

Research Jonas IMA Projects

Main Challenge:

How can media and technology be utilized to improve the experience of both refugees and volunteers?

Challenges faced by residents:

Language barriers:

- Residents currently receive only one hour of lessons per week from volunteers
- Residents want more options to study and learn Dutch.

Access to employment:

- Asylum seekers can only work after six months.
- Employers must apply for a work permit (TWV), which is complicated.
- There is no structured support for job searching.

Administrative challenges:

- After six months, residents receive a BSN number, but there is no guidance on how to register with the municipality, apply for DigiD, or open a bank account.
- Creating a CV is difficult for many since they are unfamiliar with the Dutch language and standards.

Goals:

- Improved communication and understanding between refugees and volunteers.
- Increased access to educational and support resources.
- Stronger community bonds and successful integration.
- More efficient volunteer management.

My idea:

Online Matching App:

Language learning and cultural integration can be greatly improved by creating an online platform that links refugees with Dutch-speaking volunteers, particularly in areas with a shortage of local volunteers. An improved idea for such a platform is as follows:

Platform Concept:

1. User Profiles:

- a. **Refugees:** Establish profiles that include information about their native tongue, present level of Dutch proficiency, learning goals, and particular hobbies or occupations.
- b. **Volunteers:** Describe your availability, areas of competence, personal interests, and Dutch proficiency.

2. Matching Algorithm:

- a. To promote meaningful and productive connections, utilize a system that matches users according to their availability, common interests, and language skills.

3. Communication Tools:

- a. Include functions like voice calls, video calling, and text messaging to satisfy a range of technological skill levels and tastes.

4. Learning Resources:

- a. To enhance conversational practice, provide access to interactive classes, activities, and cultural insights in the Dutch language.

5. Community Engagement:

- a. Arranging online gatherings such as workshops, cultural exchanges, and group discussions to foster a community of support and improve educational opportunities.

6. Volunteer Support (If Possible):

- a. Give volunteers training materials so they can be prepared with cultural sensitivity instruction and successful teaching techniques, guaranteeing courteous and fruitful encounters.

Existing platforms and initiatives:

Several platforms have successfully implemented similar models:

- **NaTakallam:** Employs refugees as online language tutors, offering language services while generating income opportunities and fostering global connections. <https://natakallam.com/>
- **Tarjimly:** Connects refugees and aid workers with volunteer translators and interpreters in real-time through a mobile app, facilitating communication across language barriers. <https://www.tarjimly.org/>
- **ENGin:** Pairs English-speaking volunteers with Ukrainian students for free online conversation practice, promoting language learning and cross-cultural exchange. <https://www.enginprogram.org/>
- **Conversation Over Borders:** Connects refugees with volunteer tutors in the UK for free one-on-one online English conversation classes, fostering friendships and cultural exchange. <https://www.conversationoverborders.org/>
- **AILEM:** A language learning app tailored for refugees and asylum seekers, shaped by their experiences and needs, offering relevant content and features. <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/good-practices/ailem-app>

Considerations for Development:

- **Accessibility:** Taking into account any barriers to technology use among refugees, make sure the platform is easy to use and available on a range of devices.
- **Privacy and Security:** Put strong safeguards in place to keep user information private and secure, fostering user confidence.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** To respect and honor a range of backgrounds, include cultural sensitivity into volunteer training and the platform's design.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish channels for users to provide feedback, allowing continuous improvement of the platform and addressing any concerns promptly.