**Middle School**

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the activity students will be able to:

* recognize the different environments and jobs that support those environments in the countries that refugees come from
* appreciate how people around the world may do jobs that accomplish the same task as our jobs but in different ways with different technologies
* describe and the challenges refugees have transferring their job skills into the US work environment
* think through ideas to help newcomers bridge that livelihood gap
* identify different forms of help from their peer group that might be appreciated by refugees in the US

Introduce the subject of refugees. Check that students know what is meant by the word. A **refugee** is someone who has had to leave their home country to find a refuge: a safer place to be. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. Often war and ethnic, tribal and religious violence cause people to fleeing their countries for safety. We call them refugees. They are people who have been forced to flee their country because of persecution, war, or violence. They fear persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Many refugees have a simple desire: to return home and get their old life back, but when that’s not possible, some are resettled into new countries who agree to take them in and help them rebuild their lives. The U.S. has a proud history of being one of these countries, resettling over 3 million refugees since 1975 from more than 125 different countries.

**Rebuilding their lives and making a living**

Part of rebuilding that life means making a living, often in a very different environment, under different circumstances, with different jobs than were available where they came from. This poses a special set of challenges for them.

**Activity to engage students' common humanity and harness their creativity.**

Show children pictures from life in one of the countries our current refugees are coming from: Syria, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laos, Ethiopia and Iraq.

As you show the pictures, have children talk about the different environments and jobs they see in the photos. How might a restaurant cook food or wash dishes differently in one of those countries compared to how a cook or dishwasher might do it here? Explore this concept with multiple jobs (construction, child care, farming). Next, have children talk about what their parents do for work.

Lead them into a discussion on the difficulties their parents might have transferring those jobs and the way they do those jobs into these other environments. Invite immediate reactions. Use this to help the students see the difficulties refugees might have transferring their skills to the US (technology limitations, language limitations, different standards of doing the similar jobs, degrees and licenses don’t transfer, etc.).

How would they make money if you couldn’t do the thing you have always done before?

What are the options for refugees of continuing in the same kind of meaningful work in the US when that's impossible?

Draw a big bridge on the board and lead the students in brainstorming some solutions in bridging the gap for the refugees to make a living in the same line of work when they come over. What can refugees themselves do, and how can the US help? Write their ideas across the bridge.

Show the FMIP film clips on this website and discuss the unique strategies those individual refugees have used.

Share and post the best of your classes ideas on our blog!