Refugees as Re-Builders™

A training course in
Dialogue Facilitation, Ethical Leadership and Sustainable Livelihood

You can rebuild buildings, but if you don’t rebuild people, it will be in vain.
Dr Ghassan Rabah, senior Lebanese judge, after the civil war in Lebanon

What is ‘Refugees as Re-Builders’?
Refugees as Re-Builders™ (RRB) is a training course for people of refugee background who wish to contribute to rebuilding the countries or communities from which they have fled.
The course focuses on three themes:
• Dialogue Facilitation for Social Cohesion
• Ethical Leadership for Just Governance
• Sustainable Livelihood

Why these three themes?
During many years of working with displaced persons and refugees, Initiatives of Change (IofC) (see below) has listened to many refugees and understood that facilitated dialogue is essential to building a sustainable culture of trust and mutual learning in their countries of origin. Conflict and dictatorship have destroyed the cultural, social and environmental fabric of their nations. They set communities against each other, and cause them to act in ways they would never do in peace-time.

People of refugee background in the UK, who wish to engage in rebuilding their countries of origin, may have relevant academic or technical skills and multiple experiences from living in democratic societies, but they may not have given time to learning about reconciliation processes, nation-building and economic reconstruction.

After years of conflict and broken relationships, is often a long, slow process, and Dialogue Facilitation skills are essential in re-building relationships.

It is more likely to succeed with the guidance of skilled facilitators who speak the local language. They can set up safe environments for people to talk to each other across the fault-lines of religion, ethnicity, gender or class. Once a measure of trust has been rebuilt, the development of political and economic structures can begin.

In ‘Fragile States’ social cohesion is undermined by corruption and nepotism causing injustice, division and breakdown on all levels of society. Ethical Leadership is needed to re-introduce justice into communities.

Many people can become ‘leaders’ through effective coaching, but what kind of leadership is needed in post-conflict countries? The Ethical Leadership module gives participants an opportunity to reflect on the wide variety of leadership styles. It offers a syllabus that enables participants to become role-models for self-reflective and collaborative leadership on the basis of clear ethical commitments.

But who will pay attention to responsible governance and principles of justice, if economic structures have collapsed and everyone is struggling to survive? Sustainable Livelihood is fundamental to build economic solidarity.

This module enables participants to explore a variety of economic structures that are being applied in different parts of the world that sustain families, communities and the environment.

How is the course structured?

The 35-day course (1 weekend day per week) runs over 12 months and is divided into three levels: Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced.

The Foundation level is an introduction to the 3 main themes, and equips participants with dialogue facilitation skills.
Those who complete the Intermediate level will have the confidence to start facilitating workshops on one or more of the three themes.

Those who complete the Advanced level will be able to begin to train others to facilitate workshops.

On-going training and mentoring will deepen participants’ experience of putting these skills into practice in their diaspora communities and their countries of origin, and a ‘Community of Practitioners’ will be established.

**For the foundation level of the training the participants will cover basic:**

- Facilitation skills for dialogue between conflicting groups
- Concepts of Ethical Leadership for transparency in public and private governance
- Concept of Sustainable Livelihood and introduction to rural and urban livelihood options
- How self-reflection can be used to turn ones experience of displacement into a source of strength.

**Learning approaches**

The three modules offer a human-centered and participatory style of training.

The course activities include group work and interactive sessions to encourage participants to share their experience and explore questions more deeply.

The learning outcomes are designed to offer concepts and references underpinning each session as a complement to participants’ existing skills and knowledge. Hence the learning methodology is based on lively interactive exchange of ideas between the participants and trainers.

The training builds on the displacement experience of participants and turns it into strengths. It enhances participants’ social capabilities to boost confidence and resilience to internal and external instability.

**What have the participants said about the course?**

‘The training has put me in a position to articulate the problems of my country clearly, and to contribute to finding solutions by being a voice for a silent majority’, said a Special-Needs teacher from Uganda.

A Somali diaspora leader commented, ‘I found great tools for dealing with root causes of social problems.’
And medical doctor from Sudan said, ‘The title itself touched me, as a refugee in the UK. I now have a better understanding of myself, of what is going on around me, and why I am here.’

Video testimonials:


Why is the training needed?

According to current UNHCR\(^1\) estimates there are over 65 million ‘forcibly displaced people’ in the world. This represents an increase of over 21 million since 1997.

The increase is mainly due to conflicts in the Middle East, including Syria, Iraq and Yemen, and in sub-Saharan Africa including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Substantial numbers of European citizens have come to see refugees and migrants as a burden and even as a threat. But could host communities glimpse the potential in them? Could they see in them the future human resources that their countries of origin will need in terms of knowledge, professional experience and creativity?

If so, host communities will be able to welcome, accommodate and enable them to equip themselves with the relevant training and experience to eventually make a contribution to their country of origin.

This course, like all of Initiatives of Change’s work, depends on donations from individuals, trusts, corporations and other institutions. The detailed budget is available on request from the Programme Manager, Dr Muna Ismail

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