

Topic: Employment for Refugee Seniors

Activity: Employment: A Lesson Plan for Use with Refugee Seniors

Objective

- ✓ Participants will be able to identify reasons to work in the United States
- ✓ Participants will be able to identify useful job skills they may already possess

Lesson Time

45 minutes (30 minutes discussion; 15 minutes viewing the video)

Materials

- Refugee Seniors in the United States* video, online at _____
- Projector or some other way to show video to group
- Interpretation assistance and/or scripts of the video (for literate participants)
Note: You can download the script for refugees literate in Arabic, Burmese, English, Karen, Nepali, or Somali at [__webpage__](#). Refugees literate in English may also read the video's subtitles. All other refugees will require interpretation. Alternatively, you may choose to show participants only the portions of the video in their own language. For a chart of the times various languages are used, see _____.
- Photos of American seniors at the workplace or of American seniors being active outside the workplace (see samples included)
- Photos of refugee seniors from a variety of groups (see samples included)
 - One of each group of a refugee at home in their home country/culture, perhaps working, talking to friends and family, or playing with children
 - One of each of these refugees sitting idly in the United States
 - One of each of these refugees being active in the United States, preferably at what looks like a job outside the home (a woman watching a few children at home would also be satisfactory)
- Flipchart and markers

Practice

Warm up: Needs assessment

The Importance of Working and Being Active in the United States

1. Show four photos to the group: American seniors in the United States, refugee seniors in their native culture, inactive refugee seniors in the United States, and active refugee seniors in the United States.
2. Ask the group to describe what they see. What are the seniors doing? How do they seem?
3. Then tell (or remind) the whole group that in the United States, people are expected to work until they are at least in their mid- to late-60s. Ask the seniors how they feel about this, and what they think the challenges may be. (Expect challenges such as "No English," "Can't drive," and "No work experience.")

Practice: Video Presentation and Discussion

1. Tell the participants you are going to show them a short video clip about what one refugee senior says is important in the United States. Show the video (of a Burmese woman) from 4:51- 5:07.
2. Ask the students to tell you what she said was important. (Answer: Learning basic English and being able to work.)

3. Then show the video clip of the Darfuri man (5:28-5:54). Tell the participants to be ready to discuss his job in the United States.
4. Now discuss the video clip: Ask the students what the Darfuri man's tasks are. What skills does he use at work?
5. If the group does not identify the following skills, mention and discuss each in turn. After each, ask how the group members currently use these skills or how they have done so in the past.

Teamwork: Point out that many jobs, if not most, require employees to work in teams. Remind participants that this is a skill many of them already have, as they are used to working collaboratively with their families and communities. Also, point out that working in teams is a good way to get to know others in the United States and to practice English.

Sorting: Point out that sorting, organizing, and classifying are important skills for most, if not all, jobs. Ask participants about jobs they have had or tasks they have done. Did they need to sort, classify or organize? How and what did they sort and organize? (You might want to remind them that household tasks such as cooking require sorting and organizing.)

Physical labor: Point out that many of them are very healthy, and that remaining active is a good way to stay healthy. Many of them have experience with physical labor of all sorts.

English: Point out that English will likely be needed to some extent on any job and that that is a good thing – work is a place to practice and improve this skill.

Application

1. Remind the seniors that they will not receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) until they are 65 years old. They need to use their skills now to help them find work.
2. Remind the participants that working in partnership with their employment specialist is key to finding a job that matches their skills.
3. Ask each participant to identify at least two or three skills they have that they could use on a job, and to prepare to tell their employment specialist of these skills.

Variation

Skills Identification

For seniors with lower level English skills and little previous educational or employment background, prepare photographs of people doing tasks like washing dishes, folding clothes, cooking, watching children, changing light bulbs, sweeping the floor, driving, and sewing. Have the participants sort these images into two piles: the "I can" pile and the "I can't" pile. Then, time and circumstances permitting, have them practice saying in English the skills they can do. "I can cook. I can clean."