:

- Says she will come at 4:00 p.m.
- Points to 4:00 on the clock
- Writes 4:00 p.m. on a piece of paper and gives it to Nasra



## Reflection

Many refugees are from cultures that value the quality of time spent with each other in cooperation without goals. How do Americans differ?

## Discussion Starters

Here are a few questions that can be used to stimulate conversations. Asking open-ended questions, rather than simple 'yes' or 'no' questions, will allow your refugee partner to share more information.

How many people are in your family? Tell me about them.  
(Ask to see pictures, if they are available. Share pictures of your own family.)

What did you first see or hear when you came to the United States?

What do you notice about the United States that is different from your country?

How do you like the weather we are having? What is the weather like in your country?

What kind of music do you like?

Do you like to play/watch sports? Which sports? What is your favorite team?

How do people greet one another in your country?

What are your favorite foods? What are they made of? How are they prepared? When are they eaten?

What American foods have you tried? What American foods do you like?

Are there any foods that your religion or culture prohibit you from eating?

## Suggested Activities

Don't worry about what to do during your meetings with your refugee partner. The options are endless. Even if your refugee partner speaks very little English, there are activities you can enjoy together, such as playing a simple board game or cooking a meal. Shared activities provide a focus and structure for your time together. They can also provide opportunities to learn words or phrases in English and your refugee partner's native language. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

### The Basics—Community Orientation

- Take a ride together on the public transportation system
- Go grocery shopping at an American grocery store and/or an ethnic grocery store
- Take a tour of a local government office, town hall, or fire station
- Discuss public safety and how to call 911
- Review a map of the community or drive around town
- Visit the Post Office and mail letters or buy stamps
- Discuss money and financial issues—practice making purchases and getting change; explain basic banking practices, including checking and savings accounts and loan repayments
- Talk about automobiles—new vs. used, financing, insurance, license requirements
- Discuss the variety of housing options in your community
- Visit the library—check out books; look up resources on your refugee partner's homeland; register your refugee partner to receive a library card



## Other Activities

- Have a picnic at a park or beach
- Bake cookies
- Look at photos
- Participate in family/holiday celebrations
- Celebrate national holidays
- Learn a few words of your refugee partner's language
- Watch television
- Go to community cultural events

## Games and Sporting Events

- Go for a walk through the neighborhood
- Fly a kite or play frisbee
- Play a simple board game
- Attend a local sporting event

## Cultural Activities

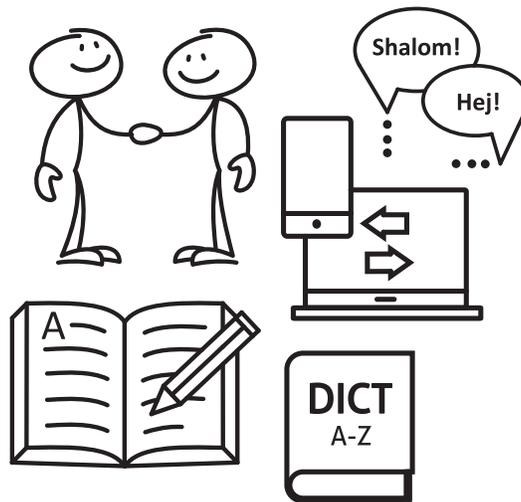
- Go to the zoo
- Tour downtown
- Go to the local historical society or nature preserve
- Show on a map the country where your ancestors are from
- Cook a traditional meal together
- Trade favorite recipes
- Visit one of Chicago's many museums or tourist attractions



## Frequently Asked Questions

### How will we be able to communicate?

Many refugees speak English quite well. Perhaps you will experience difficulty at first in understanding English spoken with an accent, but with practice and careful listening it becomes easier. For refugees who speak little or no English, learning the language better is an important goal. You will be amazed at how effectively you and your refugee partner can communicate using hand signals, pantomime, dictionaries, and Google translate.



### What if we are not able to meet together every week?

Understandably your schedule can be hectic. It is partly because of this that we recommend weekly meetings. A regular routine will help give structure to your meetings. A commitment to your refugee partner also will help build trust. If you are not able to meet at your regularly scheduled time, contact your refugee partner to reschedule. If you have questions, call Exodus World Service at 630-307-1400.

### What if my refugee partner moves away?

Refugees are often separated from family and friends as a result of persecution in their own country and their difficult journey to the United States. If your refugee partner locates friends or family in another part of the country, he or she might move to join them. Such a move can take place suddenly and with little advance warning. After your refugee partner relocates to his/her new home, perhaps you can stay in touch with a phone call or text just to say you are thinking of him/her.

