

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
1/6

OBJECTIVES //

- 1) To help participants appreciate the struggles a refugee family may experience in their journey to safety, and better empathise with the situation of refugees.
- 2) To encourage participants to co-operate, negotiate and share.

TIME // 50 minutes

GROUP SIZE // 20-40 participants

MATERIALS //

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Six (6) pieces of paper for each participant (if possible, use Good on One Side (GOOS) paper)
- A display (eg. whiteboard, flipchart, projector screen) to show List of Belongings
 - Example items for List of Belongings:
passport, food, water, tent, axe, first aid kit, soccer ball, batteries, a pet, a tarp, extra clothes
- Optional:
 - Pictures or props for each stage
 - Small wallet or envelope for each participant to carry their 'items'

PREPARATION //

To simulate the journey of a family escaping the dangers of war, this activity will move participants through nine (9) stages. These stages can be created in one of two different ways:

- 1) Groups are situated around the room, and remain stationary while images and the narrative take them through the stages. In this method:
 - Arrange desks, tables or chairs into groups of six (6)
 - Prepare the List of Belongings to be displayed to the group (board, flipchart, etc)
 - Optional: For younger audiences, prepare one copy of the Picture Map (attached) and a marker or crayon for each child to track their progress through the journey.
- 2) Participants move from station to station throughout the activity. In this method:
 - Choose a location with enough space to move the entire group between nine (9) stations
 - Determine the location of each of the nine (9) stations
 - Prepare Station One (1) with paper, pens/pencils
 - Prepare the List of Belongings to be displayed to the group (board, flipchart, etc).

Before beginning this activity, ensure you know if any participants have personal or family experiences of being refugees. This simulation activity may be more difficult for those with direct experiences of being a refugee or strong personal connections. Please consider providing an opportunity for these individuals to share their stories or add comments if they so choose, both at the beginning and the end of the simulation.

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
2/6

INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY //

For younger audiences, begin with asking the participants to think about and discuss the question: Why do people move? Ensure that youth are aware that there are many different reasons that people move. Explore the difference between moving out of choice and forced migration.

Explain the terms **migrant** and **refugee**, and the differences between these:

A **migrant** is a person who makes a decision to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere, often to find better work opportunities than in their home country.

A **refugee** is a person who is forced to leave their own country because their life is in danger. They seek safety in another country because of violence, conflict, discrimination (religious, racial, social or political) or natural disasters.

The difference between a **refugee** and a **migrant** is that migrants choose to move in order to improve their future prospects, while refugees are forced to move to seek safety and protection.

Arrange the participants into family groups of six. Ask each group is to decide who will take on the role of parents, children, and grandparents. These roles will help participants make decisions throughout the activity.

Once the roles are settled, set the tone for the activity by quieting the participants and asking them to reflect individually on the following questions. Pausing for a few moments of quiet reflection between each question:

- How would you feel if you were told you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, your home, the things that belong to you and maybe even some of your family?
- How would it feel to not know where you were going?
- Who would you take with you?
- What things would you most like to take with you?
- What do you think that you would need for a really long journey?
- What things would you have to leave behind?

RUNNING THE SIMULATION //

Use the script below to narrate the participants through the activity. Instructions are in italics. Instructions in (brackets) are for groups who are physically moving between stations.

Station One (1)

War has broken out in your country. The danger has been increasing in the past weeks as the violence gets closer to your village. If you leave, you don't know if you will ever be able to return home again.

You can hear the sound of gunfire and you know that fighting must be very near. You have to escape very quickly. You run home, and on the way, you are told that trucks are coming to take you, your family and neighbours to the coast where you hope you can find a boat to take you to safety.

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
3/6

The first thing you each must do is pack a bag for your journey. In your bag you may carry no more than six things. Look at the List of Belongings and choose from that. Think carefully about what you really need to take. Talk to the rest of your family about it. Don't forget that some things might be heavy to carry or difficult to look after. You have ten minutes to decide and draw the six things that you want to take on your six pieces of paper.

Allow ten minutes, and circulate among the groups to assist as necessary.

Your time is up!

The truck has arrived. You can't take anything else. Bring your bag and climb onto the old wooden truck.

You are on your way. Take a last look at your home.

(Slowly walk the group to Station Two (2), asking them to stay in their family groups. You can also encourage the family groups to be squished together as they walk, as if packed into a truck.)

You have to leave your dog behind, which makes you very unhappy, but there is nothing that you can do – the truck barely fits your neighbours. *Circulate and remove any pets that participants had 'packed'.* You start to cry as you think about all the happy times that you spent with your dog and wonder what will happen to him now.

The seats in the truck are hard and narrow and whichever way you sit you cannot get comfortable. The driver is in a hurry to get you to safety. He speeds along the road and almost loses control as the truck screeches around the corner. The older child in the family is thrown from their seat and their bag flies out of the back of the truck. The driver cannot hear you calling him to stop, so the bag is left far behind. The older child has lost everything. *Remove all 'packed items' from the older child in each 'family.'* (Stop at Station Two.)

Station Two (2)

Your family wants to comfort the older child, so you take some time in the truck to redistribute your family belongings so that the older child has supplies. This is also practical since it will help lighten everyone's load a little. The older child can take one thing from each person in the family. You have two minutes to do this.

Allow two minutes, and circulate among the groups, asking: What have you been left with?

Your time is up!

