“No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.” — Warsan Shire

Dialogues for Difficult Times:
Conversations about Forcible Displacement

Cover images (clockwise from upper left): Syrian students at the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan (United Nations, Photo by Mark Garten, Licensed CC BY-NC-ND 4.0); an exhibition feature at District Six, a Site of Conscience in South Africa; and a mural painted by Rohingya refugees of their journey to a refugee camp in Bangladesh as part of an ICSC documentation project.
A Dialogue Guide on Forcibly Displaced People

This Dialogue is rooted in methodology utilized by members of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a worldwide network of over 370 places of memory in 80 countries dedicated to remembering past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies.

Who Is This Dialogue For?

This Dialogue is designed for public use by museums, historic sites, memory initiatives, schools and cultural organizations who wish to explore the topic of forcibly displaced people with their communities through facilitated dialogues.

Using This Dialogue Resource

Rather than using all the model questions suggested under each phase, facilitators may select questions that reflect the evolving conversation of the group they are guiding in the dialogue. We also anticipate that you will develop new questions ahead of time or during the dialogue to draw on the strengths of your particular site, organization or community, or to respond to the needs of participants.

Preparation For The Facilitator

- Ensure that there is a comfortable space for all participants; welcome participants as they arrive.
- Explore other dialogue guides in the ICSC Resource Center including Beyond Bollywood and Native New Yorker Toolkit for Educators.
- As participants arrive, work to gain an understanding of their motivations for attending; understand who is in the room. Are they members of receiving communities, forcibly displaced individuals or a mix?
- Familiarize yourself with the support materials below and print out copies. More information is available at the United Nations Refugee Agency website.
- Decide what questions in each phase you will ask. It is not intended that all questions be asked, rather that two or three, at most, are used in each phase.
Resources

At the end of this document are two different resources that can be used in Phase 3 of the conversation. Depending on your group, you may want to print out copies of the charts for several people to share together, and print out the quotes to use for participants to gather around in reflective conversation.

Guidelines

Working together, the group can agree on a few guidelines for the conversation. Some suggestions are:

- **Share the air**: Leave room for everyone to speak
- **Acknowledge that different ways of knowing all have value**: Intellectual, spiritual and emotional
- **Recognize that all of our life experiences are different and verbal attacks on an individual’s identity or beliefs are never acceptable**
- **Seek first to understand**: Ask questions to clarify, not to debate

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Model Introduction (Adapt or share another introduction as appropriate)

Thank you for joining us today, we know our community and each of us has been impacted by forcible displacement in different ways. We look forward to spending this time together, to learn from each other and other community stories.

As we get started, we know many of us care deeply about this topic, a few community guidelines for our conversation:

- Share the air…
- …
- …

Can we all agree to those? Anything else people need from each other to have this conversation today?

As of mid-2023, more than 110 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced—and another 1.9 million people were forced out of their homes in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023. Most refugees are hosted by low and middle income countries, with Turkey welcoming the most refugees. Forty percent of forcibly displaced people are children. Almost every country has ongoing debates about welcoming refugees. This Front Page Dialogue is designed to spark conversation and understanding on the topic.

International definitions give us common language to begin our conversation.

Forcibly displaced people include refugees, asylum-seekers, other people in need of international protection and internally displaced people. The [1951 Refugee Convention](#) defines a **refugee** as a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country.” **Internally displaced persons** (IDPs) “have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.” For this dialogue we’ll use the term “forcibly displaced persons,” which includes this broad range of experiences.
Phase One: **Community Building**

Phase One encourages connectedness and relationship-building within the group. The work done here underpins the successful creation of a safe space where all participants can engage.

- Where do you feel most safe?
- When you think about forcibly displaced people what comes to mind?
- Can you think of books you’ve read or movies you’ve seen that focus on the experiences of forcibly displaced people such as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDP) or asylum seekers?
- How many places in the world do you call home?
- What do you love about your homes?

