



OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Achieving self-sufficiency is critical for the success of refugees in the United States. As such, all adult refugees (18-64) who are able to work should make finding employment a priority. As refugees start to navigate employment in the United States, it is important to be mindful of the factors that can contribute to their success.

Refugees come from a wide range of countries, bringing with them different cultural norms and expectations, as well as varying levels of prior work experience, education, and language ability. It is important to be sensitive to these factors, and to be equally aware of possible opinions (which may be strongly held) about the employment of female family members and about women working alongside men in the workforce.

KEY MESSAGES

- All refugees need to make finding and keeping a job a priority for the financial health of their families and themselves.
- There are both challenges and solutions to employment for all adults in a family.
- Employment of refugee women may change family dynamics and influence the cultural adjustment process for the whole family .

LESSON OBJECTIVES

After this lesson, refugees will be able to:

- Describe why it's important for all eligible employable adults to seek and obtain employment, regardless of sex.
- Articulate at least four advantages of refugee women seeking and obtaining employment .
- Identify two to three impacts that gender has on refugees seeking and obtaining employment.
- Determine potential challenges that refugee women who work might face and begin to identify tentative solutions.

APPLYING SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON PLANS

This supplemental lesson plan is not required, but may assist Cultural Orientation (CO) providers who are looking for ways to enhance the Employment section of their CO curriculum. CO providers and their supervisors can decide to incorporate this lesson into their curriculum based on the needs of the refugee populations they serve.

The lesson plan is a suggested guide and can be adapted according to circumstances and the creative wisdom of CO providers and their supervisors. It can be used in whole, or in part, depending upon need and time available.

The lesson includes the following sections:

- Overview
- Activity Bank
- Appendix
- Additional Resources
- Acknowledgements

This lesson can be used with the following companion resources:

- **Fact Sheet**
- **Podcast**
- **Video**

SESSION PLAN

The following is a proposed session plan of how all four activities provided in this lesson plan can be used together. CO providers may decide to select only one or two activities to conduct based on other lessons being delivered, the group of participants, and on time and resources.

Title	Description Overview
Spectrum Activity	Begin the session by conducting the Spectrum Activity, which allows participants to reflect on perceptions of gender roles (as it relates to employment), connecting them to values and goals of both individuals and families.
Goals and Employment Activity	Use the Goals and Employment Activity to have participants explore how seeking and obtaining employment can contribute to achieving their goals, whether they are male or female.
Scenarios Activity	Following the discussion on goals, ask participants to consider advantages of women and men seeking employment. Then conduct the Scenarios Activity, which allows participants to consider different challenges around both men and women working, and asks them to brainstorm solutions.
Self-Reflection Activity	Conduct the Self-Reflection Activity to reflect on the lesson and potential next steps for them as an individual or with their family.

SESSION PREPARATION

- Review the key vocabulary for the lesson
- Select statements to be used for the Spectrum Activity
- Select scenarios to be used for Scenarios Activity

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Scenarios (as selected)
- **Employment for Refugee Women Fact Sheet** (1 per participant) (optional)
- Projector for video (optional)
- Post-it notes
- Flip-chart
- Markers

KEY VOCABULARY

- Self-sufficiency
- Equality
- Goals
- Childcare
- Consequences
- Solutions
- Family dynamics

ACTIVITY BANK

SPECTRUM ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

To explore perceptions of gender roles (as it relates to employment), connecting them to values and goals.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain to participants that during this session they will consider the importance of all adults finding employment, including women, and how this may look and influence individuals and families differently.
2. Ask participants to stand. Explain that in front of them there is an imaginary line. One end of the line represents “Agree” and the other end represents “Disagree”.
3. Explain to the participants that you will read a statement and they have to place themselves along the line. It is a spectrum, so they don’t have to stand only on disagree or agree, but can be anywhere in between.
4. Read the statements provided in the [Appendix, Statements for Spectrum Activity](#). You may elect to add or edit statements based on the group you are working with and time considerations.
5. After each statement, you may want to ask follow-up questions to understand choices.
6. Complete activity with debrief questions provided below. The questions are designed to have participants reflect on goals generally speaking, and the need to become self-sufficient.
7. If time allows, play the Employment for **Refugee Women Podcast**, or provide it as a material for learners after the session.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

1. Based on the exercise, what have you realized is most important to you? What are your perceptions of men and women related to work, employment, and the family?
2. How might your perceptions and needs change now that you are in the United States? How might they influence your ability to become self-sufficient?
3. How do the items you identified as being important influence your goals? Your ability to be self-sufficient?

MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- Create a safe and comfortable environment.
- Ensure that participants know that it is okay to answer honestly.
- Remind participants to respect each other’s answers.
- You do NOT need to read all statements provided in the Appendix.
- Do not pass judgment on responses provided, and avoid “why” questions.
- Utilize the Employment for Refugee Women Fact Sheet for reference.
- If the group is smaller or more reserved, you may elect to have them to mark their answers on a piece of paper independently
- CO providers may make connections between challenges of maintaining culture and becoming self-sufficient.

GOALS AND EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

To consider goals of refugees and the role seeking and obtaining employment plays in achieving these goals (including self-sufficiency) using a gender lens.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Ask participants to think about their goals (either as individuals or for their families, or both), as it relates to initial arrival.
2. Have participants share their goals.
3. Conduct debrief.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

1. How does having a job contribute to achieving your goals?
2. How does other family members having a job contribute to you achieving their goals?
3. What are some consequences of not having a job?

SCENARIOS ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

To consider advantages of working for both men and women, and identify challenges and solutions around women working

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Start by asking participants: What are the advantages of women working? What are the advantages of men working? Through making the list, the CO provider can draw parallels between males and females, and if applicable link back to perceptions explored during the Spectrum Activity if used.
2. After collecting responses, ask participants to compare and contrast the answers. Ask them about potential disadvantages for men working? For women?
3. Provide participants with different scenarios and either guide them through the discussion points, or have the participants work in groups to respond (again depending on the group and the participants' abilities and level). [See Appendix, List of Scenarios.](#)
4. Review responses of the scenarios together.
5. Optional: Show the **Employment for Refugee Women video.**

MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- This activity can be treated as a broad overview discussion of goals or integrated into existing activities around goals .
- Based on education and literacy, it also may be valuable to facilitate additional activities before going directly into goal setting.
- This can be done in group or pairs.
- Depending on participants and time, you may have them write their goals or depict them visually.
- Utilize the **Employment for Refugee Women Fact Sheet** for reference .

MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- Take the opportunity to make connections back to their goals, and if applicable, the Spectrum Activity.
- Record responses from the discussion based on participants' abilities and level. For example, write a list, or have them write their responses on post-its.
- You can adapt and alter scenarios to best fit the context for the group of participants.
- You do NOT need to use all scenarios provided, and may elect to only use one scenario.

SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY

PURPOSE

To reflect on the lesson and potential actions they can take as an individual or with their family when it comes to employment

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Provide participants with the self-reflection questions.
2. Provide participants with access to additional resources:
 - **Employment for Refugee Women Fact sheet**
 - **Employment for Refugee Women Podcast**
 - **Employment for Refugee Women Video**

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How have your perceptions of employment changed?
2. Have your goals changed or stayed the same?
3. What are some actions that you (and your family) can take in the area of employment?

MODIFICATIONS & TIPS

- The CO provider can choose how to share and have participants consider the self-reflection questions. Possible options can be to do it as a quiet self-reflection with or without writing responses.
- Depending on participants, CO provider can conduct this as a group activity.
- If applicable, this activity provides an opportunity to link back to the Spectrum Activity .

APPENDIX

STATEMENTS FOR SPECTRUM ACTIVITY

Select statements most relevant for the group of participants; not all statements or follow-up questions need to be used.

