

FRONT PAGE DIALOGUE: THE REFUGEE CRISIS

There are currently over 65 million forcibly displaced people around the world, more than at any other time since World War II. The number of people fleeing their homelands has prompted heated debate around the capacity and obligation of countries to serve as a refuge. The response of civil society and well as state leaders in these countries has varied greatly. In a nation of 330,000, for instance, 12,000 Icelanders recently called on their government to increase the government's cap of 50 Syrian refugees by offering to personally host families, while Hungary closed its borders with Serbia and Croatia to prevent the flow of refugees across their borders. And while widespread protests against the separation of children and parents at border crossings in the United States in June 2018 led to a change in policy, 55 percent of Republicans still agree with the tactic. These varied responses among individuals and governments illuminate fears around national security, limited resources and the effects of immigration on a receiving country's national identity.

Sites of Conscience have an important role to play in facilitating constructive conversations on critical issues. Below is one model for engaging visitors in dialogue on the current refugee crisis. We encourage you to adapt and ground the dialogue in the unique history that your Site of Conscience works to preserve and share.

How to use Front Page Dialogues

Rather than using all of the model questions suggested in each phase, facilitators should select questions that reflect and further the conversation as it evolves. Secretariat staff and member sites are available to support you as you develop your dialogue session. If you are not familiar with the Arc of Dialogue model and would like more information or guidance, please contact Sarah Pharaon (spharaon@sitesofconscience.org) or Braden Paynter (bpaynter@sitesofconscience.org).

Guidelines

What are the group agreements or guidelines for the dialogue that help us establish the "container" in which dialogue occurs? Sample agreements:

- Share the air: leave room for everyone to speak.
- Recognize that our unique backgrounds and social status give us different life experiences.
- Seek first to understand—ask questions to clarify, not to debate.

Preparation

Write four to six of the statements below on large, individual sheets of paper.

- Nations that played a role in creating the crisis should play a larger role in caring for refugees.
- A nation's wealth is not the most important factor in how many refugees it should take in.



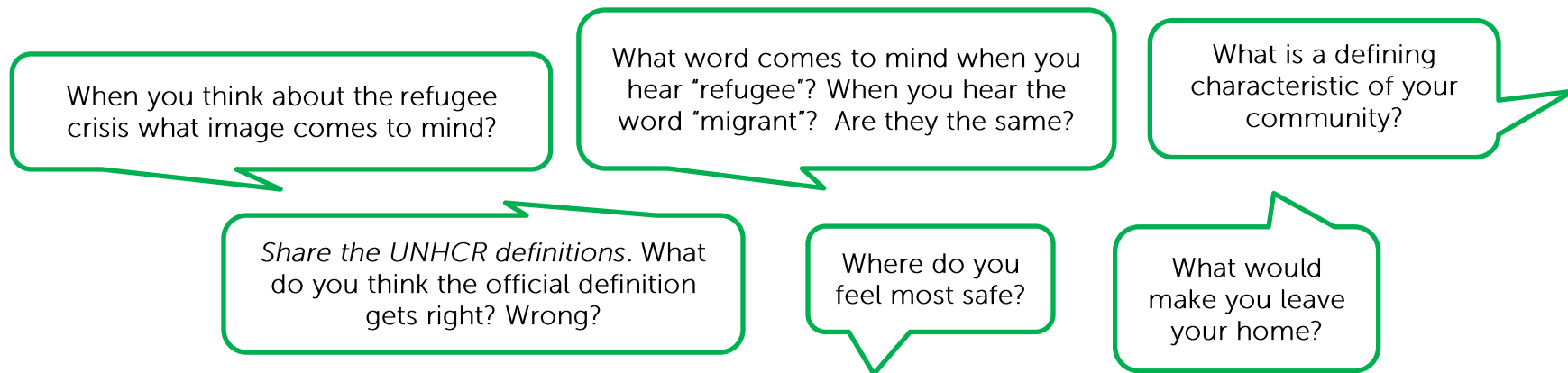
- The nations closest to the crisis should take in the most refugees.
- Refugees should go to countries as culturally similar to them as possible.
- The private sector should lead the response to the crisis.
- The ultimate goal is to help refugees return to their home country.
- Host countries should try to integrate refugees into society as quickly as possible.
- Refugees should not be given priority in the immigration process.
- A country can turn refugees away to protect its culture and way of life.

Bring these definitions with you:

- According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a **refugee** is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country."
- **Migrants**, "choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government."

PHASE I - COMMUNITY BUILDING

Questions in Phase 1 help build community and break down barriers between people by allowing participants to share information about themselves.





PHASE II - SHARING OUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Questions in Phase 2 help participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why.

Has the international response to the refugee crisis been adequate?

What makes this a crisis?

When have you provided protection for someone when they were threatened?

When have you benefited from another's compassion? When have you shown compassion to others?

Has media coverage been balanced?

Who are the outsiders, who are the insiders in your community?

Should the needs of migrants and refugees be treated equally?

To Do: Before starting Phase III, allow participants to read the statements in silence and then to "vote" their agreement or disagreement by placing a red or green dot on each sheet. After all participants have voted on all statements, the facilitator tabulates the results and shares them with the participants inviting reactions and comments from the group.

PHASE III - EXPLORING BEYOND OURSELVES

Questions in Phase 3 help participants engage in inquiry and exploration about the dialogue topic in an effort to learn with and from one another.

Does our society value all lives equally? What is the media's role in placing value on human life?

How do we determine the number of refugees a country should take?

How does your race, gender or religious beliefs influence your reaction to these events?

Should refugees have a voice in where and how they are relocated?

Do new populations make a country more vulnerable?

Are there benefits to taking in refugees?

Should the Paris attacks influence the conversation around welcoming refugees?



PHASE IV - SYNTHESIZING THE EXPERIENCE

Questions in Phase 4 help the group to reflect on the dialogue and what they learned.

What would you like to see your country do?

Whose perspective on these issues do you want to understand better?

What can you do?

As you reflect on the refugee crisis, what are the values that you think should guide the way we respond?

What should this institution do?

Who would you like to be engaged on this issue?