

CAN I COME IN?

Refugee, go home! He would if he could.

Overview

This is a role-play about a group of refugees trying to escape to another country. It addresses:

- The plight of refugees
- The social and economic arguments for giving and denying asylum

Related rights

- The right to seek asylum in other countries
- The right of non-refoulement (the right not to be returned to their country where they can risk persecution or death)
- Freedom from discrimination

Objectives

- To develop knowledge and understanding about refugees and their rights
- To practise skills to present arguments and make judgements
- To promote solidarity with people who are suddenly forced to flee their homes.

Materials

- Role cards
- Flipchart or board to write on
- Chalk and or furniture to create the border crossing post
- Pens and paper for the observers to make notes

Preparation

- Copy the role cards. Each border guard, refugee and observer will need their own card.
- Set the scene for the role-play. For example, draw a line on the floor to represent a border or arrange furniture to make a physical frontier with a gap for the check point. Use a table to serve as a counter in the border control office.
- Inform yourself about refugees and the current refugee situation worldwide.

KEY DATE

- **20 June** World Refugee Day

Instructions

1. Explain that this is a role-play about a group of refugees fleeing their homeland who wish to enter another country in search of safety.
2. Start with a brainstorm to find out what people know about refugees. Write the points on a large sheet of paper or flipchart to refer to in the discussion later.
3. Show people the set-up and explain the scenario. Tell them that they are on the border between countries X and Y. A large number of refugees have arrived. They want to cross into Y. They are hungry, tired and cold and have travelled a long way from their home countries, P; Q and R. Some have a little money and only a few have identification documents or passports. The border officials from country Y have different points of view about the situation. The refugees are desperate, and use several arguments to try to persuade the border officials to let them in."
4. Divide the participants into three groups: one group to represent the refugees, the second group to represent the border officials in country Y, and the third group to be observers.
5. Tell the "refugees" and the "border officials" to work out a role for each person and what their arguments will be. Advise the observers about giving feedback. Distribute the role cards and give people fifteen minutes to prepare.
6. Start the role-play. Use your own judgement about when to stop, but about ten minutes should be long enough.
7. Give the observers five minutes to prepare their feedback; then start the debriefing and evaluation.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start by asking the observers to give general feedback on the role-play. Then get comments from the players about how it felt to be a refugee or a border official, and then move on to a general discussion about the issues and what participants learnt.

- How fair was the treatment of the refugees?
- Refugees have a right to protection under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Were the refugees given their right to protection? Why/why not?
- Should a country have the right to turn refugees away? When? For what reasons?
- Would you turn someone away if you were a border official? What if you knew they faced death in their own country?
 - How are refugees met at the borders of your country? Are any of their human rights are being violated? Which?
- What can and should be done to stop people becoming refugees in the first place?

Tips for facilitators

The situation with regards to refugees differs widely throughout Europe and you should consider how to set the scenario and adapt the activity to meet your objectives in running this activity. It will help if you invent a short back story about the fictitious

countries, X and Y where the scene is set; Z, the country beyond Y and P,Q and R the source countries of the refugees.

Inform yourself about the definitions of a refugee, an asylum seeker (see page in the background chapter on migration). Also make a note of the main source countries of refugees and the numbers of refugees in the neighbouring countries. Also check how many refugees there are in your country

Use the brainstorm to ascertain how much people already know about why there are refugees, what causes people to flee their homeland, where they come from and the countries that they go to. This will help you decide how to guide the debriefing and evaluation, and what additional information you may need to provide at that stage.

Think about what to do if someone in the group is a refugee. If they are willing, you could build on their experience and use them as a resource person.

The three groups do not have to be equal. You may, for instance, choose to have only three or four observers and let the rest of the group be active role-players. In real life there are likely to be many more refugees than border guards and you may wish to reflect this in the role play. A good tip is to give the observers the role of “journalists” who have to file a report as part of the debriefing.

Consider what you want to achieve with this activity and think about how to set the scene. Are your refugees a mass of tired, hungry, desperate people? If so you could, run the activity outdoors in a wood or else by a river or lake if your refugees are to arrive in a crowded, leaky boat. If you are indoors and want to set the scene on a dark, cold night turn off the lights and open the

windows. Alternatively, are the refugees arriving in smaller numbers at a formal border crossing? In this case set up an “office” where the officials can (briefly) check the refugees passports and ask where they come from.

Review the role cards and adapt them as necessary. Be aware that the role play can get very chaotic. In this case, stop the action (as in Forum Theatre) and ask the journalists to interview the refugees and the border guards. This will enable everyone calm down and listen more carefully.