### **What if I am asked to help out financially?**

We recommend paying for events to which you invite your refugee partner. If you receive requests from your refugee partner for cash to help meet other needs, do not feel obligated to give financial assistance. It can be more helpful for you to assist your refugee partner in thinking through a problem situation rather than giving money. If you have any questions concerning a request from your refugee partner, please contact Exodus World Service at 630-307-1400.

### **What if my refugee partner needs special help I can't provide?**

You will probably encounter situations with your refugee partner which are beyond your knowledge and understanding. For example, immigration issues are frequently a confusing area for refugees and volunteers alike. Public aid and medical assistance regulations can also be very technical. Please refer your refugee partner to his/her resettlement caseworker who has specialized skills and knowledge needed to handle these issues.

### **What if I run into problems?**

The desire of Exodus World Service is for volunteers to have a positive experience working with refugees. Please call or email us directly for any assistance. 630-307-1400.

# SECTION 6

## REFUGEE MINISTRY



*“Speak up*  
for those  
who cannot speak for themselves,  
for the rights of  
all who are destitute.”

PROVERBS 31:8



## The Ministry of Presence

One of the most important qualities needed as an Exodus World Service volunteer is the ability *to be*.

Your presence alone is a valued gift to your refugee partner. The power of God's love is communicated when you choose to spend time with a refugee and share in his or her life.

American culture places great value on productivity and accomplishment, making it difficult to believe that simply being present with someone is enough to minister to them. You may feel that the time spent with your refugee partner is only worthwhile if it "accomplishes" something. But the measure of your success is not how well you teach English or how much practical help you offer. Rather, it is the degree to which you are able to just be with your refugee partner.

Shifting your thinking to recognize the value of simply being together and sharing experiences may be a challenge. But the lesson found in the challenge can be one of the most valuable things you learn as an Exodus World Service volunteer.



## Receiving and Giving

If your relationship does develop into a friendship, you may be asked to do more and more for the family. In the culture of many refugees, friends and family members are the first people you turn to when you have a need. Your refugee partner may begin to bring the family's needs to your attention and ask for your



help. Sometimes, you will be able and willing to help with a problem. At other times, however, you may lack the resources or expertise to get involved. It is important to know that it is all right to set boundaries as you would with any other relationship.

If you are unable or unwilling to help with a particular request, simply say so. Where appropriate, you can suggest alternative solutions.

## Dohn Wants a Car

Dohn, a refugee, is finding it difficult to get around in his community. Dohn notices that everyone he meets has a car, and many families have more than one. In Dohn's homeland, only the wealthy had cars. Most people traveled by bicycle or walked. Because cars are so abundant in the United States, Dohn assumes that either Americans are very wealthy or cars are inexpensive and easy to purchase. Dohn decides a car is the best solution to his transportation problem, and he approaches John, his volunteer, for help. The following dialogue illustrates how John handles the request. In responding, John considered the appropriateness of the request, the underlying need, and some alternative solutions to the problem.

Dohn: "Mr. John, America is a very rich country."

John: "Yes, I guess you could say it is."

"And you are a very rich American?"

"Well, no not really. I mean, I consider myself to be middle class."

"Well, you see, the problem is one really needs to have a car in America. Can you buy a car for me? (Dohn is looking for ways to solve his transportation problem. He does not know that his request is inappropriate.)

(Surprised) "I do not really have that much money. I barely have enough money to keep my own car on the road as it is. (John realizes this request is inappropriate and does not feel obliged to help.)

"Can you lend me the money? I will buy the car and pay you back each month."  
(In Dohn's culture, it is common to ask for money from a friend.)

(Jokingly) "I am not a bank, Dohn. I don't have the money to lend you. Besides, can you really afford to have a car right now?" (John uses humor to clarify his relationship with Dohn and then brings the issue back to the serious financial question of car ownership.)

“Mr. John, as you know, I have been here in America for over two months now and I still don’t have a car. If I have a car, I can get a job. If I get a job, I can afford a car. But if I don’t have a car, I can’t get a job. If I can’t get a job, how am I supposed to survive in America?” (This is the key to Dohn’s request – it is difficult to find transportation, especially in the suburban location where Dohn is living. Dohn rightly views transportation as the key to his employment goals.)



“A car is a great convenience, but it comes at a pretty high cost. Besides the purchase price of the car, you must pay for gasoline, oil changes, repairs, and then you must make insurance payments. Let me show you what it costs me to keep my car on the road.