Phase Two: **Sharing Our Own Experiences**

Phase Two invites participants to think about their own experiences related to the topic and share these experiences with the group. The facilitator helps participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why. Questions in Phase Two welcome each person’s experience equally and place minimal judgment on responses, gathering more information than questions in Phase One.

- How does the media coverage you have seen align with your own experiences, how does it diverge?
- When have you benefited from another’s compassion?
- When have you provided compassion for another?
- Who are the outsiders and who are the insiders in your community?
- Can you share a family story about forcibly displaced persons? Or a story from any of your communities?
Phase Three: Exploring Beyond Our Own Experiences

Phase Three questions explore the topic beyond participants’ personal experiences with it, to learn with and from one another. Until this point, participants speak primarily from their own experience, of which they are the undeniable expert. Phase Three questions provoke participants to dig deeper into their assumptions and to actively probe underlying social conditions that inform our diversity of perspectives.

Share printouts (per small group) of the UNHCR graphs in Attachment A before beginning Phase 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How does your race, gender, ethnicity or religious beliefs determine your thoughts about forcibly displaced people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should forcibly displaced people have a voice in where they go?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should we determine the number of refugees we should take in our country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do countries have a responsibility to support forcibly displaced people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do receiving countries benefit from the arrival of forcibly displaced people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What causes your greatest anxiety about arrivals in your community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of our national values should guide our country’s refugee policy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What shapes a country’s responsibility to support, or not, refugees and IDPs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything in these graphs that surprises you? Why?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gallery Wall Quotes:** Using quotes in Attachment B, The facilitator hangs the quotes around the dialogue space and asks participants to read all of them, silently. After reading all of the quotes, participants are instructed to stand near the quote that they’d like to speak more about. Participants are then encouraged to discuss why they chose that quote either in small groups or the full group.

Phase Four: Synthesizing and Closing the Learning Experience

After dialogue programs that reveal differences as well as similarities between participants, it is important to end a dialogue by reinforcing a sense of community. **Phase Four questions help participants examine what they’ve learned about themselves and each other and voice the impact that the dialogue has had on them.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would you like to see your country do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What could you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who would you like to be in conversation with about forcibly displaced people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose perspective on these issues do you want to understand better?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For questions or queries, contact: training@sitesofconscience.org
Shared Resources

Attachment A:

108.4 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced.

- Refugees (under UNHCR’s mandate)
- Palestine refugees (under UNRWA’s mandate)
- Asylum seekers
- Other people in need of international protection
- Internally Displaced People

62,500,000
29,400,000
5,900,000
5,200,000

Most refugees – 76 per cent – are hosted by low- and middle-income countries.

- Low-income 16%
- Lower-middle-income 26%
- Upper-middle-income 33%
- High-income 24%

As of the end of 2022
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2022, 14 June 2023

Disclaimer: figures do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.
Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2022, 14 June 2023

Major hosting countries
Türkiye hosted nearly 3.6 million refugees, the largest population worldwide, followed by the Islamic Republic of Iran with 3.4 million.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>People (millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia*</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographics of forcibly displaced people
Children account for 30 per cent of the world’s population, but 40 per cent of all forcibly displaced people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-17</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-59</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
Participants can learn more about their own countries here: [https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance](https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-are/figures-glance).
Attachment B:

“No one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.”
—Warsan Shire

“I was once a refugee, although no one would mistake me for being a refugee now. Because of this, I insist on being called a refugee, since the temptation to pretend that I am not a refugee is strong.”
—Viet Thanh Nguyen

“The people of this country are too tolerant. There’s no other country in the world where they’d allow it... After all we built up this country and then we allow a lot of foreigners, the scum of Europe, the offscourings of Polish ghettos to come and run it for us.”
—John Dos Passos, early 20th century novelist, on U.S. immigration policy

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”
—Emma Lazarus, about the Statue of Liberty

“Refugees are not terrorists. They are often the first victims of terrorism.”
—António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres