

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS TOOLKIT

Community Conversations Toolkit: Connecting with Refugee Experiences

The Community Conversations Toolkit: Connecting with Refugee Experiences enables Americans to connect in new and different ways with the experiences of refugees around the world. Using the toolkit, you can engage friends, neighbors, and community members to learn more about refugees and the ongoing global refugee crisis.

About Community Conversations

The global refugee crisis is the largest humanitarian issue of our time. Awareness of the refugee crisis is high. Understanding and engagement is not. The Community Conversations initiative engages current and potential refugee supporters to educate their friends and neighbors through a variety of venues and common interests (e.g. book clubs, religious groups, passion for music or film, tech or other shared interest/expertise communities) and enables them to use their time, energy, skills, and resources to support refugees together. Participants can then do the same with their networks, creating a ripple effect.

As more people gain knowledge and better understand refugees' experiences, they can share what they have learned with others through word of mouth, events, and other resources. Participation in Community Conversation activities will increase the level of engagement around the global refugee crisis among individuals and groups. At the conclusion of each Community Conversation experience, participants will be given the option to learn more, spread the word, and/or host their own community conversation.

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

The Community Conversations Toolkit: Connecting with Refugee Experiences will make it as simple and straightforward to engage your friends, family, and community members in activities and actions that help them connect with and better understand the refugee crisis.

Take the steps outlined below to plan and host a successful event. The following tools and supporting materials can be used as designed or customized to fit your community's needs:

- **Fact or Fiction Game**
- **Presentation Slides**
- **Talking Points**
- **Media List with Discussion Questions (i.e. Book List, Film List, Music List, Article List)**
- **Sign-In Sheet**
- **Handout: Forced to Flee: Facts and Figures**
- **Handout: Actions You Can Take to Support Refugees**
- **Resources (Organizations, Educational Materials, Websites)**

Ways to Engage

Whether as part of a formal group, such as a community center, a school, or a faith-based organization, or more informal groups, such as a group of friends and neighbors, you can meaningfully connect with the 60+ million people who have been forced to flee their homes around the globe. Following are some suggestions:

Host a Book Club

Connect to the refugee experience through reading and discussion of fiction, nonfiction, children's books and/or articles. These can be one-time- events or ongoing conversations and can be tailored to the size, needs, and interests of your group.

Host a Discussion

Engage your friends, colleagues, and neighbors to gain a deeper understanding of the history, facts, and consequences of the refugee crisis. These discussions can be tailored to meet the needs of specific communities, help to draw parallels between the global situation and the United States, and more.

EVENT

Plan Your Event

As with any gathering you host, there are several steps to take to ensure the event is a success. These include:

☐ **Make a guest list.**

Will you host an existing group (e.g. book club, knitting club, social group, office colleagues, other team) or create a guest list from scratch? Do you want to host an intimate gathering with just a handful of friends or a larger event that is open to friends of friends, or the larger community? If using an existing group or meeting, you can add new guests to that as well.

☐ **Determine event location, date, and time.**

Choose a time, date, and location that are convenient for the greatest number of guests. If you have a group that already meets on a regular schedule, your event could take place during one of your upcoming planned gathering to minimize potential schedule challenges. For smaller groups, consider hosting at your house, or if you require more space, reach out to local libraries, schools, and religious institutions.

☐ **Invite your guests.**

Send invitations and track RSVPs using email templates and other tools provided to help you manage the process from start to finish.

