



Guide for helping refugees*

*For conciseness, "refugees" includes here beneficiaries from asylum, people who have solicited asylum and persons transiting the country



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Starting point

- If we wish to offer our help to refugees, it is important to understand that, although they are in a difficult situation,
 - they have the right to **decide for themselves** what would be beneficial right now and what type of help they accept;
 - it is preferable to create contexts **for them to make** even the smallest **decisions** in order to maintain control over their lives;
 - for the moment, **a short- and medium-term plan** would be helpful.

The purpose is to offer instead of to enforce our help.

Freedom of choice

- Therefore, if we cannot join a group that already offers organised help,
 - we could imagine a few **practical solutions** for the refugees' current circumstances;
 - we can run these scenarios in our minds, while **asking ourselves how we would respond** to such proposals, if we were in a similar situation;
 - we may offer the solutions that remain on our list after the role-play described above;
 - we should allow refugees the **freedom to select** what suits them best.
- If our help gets **declined**, we should not interpret this as an insult, but **as their choice**.

The purpose is to respect everyone's right to decide for themselves.

Context

- In order to **help efficiently**, it is necessary to get to know the **current circumstances** first.
 - In a continuously changing context, what was needed yesterday may no longer be valid today.
- For understanding how to offer our help in the best way, it is useful to find out details about the **on-going situation**
 - either by travelling to the areas where refugees arrive and by talking both to them and to the persons who already help them
 - or by remotely contacting people involved in helping refugees.

The purpose is to find out what is needed now.

Details

- It is preferable to ask questions that lead us **rapidly** to useful information on what type of support is needed now.
 - On site, we should observe first what is happening and only then, based on our observations, we can initiate conversations for getting the missing infos.
 - For discussions on the phone or online, it is advisable to prepare a list of questions in advance.
- This way, we **do not interrupt** helpers **for a longer time** than needed, so that they can continue offering their support to refugees.

The purpose is to find out useful information as fast as possible.

Deeper analysis

- Next, we **put together** our observations and the pieces of information we have gathered while talking to refugees and helpers.
- We can then make a list with our **conclusions**.
- We **compare** this list with the realistic type of help we may offer at this point.
 - More suggestions on the next page.

The purpose is to identify what we can offer for what is needed now.

Compatibility

- From our inventory with what is currently needed, we select the ways in which we could help now.
- If the type of help we want to offer is rather complex, we should ask ourselves honestly:
 - *Do we have the **necessary resources** to get involved in this situation?*
 - e.g. transportation on a longer distance, translating for a longer time, offering accomodation indefinitely, etc.
 - *Are **we ready** for this?*
 - We should take into consideration also the less pleasant aspects (uncomfortable weather conditions, tiredness, exposure to suffering, chaotic contexts, patience, cultural and linguistic barriers, etc.).

The purpose is to consider if the intended help is realistic to us.

Responsibility

- We should **consciously** choose to help in a **responsible** manner
 - based on the resources that we have available at the moment and which can last until the end.
 - This prevents us from giving up beforehand.
- **Pragmatic help**, according to the refugees' current needs and to our realistic possibilities, is the one that is needed in situations with an uncertain end date
 - and it is more useful than the "let's do it" approach, which is efficient rather short-term.

The purpose is to offer help that we can deliver as promised.

Communication

- Once we have decided what type of help we are able to offer, we can **communicate** it to the helpers and to the targeted refugees together with our **contact details** (e.g. our phone number, our e-mail address, etc.).
- In case we can no longer keep our promise or if any important adjustments need to be done, we should immediately inform the persons involved.
 - If we need to be substituted, it is advisable to get involved in finding a replacement on time.

The purpose is to communicate honestly and efficiently.

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