

# ON THE MOVE: A REFUGEE SIMULATION ACTIVITY

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## 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
- 6 clips of paper for each participant (use GOOS (Good on One Side) paper if possible)
- Pictures for each stage (option)
- List of Belongings, visible to whole group (board, flipchart, etc)
  - Examples: Passport, food, water, tent, axe, first aid kit, soccer ball, batteries, a pat, a tarp, extra clothes
- Optional:
  - 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 stages. These stages can be created in one two ways:

- 1) Groups can be situated around the room, and remain stationary while images and the narrative take them through the stages. In this method, prepare as follows:
  - Arrange desks, tables or chairs into groups of 6
  - Prepare the List of Belongings to be displayed to the group (board, flipchart, etc)
  - Optional: For younger audiences, prepare 1 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.
  - Choose a location with enough space to move the entire group from station to station
  - Determine the location of each station
  - Prepare station 1 with paper, pens/pencils
  - Prepare the list of Belongings to be displayed to the group (board, flipchart, etc).

*Before beginning this activity, please ensure you know if any participants have experience or direct connection to any refugees. This simulation game may be more difficult for those with direct experience or connection. Please consider providing an opportunity for these individuals to share their stories or add comments if they so choose.*

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## INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY //

*For younger audiences, begin with asking the participants to think about and discuss the question: Why do people move? Ensure that children 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, and seek safety in another country. This might be 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 have 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 for each question:

- 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 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 ACTIVITY//

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

### Begin

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.

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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 belongings list 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 these things might be heavy to carry or difficult to look after. You have ten minutes to draw on your cards the six things that you want to take.

*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 with you and climb on the old wooden truck.

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

*(Slowly walk the group to station 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. *Remove any pets participants had 'packed'.* You start to cry as you think about all the happy times that you spent with him 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 hear you calling them to stop so the bag is left far behind. The older child has lost everything.

*(Remove all items from the older child.)*

*(Stop at Station Two.)* You both want to comfort your family member, also thinking practically, you take the time in the truck to redistribute your family belongings so that the older child has supplies.

They can take one thing from each person in the family. You have two minutes to do this. What have you been left with?

*Allow two minutes.*

### **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.)* Something is very wrong with the truck's engine and it cannot be fixed. You must continue the journey on foot but find your bags are too heavy to carry. Each family member must relinquish their heaviest item. You have two minutes to decide on these items, and leave them behind.

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*Allow two minutes, collecting the 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 you 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.)* The mom in your family falls and hurts her leg. She cannot go on without help. Two of your family will have to carry her. Mom, and the two helpers, can no longer carry their bags. The rest of the family will have to 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 along, 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.)* 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 opportunity to seek to replenish supplies, requesting items such as food in exchange for helping through the forest.

At last you can see the sea and you know you have reached the coast.

The injured person and their 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!**

You are overjoyed to see the fishing boats waiting in the bay. But unfortunately the boats are very small and you are told that none of the boats can take more than four people.

*(Stop at Station Six.)* Your family must split up into groups of four. 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.

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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 he agrees to let you on board in exchange for the most valuable thing in your bag. The boat is leaving in two minutes, each person must pay quickly.

*Collect each person's most valuable item and let them pass you to arrive at Station Seven.*

The boat is very small and the fisherman now says that you have too much luggage.

No one may carry more than two items. Talk with the others in your 4-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.)* 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 check the belongings in your bag and throw away anything that is spoilt.

*Allow two minutes, and circulate through the groups 'helping' groups dispose of items. You will need to make some judgement 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?

**This is the end of the activity.**

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## DEBRIEF AFTER THE ACTIVITY //

Gather the group for a discussion about the activity. Here are some examples of 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?
- Arriving on the shore, what might be some of your hopes and fears?
- How would you want to be welcomed by your new country??
- What is our role as a community with regards to the situation of refugees given what we have learned today?

## NEXT STEPS //

**CONTINUE LEARNING:** For the latest news, reports, and other resources, visit [devp.org/syria](http://devp.org/syria)

## RESOURCES:

Caritas internationalis (global network of catholic agencies, Development and Peace is Caritas Canada):

- Global campaign: <http://www.caritas.org/2015/12/message-on-world-day-of-peace-from-syria/>
- Videos: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuQafgNw\\_znzC2SmFB-sECaPAQyniFglx](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuQafgNw_znzC2SmFB-sECaPAQyniFglx)

## ACTION:

Fundraising: [devp.org/syria](http://devp.org/syria)

Advocacy, Petition: [devp.org/syria](http://devp.org/syria)

Receiving refugees into your community:

- Do you know of any countries or regions in the world where people have become refugees?
- Do you know why they have become refugees?
- What stops us from welcoming refugees?
- 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?