



VRJWILLIGERS
ACADEMIE Amsterdam

Masterclass Insight in voluntary work

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Objective

In this workshop we want to investigate new ways of thinking about care for each other. This approach will lead to see refugees not only as people that need support, but also can provide support. In this workshop we're going to explore voluntary work for refugees. What does it mean? And what kind of work is possible?

Sharing from experience: arrival in The Netherlands

Babah and Renate talk about his experience when he arrived as a refugee from Sierra Leone in The Netherlands. It was the first time he realised he could no longer disappear in a group of people, but would be noticed directly because he stood out in the crowd. He was treated like a number and for the first time he became conscious about his skin colour. He learned and is now teaching other 'newcomers' not to accept this. 'you're not a refugee, you have a name, talents, narratives, dreams about the future.' If one starts sharing from that perspective it's easier to connect. People like talking with people about what they know.

Voluntary work

For newcomers 'volunteerwork' has a different meaning. For people in your community you take care, this is not seen as volunteer work. Volunteerwork is more

associated with humanitarian work like het Rode Kruis or Medicins sans Frontiers. Taking care of other people in your area is not seen as 'volunteerwork', but as a natural logical thing to do. In The Netherlands this is institutionalised. Also the reasons for doing it differ. Many people are waiting endlessly in an AZC and would do it to kill time, but also because in the end 'we all want to feel relevant'. And when you give, you get back. Babah got inspired by other people doing volunteer work in The Netherlands. It's important to create the opportunities for this. He started for example to visit schools and share his stories, which changed perceptions of the children. 'the experience is what makes us different.'

Present

Karin Schreurs shares the possibilities and experiences of Present, who organised a pilot project for newcomers to do volunteerwork.

vluchtelingen@presentamsterdam.nl.

Reactions from the participants

Problems are indicated like the fact that there is no opportunity for refugees to talk with people about the trauma's. It's only about what you want to do. The period they have to wait is too long. Also, it is mentioned that even though the pilot project for volunteer work is over, volunteer organisations could still take initiatives in a more informal way.

Groups are created of a diversity of backgrounds to reflect on:

How can we support each other?

Newcomers could start in the physical place where they are and see what's needed and Dutch people could seek a connection with AZC's that are near them and ask what's needed.

'charity begins at home'.

We could help the 'pioneers' among the newcomers to be seen and heard. They could explain the concept of voluntary work to others.

What is the role of voluntary work?

The perception of voluntary work could be changed. Instead of regarding it as work you don't get paid for, you could see it as a way to connect and meet friends.

How can we enable more/better use of voluntary work

A guideline for different stages you pass through as a newcomer would be handy. The concept of voluntary work could be included in lessons in schools.

People doing voluntary work should receive certificates/ references

We could approach voluntary work as a group, not as an individual. Maybe as an individual you don't have all the requirements (like talking the language), but as a group you have.

- You should have a flexible attitude
- Use social media and create a 'newcomers database.'
- There are platforms, like:

<http://www.refugeestartforce.eu>

<https://www.global-workforce.nl/>