

## Topic: Employment

### Activity: Employment Expectations and Goals: A Case Study for Refugees

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#### Objective

- ✓ Participants will consider some challenges they may face finding employment in the United States
- ✓ Participants will consider strategies to overcome potential frustration with underemployment
- ✓ Participants will think about their long-term employment goals

#### Lesson Time

20 minutes

#### Materials

- Critical incident, one copy per participant (included)
- Flipchart paper with reflection questions listed (samples included)
- Markers
- Tape

#### Introduction

Newcomers to the United States often encounter difficulties finding employment that matches their qualifications, particularly advanced education and professional skills. Some are unwilling to accept low-level jobs and later experience frustration when their high expectations about life in the United States do not match reality.

#### Practice

(Note: Feel free to change names to reflect your participants.)

1. Put participants into small groups of 2-4 and ask each group to choose a spokesperson.
2. Distribute “Employment Expectations: A Critical Incident for Refugees.”
3. Ask groups to read the case study (or facilitator can read it aloud if literacy is a challenge). Participants discuss the reflection questions.
4. Bring the large group together and ask the spokesperson from each group to summarize the main ideas from their group discussion. Write answers to the discussion questions on the flipchart paper and discuss as necessary.

#### Reflection Questions

- What happened in this critical incident?
- What kinds of sacrifices did Fadi and his wife have to make?
- Why did Fadi take the part-time job right away?
- What options does Fadi have?
- What are some 10-year goals you might make?

## Employment Expectations and Goals: A Case Study for Refugees

Fadi\* is a university-educated professional who is applying for resettlement in the United States. Fadi hears that life in the U.S. is difficult for new refugees and social benefits are limited. He warns his wife and children that they will likely suffer for some time due to lower quality housing and limited job opportunities. Fadi and his family agree that the chance for safety and new opportunities is worth the sacrifice. After several months of waiting, Fadi resettles as a refugee to the U.S. with his family.

### Stop and reflect:

- What are some things Fadi should do first when he arrives in the United States?
- What kinds of sacrifices will Fadi and his wife have to make?

Upon arrival, Fadi wants to find a job using his professional skills right away. However, his case worker urges him to be realistic and focus on taking care of his family in the short term while working on long-term goals. Fadi listens and focuses first on finding any job, even if he is overqualified. After one month of searching, he finds part-time work in a low-level job. Although the job isn't ideal, he knows it will help his family. Also, since his undergraduate degree is not recognized in the U.S., Fadi focuses on getting his transcripts evaluated. The process takes over a year, and Fadi often feels frustrated. Sometimes he wonders if he made the right decision to come to the U.S.

### Stop and reflect:

- Why did Fadi take the part-time job right away?
- What would you do if you were Fadi?

Fadi tries to focus on the future as well as his immediate needs. He makes a 10-year goal to save money, attend graduate school, and find a job using his professional skills. He eventually finds a new full-time job at a refugee resettlement agency and spends months researching financial aid options to attend graduate school. After two years, Fadi enters a master's program in management.

Fadi works weekdays, attends classes on weeknights, and studies on weekends. Life is not easy, but he is proud of his graduate school progress and looks forward to the day when his hard work will allow him to find a job in management. Fadi also feels valued when helping other refugees as a case worker at the resettlement agency. He feels grateful for the good life and opportunities the U.S. gives him, and he wants to encourage other refugees to enrich U.S. communities and workplaces like he does. With patience, he thinks his 10-year goal will pay off.

### Stop and reflect:

- Why did Fadi decide to attend graduate school?
- What are some 10-year goals you might make?