(John shares information to help Dohn evaluate his desire to have a car.)

“Maybe there are some alternatives to owning your own car. Can you use public transportation to get to your place of work? What about car pooling with your neighbor?

(John offers alternatives that Dohn may or may not have considered.)

“O.K., but first...you show me how to get my driver’s license!” (Dohn is persistent in his desire for a car. Yet John is also firm in setting boundaries for the personal assistance he can offer to Dohn in this situation. The discussion ends with a much more practical request for help.)

## Your Faith and Volunteering with Exodus World Service



Exodus World Service provides a practical opportunity to strengthen your faith. Through your relationship with your refugee partner, you will experience some of the immense variety of different cultures and peoples God has created. You can begin to more fully comprehend the character, grace, and glory of God by seeing through the eyes of another.

You also have an opportunity to communicate the power of God's unconditional love. Through regular meetings and shared activities, you and your refugee partner will develop understanding and friendship. During these times you will be discussing who you are and what you believe. Your refugee partner will be observing how you relate to other people, what choices you make, and what is important to you. The importance of your faith in your life will be noticed.

As your relationship deepens and trust is established, your refugee partner may ask questions about your faith. Be sure to answer from the perspective of what you believe and what is important to you. Do not tell your partner what you feel he or she should believe. You can also ask your refugee partner questions about his or her faith. Ask your questions with a genuine desire to learn and understand more about your refugee partner—not in an attempt to change his or her beliefs. It is very important that you live out God's unconditional love in your relationship with your refugee partner. You should freely give of your time and talents to your refugee partner with no conditions or expectations attached.

Your refugee partner has experienced tremendous loss. Family, friends, home, job, and possessions have all been taken away or left behind. Those things your refugee partner was able to bring along to their new homeland are treasured. This includes his or her faith. Some refugees are Christian, but most are not. Your refugee partner may be Muslim, Buddhist, animist or agnostic. Do not challenge or disparage your refugee partner's faith.

Remember, faith in Christ is a gift of God. You cannot "convert" your refugee partner. It is the Holy Spirit that brings people to faith. You can live out your faith in a day-to-day, practical way that allows God to communicate through you His love, joy, and assurance of forgiveness.

## Seven Biblical Principles for the Care and Nurture of Refugees

You won't find the word "refugee" in the Bible.  
But you will find refugees!

Some of the most important people in Scripture were refugees. Jesus and his parents slipped into Egypt to escape Herod's infanticide. Moses and the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian tyranny into the Promised Land. Early church believers poured out of Jerusalem to save their lives, and consequently, the gospel reached new corners of the world. The Apostle John was exiled on Patmos and wrote the book of Revelation. All fled their homeland because they were singled out by leaders within their own country as targets for persecution. In other words, they were refugees!

Time after time, God has taken the tragedy of forced migration and used it to work out His purposes. He took extraordinary interest in refugees. He still does today. He's working out plans and purposes for Iraqis who have been fleeing their country for over ten years, for the Congolese and Sudanese running for their lives in Africa, and for the Burmese who fled ethnic cleansing and religious persecution.

God has not left us to guess as a nation or as His people how we are to treat these people so close to His heart. The crowning passage that declares God's concern is in Matthew 25. When we stand before our Lord on the Day of Judgment, He'll ask us how we treated people who graphically fit the description of a refugee: strangers, the hungry and thirsty, those in need of clothes, those who are in prison, and those who are sick—each strikingly similar to a refugee today.

*Then the King will say to those on the right, "Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."*

Matthew 25:34-36,40

Numerous Bible passages describe how God wants us  
to treat refugees—the strangers, the poor, the aliens,  
and the sojourners in our midst.

## Seven Key Principles Describe God's Abiding Concern for Refugees

KEY

**1**

### God Loves, Protects, and Provides for Refugees

- a. He watches over them. *Psalm 146:9*
- b. He provides refuge for them, a shelter from the storm, and shade from the heat. *Psalm 9:9; Isaiah 25:4*
- c. He shows no partiality to natives of a country. Refugees and natives have equal status in His sight. *Numbers 15:16; Deuteronomy 10:16–19*
- d. He defends their cause, providing food and clothing for them. *Deuteronomy 10:16–19*
- e. Jesus announced that the essence of his ministry was to help and serve people in refugee-like situations. *Luke 4:16–21*

