

# EXPLORING CULTURAL JOURNEYS OF REFUGEES AND VOLUNTEERS: THEORY, PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE

## TRAINING OBJECTIVES

To become even better at what you are already doing by advancing your knowledge and skills in:

- Sharing experiences and expertise with intercultural experts and fellow volunteers
- Gaining insights into cultural journeys of RAAS
- Reflecting on efficient communication skills when using English with RAAS
- Understanding and diminishing bias and stereotyping
- Consciously choosing your own cultural journey strategy
- Gaining skills to improve your wellbeing and motivation as a volunteer

We will not provide a list of cultural does and don'ts as this encourages cultural stereotyping. We do provide cultural insights and dimensions to understand cultural differences, yet mainly aim to reduce anxiety whilst encouraging ongoing corrections of one's growing cultural knowledge through continuous interactions with refugees and persons who seek asylum.

## SESSIONS

Join us virtually for all three sessions and a one-time payment of £10:

1. 10am-1:30pm on Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023
2. 10am-1:30pm on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023
3. 10am-1:30pm on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023

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## DETAILED OVERVIEW OF THE 3.5H X 3, ACROSS 3 WEEKS, TRAINING PROGRAMME

The overarching goal of this online training programme is to retain volunteers through fostering mutual cultural adaptation between volunteers and refugees/persons who seek asylum (RAAS). Indeed, research has shown that to achieve effective acculturation and wellbeing in refugees/persons who seek asylum, volunteers need to engage in reciprocal cultural adaptation. To address this notion, the program content and exercises draw upon a combination of our intercultural trainers' experiences and expertise, duly underpinned by authoritative academic research, together with direct feedback from fellow volunteers.

In preparation for all three sessions, we will ask you to reflect on and discuss your personal experiences regarding specified (intercultural) encounters. To do so, we use the 3R tool - a well-established tool to foster personal reflection techniques and intercultural learning (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Spencer-Oatey & Davidson, 2018). In this way we provide the perfect platform for volunteers to share and learn from, as well as connect with each other and apply the ideas that have been introduced to a personal experience in every session.

**Session 1:** We first take a closer look at the notion of culture in general, and Afghan, Arabic, and Ukrainian cultures more specifically. The aim of this part is for all participants to gain a more profound understanding of culture as a first step towards cultural learning. We then discuss how communication varies across cultures - especially for Arabic and Farsi speakers - as well as what volunteers can do to ensure they understand and are understood by the RAAS they support. Finally, we discuss the stress-and-adaptation phases and acculturation strategies of RAAS. This is to establish a more profound understanding of the cultural journeys of RAAS and how it can impact their communication and relationships with volunteers. Thus, Session 1 will provide some theories on national cultural differences; yet, the purpose

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of this is solely to provide a starting point for intercultural contacts and to diminish potential contact anxiety. Ongoing reflections and adjustments of the suitability of generic cultural understandings are expected of all participants. Thus, we will not provide a list of 'does and donts' as such practices can easily enhance cultural stereotypes. To better understand our reasoning for this approach, have a look at the TED talk on 'the danger of a single story': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>

**Session 2:** We first discuss the nature of privilege and power. This is to better understand what these concepts are, how they impact RAAS' 'cultural journey' and how they relate to the stereotypes or unconscious biases we hold. This is followed by an in-depth exploration of what unconscious bias really is (i.e., not a biased monster in your mind) and how volunteers can tackle it. Specifically, we will introduce the '5Ds' of being an active bystander and how these can be applied to volunteers' personal experiences. Finally we will introduce you to the stress-and-coping phases of volunteers in response to their contact with RAAS' cultures. This serves as an early introduction to the topics to be covered in Session 3.

**Session 3:** On our final training day, we explore volunteers' own 'cultural journey' and which acculturation strategy may be best to support RAAS as well as to benefit volunteers. We then introduce the struggles of 'compassion fatigue' and how to avoid it. To do so, we will identify volunteers' personal strengths and ways to apply them in their work with RAAS in the weeks to come. These exercises are based on the works of Prof. Martin Seligman (2011).

**Handbook & extra resources:** The training comes with a handbook that includes exercises that will be used to prepare for the training sessions as well as the content of each session. For each session, extra resources will also be shared via email which even further expand on presented ideas and discussion points from our training.

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**Facebook group:** We regard this training program as a first step to an ongoing journey of intercultural learning. To engage in such ongoing learning, we encourage all program participants to join our Facebook group 'Volunteer Network Group (supported by SIETAR UK)', as exercises, future events/trainings and more free resources will be shared there.

**Note:** As intercultural trainers we aim to provide support with regard to the cultural aspects of reciprocal learning and rapport building. Although we are aware of and acknowledge the psychological and structural challenges often faced by refugees/persons who seek asylum, we are not in the position to provide insights on topics such as PTSD or legal matters.

**Anderson, L. E. (1994).** A new look at an old construct: Cross-cultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 18(3), 293-328.

**Seligman, M. E. P. (2011).** *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.

**Spencer-Oatey, H. & Davidson, A. (2018).** The 3R reflect tool: Developing evaluation sensitivity in intercultural encounters. V.2. Available at [www.warwick.ac.uk/globalknowledge](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/globalknowledge)

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