

Activity (11-15): Refugee Simulation

Created by the Kompaz 2016/2017 team, but borrowing lots from a similar activity by the [Con Lupa](#) team and the Jargon Buster from an activity by [CISV Intern Sarah Lawson](#).

Objective: To emulate parts of the refugee/asylum seeker experience, giving the participants a deeper understanding of what asylum seekers go through and inspiring reflection around the right to seek asylum (UNDHR Article 14), why it is important and enhance the participants understanding of the right to seek asylum (UNDHR Article 14).

NB! This is a rather testing activity for the participants, with much unfairness, waiting and frustration, so be sensitive, and adjust according to what you feel the group is ready for.

This activity may require some effort, but will be well worth it.

Tip: Run the activity “[To Flee From Home](#)” earlier in the day or camp, to give the participants a more thorough understanding of the reasons why refugees flee in the first place.

Time: 2 hours (you can keep the game up for as long as you want – when the game ends, most people will not have made it to the welcome centre).

Size: 25-50

Materials: The Kompaz video on the right to seek asylum. [Jargon buster cards](#) (print as many as you need). Paper money (create on-site). Drawing materials. Threads in different colours to make bracelets.

Warm-up: Jargon Buster: Split the participants into groups, give them each a set of jargon buster cards (see appendix) and ask them to match the words with the definitions. The first group to correctly match the definitions with the words wins.

The game:

This is a game with several stations, each station representing a part of the process fleeing and seeking asylum. This game should take place over a large space, using several rooms and outside areas if needed. Each station needs at least one facilitator, who will have to stay in character throughout the whole activity. There are two distinct “parts” to this game: One before they reach the “safe” country, and one after – they should be somehow physically separate as it is necessary to use people smugglers to get from one part to the other.

When the game starts, all the participants are refugees who have managed to flee their own country, but have not yet managed to reach a safe one (the equivalent of being stuck in Libya).

Explanation:

Explain to the participants in this activity they will be refugees that have left their home behind, fleeing from war, abuse or poverty. They are now trying to reach a safe country to seek asylum. The goal of the game is to reach the “welcome centre” – this represents having been granted asylum. First, however, they have to reach the safe country, and when they get there they have to apply for asylum.

The game:

PART ONE: Getting to the safe country.

Station 1: People smugglers (requires at least two facilitators, as one will intermittently leave and take participants with them).

In order to reach the country, the refugees first to enlist the help of people smugglers. When they first come to the people smugglers, they say that it costs 100 dollars per person, so everyone has to go and make some money at other stations (make sure that the participants spread out over the different stations). When they come back with 100 dollars, the price has increased to 200 dollars.

When participants have gathered 200 dollars, the people smugglers will lead them to a place where they will be kept waiting for an arbitrary amount of time. Then they will take the participants aboard “boats” to take them to the safe country. For each journey, about a quarter of the participants “drown” and are out of the game.

Work station 1: Textiles (sweatshop)

Their task is to draw 10 different t-shirt designs. The facilitator will reject most or all of the designs, and rip them up, telling them to make new ones faster. The facilitator decides when to pay/release participants, keeping some for longer than others. They are paid 50 dollars upon completion (or less if the facilitator is feeling grumpy).

Work station 2: Sorting

Here they are given a menial, slow and annoying sorting task. For example, give them some scrambled up decks of cards and have them sort them and put them in order, a box of pens/markers and have them sort out those that do not work (or by colour) – be creative, use what you have! The facilitator can disrupt the sorting and scramble their work, and will decide when they’re happy with each participant’s work. They will then get paid 50 dollars.

Work station 3: Bracelets

Here they have to create one or several bracelets out of thread. Facilitator decides how many they need to make in order to get paid, and will reject bracelets at whim. Will pay 50 dollars.

Work station 4: Modelling

One facilitator will walk from station to station, offering modelling jobs to some of the participants (200 dollars for 10 minutes work!), saying that he/she works for a children's clothing brand. This facilitator will have to be very kind and sympathetic, and will get into fights with the other facilitators about how the participants are treated at the station. The facilitator recruits 4 or five "models", takes them to do a "photoshoot". After the "photoshoot", he or she locks the participants in a room, and slips a note under the door saying "you are going to be sold to be a slave in an unknown country".

PART 2: "Safe country"

Home office

Everyone has to line up at the home office and fill out an application form in a foreign/made-up language. The facilitator "staffing" the home office has to be rude and impatient towards the participants, and process all applications slowly (can go for frequent coffee breaks). The facilitator will decide – by whatever criteria they choose or completely arbitrarily – to mark the application with an X or an A (the majority with X). Those who get an X get sent to the detention centre, the rest will go on to the next stations.

Station: Language class

Here the participants have to learn a new language – it can either be a real language that only the facilitator speaks or one that is made up. The "teacher" talks *only* in the made up language, and goes through vocabulary and conjugations. She or he creates a small "test" in the language, and participants have to get a certain score right (maybe three right answers?) in order to move on – if not, they have to sit through another "lesson" and try again. If they fail three times, they are sent to the detention centre. Those who pass can go to the "Welcome Centre".

Detention centre

An enclosed area where people are kept through an arbitrary amount of time. The participants kept here are not allowed to talk to each other. Upon release, they are flown back to the starting point.

Final station: Welcome Centre

The only friendly place, where the leader speaks in English. Try to make this place comfortable and nice, to contrast it with the other stations. There may be snacks and games.

Debrief (30 minutes):

Reflect:

- How did each area make you feel? (Encourage them to talk about experiences in every part of the game - not everyone got to the same stations)
- What was difficult and frustrating about the activity?
- Which human rights were violated in this activity?

Video: Now show the Kompaz video about refugees - this is very important as it links the experiences in the activity to the real-life issue of refugees.

Generalise:

- What issues do refugees and asylum seekers face in real life? Did we see some of them here? Were they talked about in the video?
- In this activity, the “Welcome Centre” is a very comfortable and fun place. Do you think that is the case in real life - that when people finally get asylum, everything is fine?

Apply:

- If it is a human right to seek asylum, why do so many refugees have to face so many dangers on the way? Who is responsible for refugees?
- What do you think we can do to improve the situation of refugees?