KEY

**2**

### God Expects His People to Love Refugees and to Give Freely of Their Resources to Help Them

- a. Love refugees as you love yourselves. *Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:16–19*
- b. Treat refugees fairly and stand up for them when others mistreat them. *Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:33, Deuteronomy 23:15; Psalm 82:4; Zechariah 7:9–10*
- c. Share your food, clothing, and shelter with them. *Isaiah 58:6–11; Matthew 25:31–46; Luke 3:10*
- d. Invite them into your homes. *Isaiah 58:6–11; Luke 14:12–13; Hebrews 13:2*
- e. Set aside part of your income to help them. *Leviticus 19:10, 23:22; Deuteronomy 24:19–21, 14:28–29, 26:12; Galatians 2:10; James 1:27*
- f. Sell your possessions to help them if need be. *Luke 12:33; Matthew 19:21*
- g. Encourage them. *Isaiah 1:17*

KEY

**3**

### God Views Our Compassionate Treatment of Refugees as a Fundamental Indicator of True Christianity

- a. When believers stand before Him on judgment day He will ask them how they treated refugees. *Luke 14:12–13, Matthew 25:31–46*

KEY

**4**

### God Expects the United States to Rescue Refugees, to Take Them In, and To Treat Them Just Like Her Native Born

- a. Rescue refugees from persecuting nations. *Isaiah 16:3–5*
- b. Give shelter to them from their destroyers. *Isaiah 16:3–5*
- c. Never return refugees to their oppressors. Let them live with you. *Deuteronomy 23:15*
- d. Give them a choice as to where they can live among you. *Deuteronomy 23:15*
- e. Treat refugees just like you do your own citizens through your laws and regulations. Treat them fairly. *Leviticus 19:34, 24:22; Numbers 15:16*
- f. Set aside part of your income to help them. *Deuteronomy 14:28–29, 26:12*

KEY

**5**

### God Promises to Bless the Family and Nation Who Take Care of Refugees

- a. He blesses them and the work of their hands. *Deuteronomy 24:19–21*
- b. He answers their prayers. *Isaiah 58: 6–11*
- c. His glory is their rear guard. *Psalms 41: 1–3; Isaiah 58:6–11*
- d. He strengthens them physically. *Psalms 41:1–3; Isaiah 58:6–11*
- e. He satisfies their needs. *Proverbs 28:27; Isaiah 58:6–11*
- f. He protects them. *Psalms 41:1–3*
- g. He will repay them at the resurrection of the righteous. *Matthew 25:31–46 ; Luke 14:12–13*

KEY

**6**

## God Promises to Curse the Nation and People Who Mistreat Refugees

- a. The judgment and curse of the Lord is on a nation that withholds justice from the refugee. *Deuteronomy 27:19, 24:17; Ezekiel 16:49, 22:9, Malachi 3:5*
- b. The Lord will not answer their prayers. *Proverbs 21:13*
- c. He who closes his/her ears to refugees will receive many curses. *Proverbs 28:27*
- d. You show contempt toward God if you oppress the poor. *Proverbs 10:31*
- e. A nation's right to its land is predicated upon treating refugees well. *Jeremiah 5:5-7*

KEY

**7**

## God Views Our Care for Refugees as a Concrete Expression of Love and Service to Him.

- a. When we take care of refugees, we take care of the Lord. *Matthew 25*

## Moving Forward

Thank you for taking the time to learn about refugees and building cross-cultural friendships. You are responding to God's call to "welcome the stranger" in our midst!

**Below are next steps you can take. Please visit [www.exodusworldservice.org](http://www.exodusworldservice.org) to:**

- √ Learn about volunteer service opportunities.
- √ Email [program@exodusworldservice.org](mailto:program@exodusworldservice.org) to get started. We'll send you a volunteer application form to complete and return. You will also be asked to submit three references.

### Other opportunities to explore:

- Join our Prayer Team. [exodusworldservice.org/pray-for-refugees](http://exodusworldservice.org/pray-for-refugees)
- Attend the Celebration of Hope and/or Run/Walk for Refugees.
- Give financially and further the work of this ministry.
- Engage your congregation, school, teen/adult program in a Run For Your Life Simulation.
- Invite a speaker to your church, small group, school or community programs.
- Host a Bible Study with your small group. *Who is My Neighbor? What the Bible Says About Refugees* is a four-week study guide available from Exodus

## Mission

Exodus World Service mobilizes the Christian community to welcome and befriend refugees. We do this by educating churches about refugee ministry, connecting volunteers with newly arriving refugees through practical service projects and equipping individuals to champion refugee ministry.

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