☐ **Plan the details.**

The scope of planning for events will vary. If you are hosting a small gathering of friends in your home, you will likely plan for food, drink, and seating needs, in addition to pre-printing (e.g. sign-in sheets) or pre-sending any supporting materials to your guests (e.g. books, discussion questions). If you are hosting an event at another location or having many guests, your plans may be more involved. Following are key questions to answer when you're planning:

- **Food and drink:** Will I serve food and drink? How much do I need? Do I want or need to ask others for help in preparing, providing?
- **Venue:** Do I need to do anything to modify the venue (e.g. rearrange furniture) to accommodate my guests? Do I need to secure a venue? Who do I need to contact? Are there restrictions on food, drink, or anything else that I need to consider? What are my responsibilities to the venue before, during, and after the event?
- **Guest Speaker:** Would you like to invite a guest speaker to enhance your event? If you're hosting a book club, would you like to try to invite the author of the book you are reading, a friend or someone in your community that does work with or about refugees, someone who has experienced being a refugee? You could also invite someone to Skype or conduct a video chat during your event if they are not local.
- **Materials:** Do I have all the appropriate materials I need to host my event, including presentation materials, sign-in sheets (or iPad or laptop for easy sign-in and other online components as applicable), projection equipment, cords/cables, film, book(s), copies of materials (e.g. discussion questions, articles) to hand out?
- **Volunteers:** Do you need or want help to plan the details? Secure a venue? Prepare materials? Assist you at the event? Reach out as soon as possible to secure the help you need and be specific (and kind) when you ask for help in terms of what you need, how you need it and when you need it.
- **Sign-In Sheet:** Download the sign-in sheet to have your guests fill out during your event. They can sign up to host an event, share what they've learned, or simply to learn more. Decide when during your event would be best for guests to sign in. When will they be most likely to say, "I want to learn more about this," "I want to tell my friends about this," or "I want to do more to help."

☐ **Know your stuff.**

Be prepared for the event you are hosting. For example, if you're hosting a book club, be sure to read the book, discussion questions, and any other supporting materials in advance. If you are screening a film, you may want to watch it in advance and/or familiarize yourself with the story, reviews and any other supporting materials.

If you plan a short presentation for your event, please rehearse in advance and make comments brief. You do NOT need to become an expert or know the answer to every possible question, but get comfortable with the material to make the event more successful and more enjoyable for you and your guests.

☐ **Make an Agenda.**

Once you have all the elements in place, think through the timing of each and create an agenda (this can be just for you or shared with the group) that will help your event flow as smoothly as possible.

Host Your Event

Now is the time to put your plan into action. Make sure the venue is set up, any food or drink is ready to serve, materials are ready and available, and guest speakers and volunteers, if you have them, are confirmed. With an agenda and a solid plan, your event is likely to run very smoothly.

Remember to include time for guests to fill out the sign-up sheet as part of your event. It is okay to make changes during the event to better suit the flow of the discussion or presentation. Be prepared to be flexible if certain elements take more or less time than planned.

After Your Event

☐ **Thank your guests.**

Follow up with your guests after the event, within 24 hours if possible, to say thank you for participating, and give them options to continue their engagement with the refugee crisis. Be sure to thank volunteers, guest speakers, and anyone else who helped you plan or execute your event.

☐ **Send in your Sign-In Sheet.**

Please send your Sign-In Sheet to the HIVE within 24 hours of your event. You can take pictures and email to: erin@unrefugees.org or send via snail mail to: The HIVE, 259 West 30 th Street, 16 th Floor, New York, NY 10003.

☐ **Give Feedback.**

All hosts and participants will receive a brief online survey about their experiences with the Community Conversations event. Please complete the survey and ask your guests to complete the survey as well. Feedback about the tools and process will allow us to continue to refine the initiative and make the experience better for future participants.

☐ **Share.**

Beyond giving us feedback, please feel free to share your experiences with your friends, family, and colleagues. You can use social sharing tools to send links to our tools, resources, and website -- whether they want to learn more about your experience or host a community outreach event themselves. You can also write or blog about your experiences to share with a wider audience.

☐ **Plan another event.**

Do you know other people that you think would benefit from and appreciate learning more about refugees? Did you host a book club and now want to screen a film? Perhaps you have a friend who would like to host an event. Use your experience to help them get started.

Resources

Please visit [WEBSITE URL](#) for a comprehensive list of resources to help you and your guests better understand and further engage in the refugee crisis. The list includes organizations, websites, and individuals who are doing work to support refugees and helping audiences learn more about the plight of refugees.