The truck has to climb up a steep mountain. It gets slower and slower and a strange choking noise comes from the engine. You wonder if this truck will ever get you to the coast.

You hear a mighty bang and the truck grinds to a halt. (Stop at Station Three.)

Station Three (3)

Something is very wrong with the truck's engine and it cannot be fixed. You must continue the journey on foot! Now, you discover that your bags are too heavy to carry. Each family member must relinquish their heaviest item. You have two minutes to decide which items are heaviest and leave them behind.

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
4/6

Allow two minutes, collecting the six relinquished items from each group.

Your time is up!

(Begin to walk the group slowly towards Station 4, reading as you walk). You struggle on, but find it harder and harder to keep going. It is a hot day and the sun is beating down. There has been no rain for more than a year, so the roads are hard, full of holes and difficult to walk on. *(Stop at Station Four.)*

Station Four (4)

The mother in your family falls and hurts her leg. She cannot go on without help. Two of your family will have to carry her. But this means, Mom, and the two helpers, can no longer carry their bags! The rest of the family can help carry their belongings, but remember that no-one may carry no more than six items.

Some things will have to be left behind. Talk about this as a family. You have three minutes to sort it out.

Allow three minutes, collecting the relinquished items from each group.

Your time is up!

(Begin moving the group forward again, with the two helpers assisting the mom forward if participants can do so safely.) You continue on and enter into a thick green forest. You are all very tired, especially the oldest people in your family, but you have to keep on going. *(Stop at Station Five.)*

Station Five (5)

You need to slash and cut your way through the trees. What will you use to do this? If some families do not have a knife, suggest they seek to partner with another family. Some families may be happy to help. Adult groups, or older youth, may recognize this as an opportunity to try to replenish supplies, and request a trade of items, like food, in exchange for helping another family through the forest. *Allow one to two minutes for conversation.*

At last you can see the sea and you know you have reached the coast. The injured Mom is doing better, so her and her helpers are able to carry what is left of their own belongings. Return their belongings to them. You have two minutes to sort these out. What have you got left now?

Allow two minutes.

Your time is up!

When you get closer to the water, you are overjoyed to see several fishing boats waiting for you in the bay. But the boats are very small and you are told that none of the boats can take more than four people. *(Stop at Station Six.)*

Station Six (6)

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
5/6

Your family must split up into two or more groups. This is very hard to do. You want to stay together and are frightened of what might happen if you separate. You don't know when or where you will be able to meet up. But you have no choice. You can't stay on this shore. You have two minutes to sort out your groups, and stand together in groups of 4. Who will you go with?

Allow two minutes.

Your time is up!

(Move the groups toward Station Seven in their groups of 4. Stop before you reach Station Seven). The fisherman will not let anyone get on his boat without payment. You have no money, but the man agrees to let you on board in exchange for the most valuable thing in your bag. The boat is leaving in two minutes, so each person must pay quickly. Collect each person's most valuable item and let them pass you to arrive at Station Seven.

Station Seven (7)

The boat is even smaller than it looked from far away, and the fisherman now says that you have too much luggage and that no one may carry more than two items. Talk with the others in your four-person group, considering your whole family, and decide what can be shared and what must be left behind. You have four minutes. What have you got left?

Allow six minutes.

Your time is up!

(Move the groups towards Station 8.) The boat sets sail. The sea is rough and stormy. The boat starts to leak and sea water floods in. (Stop at Station 8.)

Station Eight (8)

You manage to save your bag, but it is soaking wet and anything which could be affected by water is ruined. You have two minutes to go through the belongings in your bag and throw away anything that is spoiled.

Allow two minutes, and circulate through the groups 'helping' groups dispose of items. You will need to make some judgment calls about items that would be ruined by water, adjusting your severity according to your participants.

Your time is up!

(Move the group towards Station Nine.) At last you can see land. You climb ashore. What will happen now?

Station Nine (9): This is the end of the activity.

ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

page
6/6

DEBRIEF AFTER THE SIMULATION //

Gather the group for a discussion about the activity. Encourage participants to reflect on whether their initial thoughts have changed as a result of the simulation. Here are some guiding questions:

- Have you or anyone you know been a refugee?
- How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, the things that belong to you and maybe even some members of your family?
- What did you bring at the beginning of the journey?
- Did you bring the right things?
- Did you think about food and water?
- How did you feel when you had to give up your belongings?
- What was the most difficult part of the journey?
- How did you feel about what was happening to you?
- How did you feel when your family had to separate?
- How did you feel at the end of the journey?
- How might it feel to be a real refugee?
- When you arrived on the shore at the end, what were some of your hopes and fears?
- How would you want to be welcomed by your new country??
- Given what we learned today, what is our role as a community with regards to the situation of refugees ?

NEXT STEPS //

Learn more

- To learn more about forced migration, watch our videos at devp.org/en/education/fall2018/materials
- To learn more about our Global Solidarity Walk (organized by our global confederation of Catholic relief and development agencies), visit journey.caritas.org

Take action

- To organize a walk and raise awareness of the root causes of forced migration, visit devp.org/sharejourney
- To sign our action card, go to devp.org/en/education/fall2018/action

Ask more questions

- Do you know of any countries or regions in the world where people have become refugees?
- Do you know why these people have become refugees?
- What stops us from welcoming refugees in Canada?
- How can we welcome new people to Canada, and in our own community?
- How can I play my part in welcoming new people into our community?