Statement	Potential Follow-Up Question(s)
It is important for all adults in a family to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the value of having all adults work?• What are the potential challenges of having all adults work?
Men and women should share the responsibility of taking care of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How could it be difficult for men and women to share the responsibility?• What are the advantages of shared responsibility?
It is important to make enough money to pay rent and bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will make it difficult to pay rent and bills?• How can the entire family contribute?
It will be very difficult for me to find a job (<i>because of my schedule, my experience, my English</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What steps could you take to reduce these difficulties?• How could you receive help in overcoming these challenges?• Is it possible to find a job without English? How does English impact your job prospects?
It is important for women to be at home and take care of the children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a time when it is okay for women to not be at home and take care of the children?• What are the advantages of women taking care of children? Are there disadvantages?
It is important for men to be at home and take care of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a time when it is okay for men to not be at home and take care of the children?• What are the advantages of men taking care of children? What are the disadvantages?
If a man has children, he does not need to work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What about a woman who has children?• What influences your answer to this statement?
It is important to learn to drive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this a short-term or long-term goal? Explain.
I am okay (good) if a woman is supervising me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What could be challenging about this?
I am okay (good) if a man is supervising me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What could be challenging about this?

LIST OF SCENARIOS

Select scenarios prior to lesson. For each scenario you will need to fill in names that will be relevant to your participants.

_____ (mother) has arrived in the United States with her two children aged 14 and 4. She speaks some English, but has little to no work experience. She does not have any family, but her neighbors are very kind and also have children. She needs to find a job to pay her rent and other bills.

Discussion Points:

- What could be some challenges for _____?
- What are some potential solutions for _____?
- What will happen if _____ does not find a job?

_____ (husband) and _____ (wife) have arrived in the United States. They do not have any children. They have been married for three years. _____ (husband) can speak English very well, but _____ (wife) cannot speak English. _____ (husband) wants to find a job, and _____ (wife) wants to focus on learning English first. After three months _____ (husband) has not found a job, and _____ (wife) has improved her English a little. They need to pay their rent and other bills.

Discussion Points:

- What could be some challenges for the couple?
- What are some potential solutions for them?
- What will happen if _____ and _____ do not find a job?

_____ (husband) and _____ (wife) have arrived in the United States with their two children aged 6 months and 2 years old. _____ (husband) can speak some English and has work experience, and _____ (wife) speaks very little English, but does have prior work experience. Since the children are young, _____ (husband) focuses on finding a job, so _____ (wife) can stay home. _____ (wife) wants to learn English, even though she is at home with the children, so that she can eventually start her own business. After six months, _____ (husband) has a job, but they need more income.

Discussion Points:

- What could be some challenges for the family?
- What are some potential solutions for them?
- What will happen if _____ and _____ do not have more income?



_____ (wife) and _____ (husband) have arrived in the United States with their one child that is six years old. _____ (wife) speaks English well, and has work experience. _____ (husband) does not speak as much English, but he does have work experience. _____ (wife) quickly finds a job, and so _____ (husband) stays at home with their child. They decide to move into a different apartment after two months, but it is more expensive. They do not have enough income.

Discussion Points:

- What could be some challenges for the family?
- What are some potential solutions for them?
- What will happen if _____ and _____ do not have more income?



_____ has arrived in the United States by herself. She does not have any children. She does not speak any English and has not completed schooling. She does have family that already lives in the United States. She shares an apartment with one other woman. She wants to continue her education, but she needs to pay her rent.

Discussion Points:

- What could be some challenges for _____?
- What are some potential solutions for _____?
- What will happen if _____ does not find a job?



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR's Dialogues with Refugee Women*
- UN Women: Women refugees and migrants

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This lesson plan was developed by CORE in collaboration with the CO Leadership Network, a community of practice comprised of Resettlement Support Center CO Coordinators and Resettlement Agency CO Focal Points.

At the time this lesson plan was developed, the CO Leaders were: Jamal Alfakhouri, Sara Bedford, Pat Blashill, Erick Consuegra, Ella Fowler, George Gholam, Kathleen Gillen, Rebecca Heilemeskel, Amanda Lalley, Scott Kerr, Lauren Messing, Javier Morenza, Daryl Morrissey, Vanessa Reinertson, Pushkar Sapkota, Sara Fairley, Tracy Vunderink, Peter Vogelaar, Virginia Weyer.

This lesson plan also received support from Halima Gellman, Gender Equality Technical Advisor with the International Rescue Committee.

Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

8719 Colesville Road, 3rd Floor • Silver Spring, MD 20910

www.coresourceexchange.org



The contents of this document were developed under an agreement financed by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States Department of State but do not necessarily represent the policy of that agency and should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced.