

# REFUGEEWORKS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A PROGRAM OF LIRS



## Employment Readiness Training: Overseas and Domestic

Summer of Solutions Webinar Series  
September 22, 2011

# Introductions

# Who's Presenting?

- Rebecca Armstrong, RefugeeWorks
- Sanja Bebic, Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics
- Colleen Mahar-Piersma, Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics
- Sarah Krause, Church World Service/Refugee Service Center



# Agenda

- Cultural Orientation Overview
- Case Studies
  - Nairobi
  - Pittsburgh
- Resources
- Question and Answer Time



# Cultural Orientation Overview

Presented by Sanja Bebic, Cultural Orientation Resource Center, Center for Applied Linguistics

# Cultural Orientation Resource Center at CAL

Funded by the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration to:

- ▶ Research, develop and disseminate **resources** about refugee training and resettlement;
- ▶ Provide **technical assistance** to refugee service providers regarding refugees' cultures, languages and orientation needs; and
- ▶ Develop a globally linked network to **exchange** refugee orientation information, concerns, and best practices.

---

Funded by ORR to provide technical assistance on:

- ▶ **enhanced and extended orientation** for **ORR-eligible clients** (refugees, asylees, entrants, etc.), and
- ▶ **characteristics, resettlement, and integration** of these groups.

# Overseas Orientation

- ▶ Dept of State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) funds and oversees overseas U.S. Cultural Orientation (CO).
- ▶ Overseas CO is provided by intergovernmental, international, or U.S.-based organizations contracted by PRM.

## Headquarters:

Africa: Kenya

Near East & South Asia:

Jordan

Nepal

Turkey

Southeast Asia: Thailand

Europe: Russia

Austria





## Cultural Orientation for U.S.-bound Refugees

Location: Austria (Vienna)

*Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society*

Caseload: Iranian religious minorities

General Duration: 16 hours

Emphasis: Employment, Role of the Resettlement Agency, Rights and Responsibilities, Health Care, Education

Location: Europe and Central Asia (HQ: Moscow)

*International Organization for Migration*

Caseload: Lautenberg P2 (Jews and religious minorities in FSU); P1 cases

General Duration: 6-7 hours for Lautenberg cases; 15-18 hours for P1 cases

Emphasis: Varies widely according to participants' background

Location: Turkey and Near Asia (HQ: Istanbul)

*International Catholic Migration Commission*

Primary Caseload: Iraqis, Iranians

General Duration: 21 hours

Emphasis: Employment, Role of the Resettlement Agency, Cultural Adjustment

Location: Nepal (Dhaka)

*International Organization for Migration*

Caseload: Bhutanese

General Duration: 15-25 hours

Emphasis: Employment and Cultural Adjustment

Location: Cuba (Havana)

*U.S. Interest Section*

Primary Caseload: Cubans

General Duration: No formal orientation; videos and materials available

Location: Middle East (HQ: Amman)

*International Organization for Migration*

Primary Caseload: Iraqis

General Duration: 20 hours

Emphasis: Employment, Role of the Resettlement Agency, Cultural Adjustment

Location: East Asia (HQ: Bangkok)

*International Rescue Committee*

Primary Caseload: Burmese (Karen, Chin, Karenni, etc.)

General Duration: 15-25 hours

Emphasis: Housing, Employment, Cultural Adjustment

Location: Sub-Saharan Africa (HQ: Nairobi)

*Church World Service*

Primary Caseload: Somalis, Sudanese, Eritreans, Darfuris, etc.

General Duration: 18 hours (+ 6 hours for Somali youth)

Emphasis: Employment, Cultural Adjustment, Housing, other topics according to participants' background

# Overseas: Key Employment Messages

- ▶ The refugee plays a central role in finding employment in the U.S.
- ▶ Early employment is essential to survival in the U.S. and must be the primary focus
- ▶ A person's initial job may not be in their chosen profession



# Employment Activities

- ▶ The red balloon
- ▶ Musical chairs
- ▶ Job interview role play



- ▶ Employment dilemmas
- ▶ Skills identification

**Topic:** Employment  
(Church World Service/OPEs in Accra, Ghana and Nairobi, Kenya)

**Activity:** Skills Identification Game

## Introduction

In this activity, refugees will learn about the various skills associated with different jobs in the United States.

## Objective

Participants will be able to identify certain jobs, determine which jobs are entry-level, skilled or professional, and detail the skills necessary to obtain certain jobs.

## Materials

- Images of jobs (see examples below)

## Practice

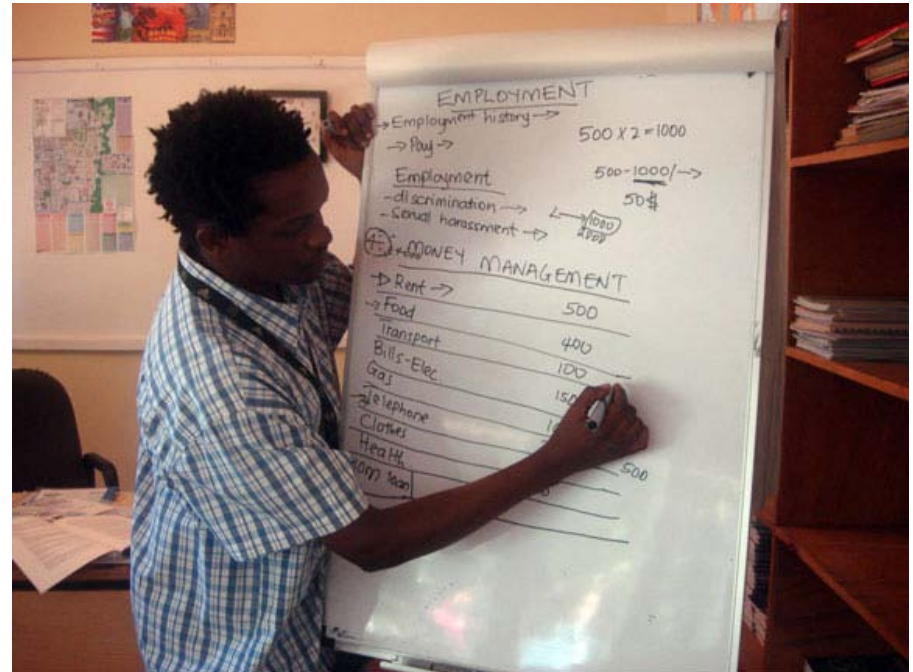
Distribute cards with various job images. Ask participants to:

- Identify the jobs.
- Match the jobs with one of three job types: Entry-Level, Skilled or Professional.
- List the skills/qualities needed for each of the jobs.

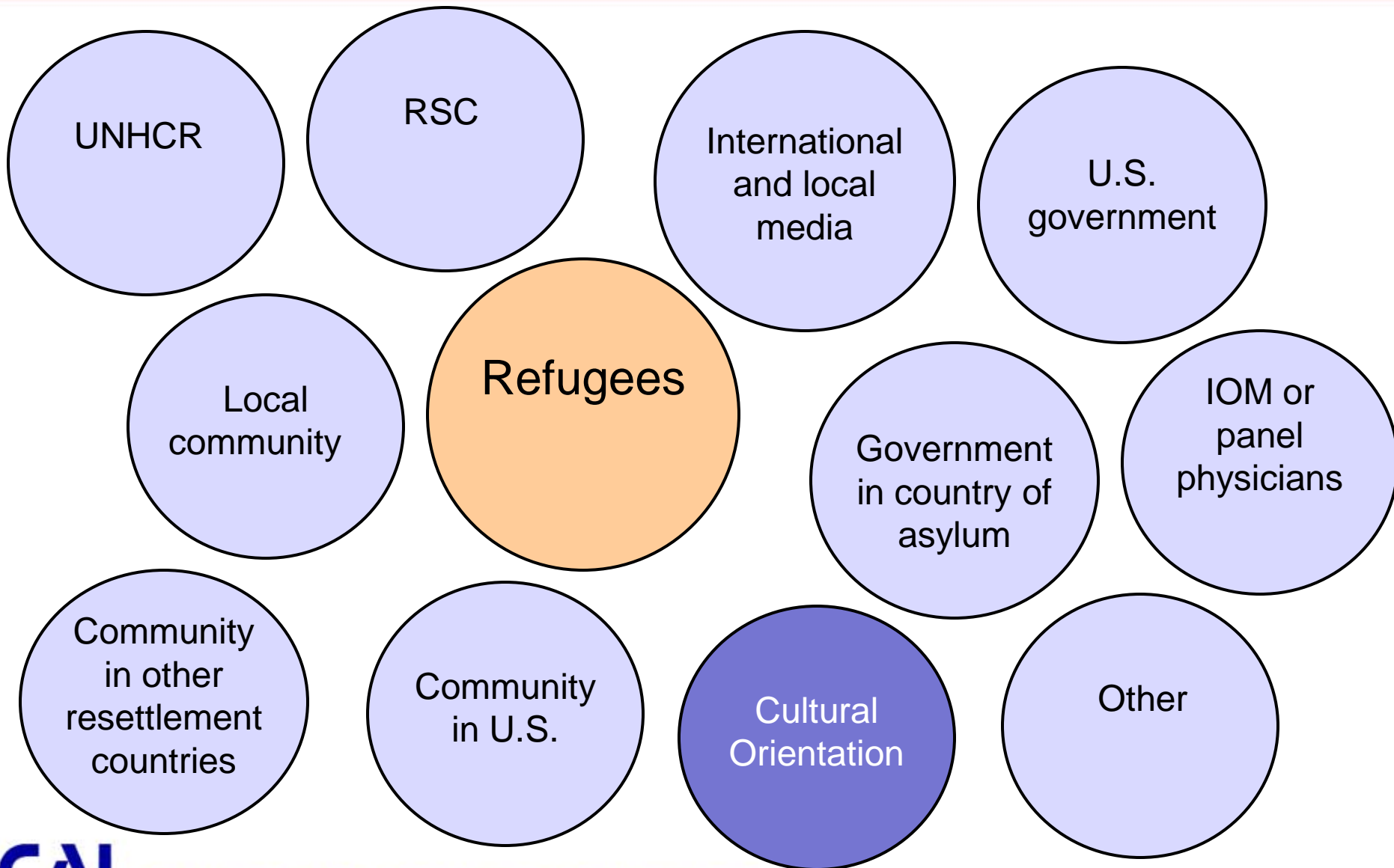


# Overseas: Limitations

- ▶ Refugees may not be receptive to messages
- ▶ Unfamiliar concepts
- ▶ Different levels of education and exposure to the West
- ▶ Varying levels of motivation
- ▶ Limited time
- ▶ Difficulty focusing or retaining information (for variety of reasons)



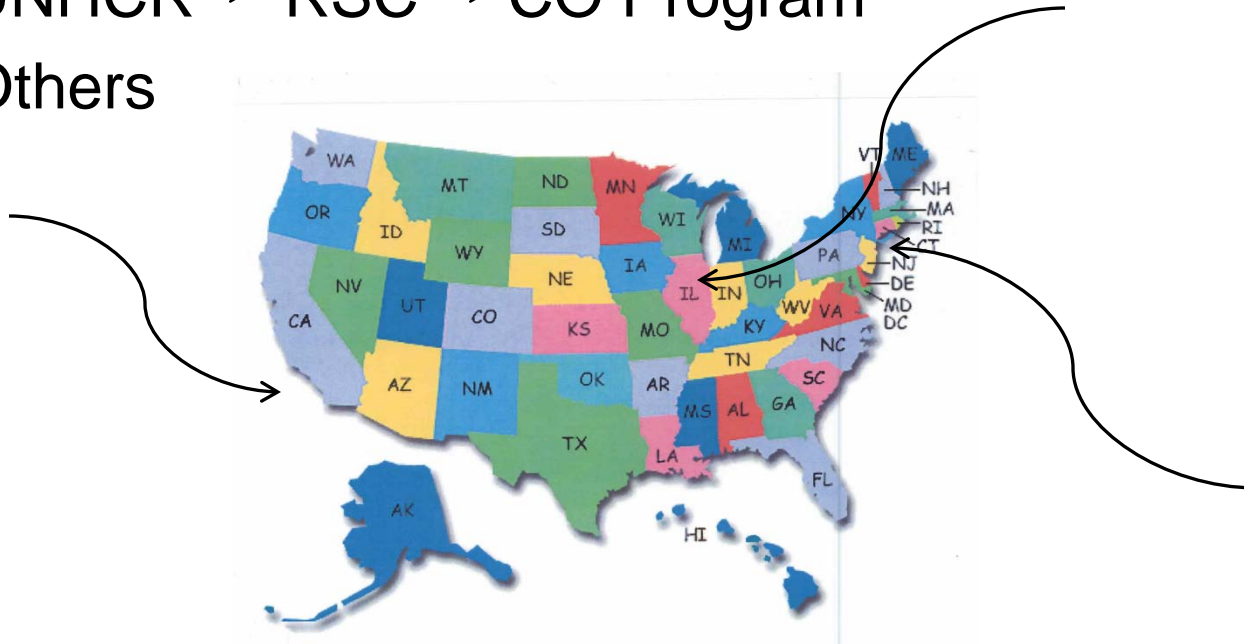
# Overseas: Multiple Sources of Information



# The Orientation Continuum

## Pre-arrival:

- ▶ UNHCR → RSC → CO Program
- ▶ Others



## Post-arrival:

- ▶ Resettlement agency (R&P)
- ▶ Ethnic community
- ▶ Other service providers

# From Overseas to Domestic Orientation

- ▶ Adult students need a connection between what they are being taught and their own lives.
- ▶ They need to apply what they've learned.



# Domestic Orientation: Basic Questions

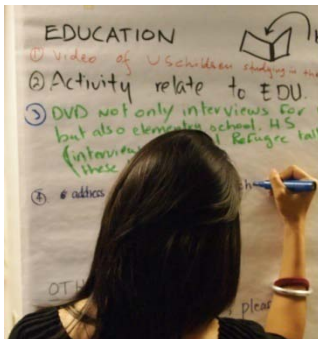
- ▶ What do I need to get my clients to understand?
  - Because of a requirement
  - Because it's what they're interested in
  - Because they need to know
- ▶ What do they already know?
  - Build upon their existing foundation (overseas CO, other knowledge, skills and experiences)





# Domestic Orientation: Basic Questions

- ▶ How can I convey the necessary information, so they understand it and retain it?
  - ▶ Match your methods to the material
  - ▶ Incorporate activities
  - ▶ Change methods and pacing
  - ▶ Review and repeat (in later meetings as well)



# Case Study #1

Church World Service/Refugee Service Center  
Nairobi, Kenya



**Church World Service**

# Program Administration



- Administered by CWS/RSC Nairobi
- Trainers experienced in intercultural communication and education, with a collective proficiency in English, Somali and Kiswahili



# Region of Service



CWS/RSC Nairobi is responsible for the processing of refugees in 45 different countries.



# Cultural Orientation Objectives



- To inform participants of the processes and systems that will impact on their resettlement to the United States;
- To assist participants in developing realistic expectations of the US;
- To equip participants with the skills and attitudes necessary to enable them to have a positive acculturation experience

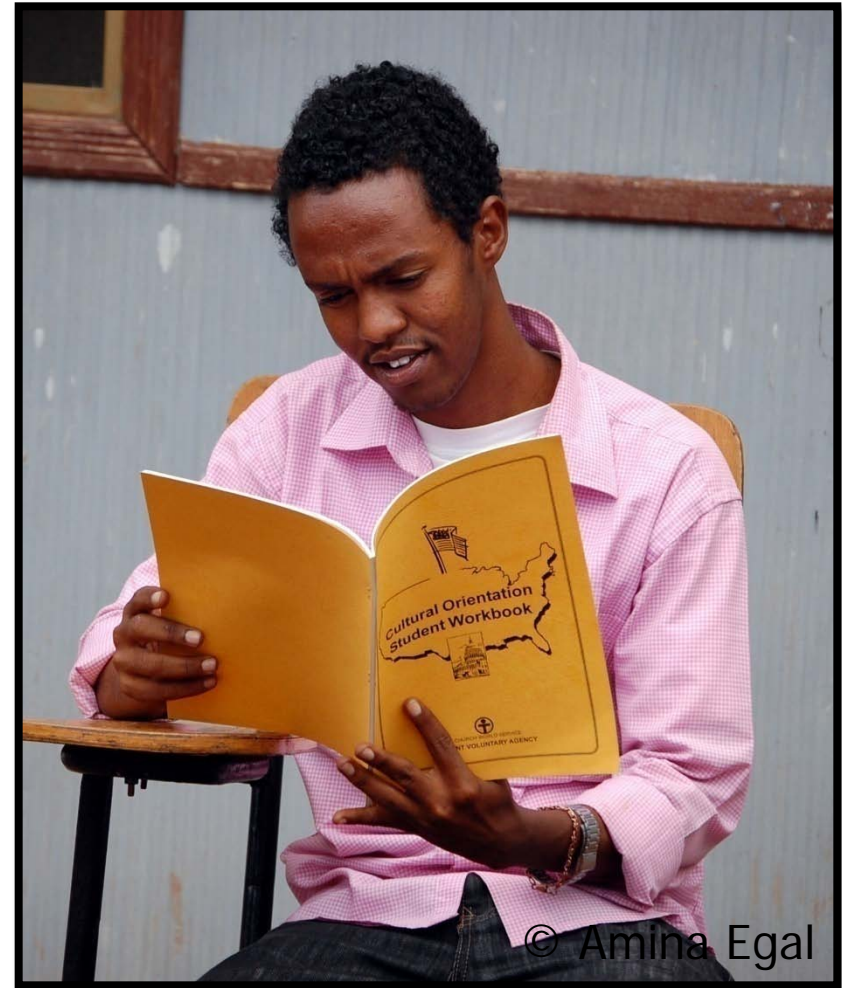


© Amina Egal

# Information Throughout the Process



- In the camps
- At RSC interviews
- At Cultural Orientation training sessions



# CO Training Structure



- Standard CO
  - 3 working days; 6 hours per day
  - Targets those 15 years and above
- Chad CO
  - 5 working days; 6 hours per day
  - CO for children/youth as well as for adults
- Somali Youth CO
  - Standard CO + 1 working day; 6 hours
  - Targets those ages 15 - 26
- URM CO
  - A minimum of 3 working days; 1 hour per day





# Training Content



- U.S. Overview
- Pre-Arrival Processing
- Resettlement Agency
- Community Services
- Housing
- Employment
- Financial Literacy
- Transportation
- Education
- Health
- Cultural Adjustment
- Travel
- Rights and Responsibilities
- U.S. Law



© Amina Egal 2011

# Employment Unit Objectives

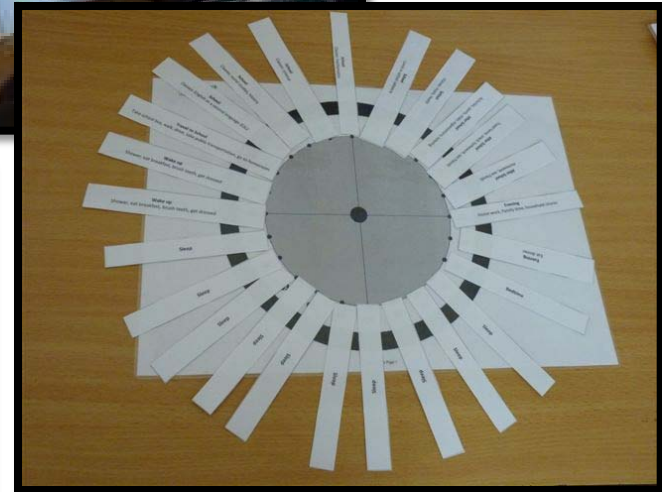


- The refugee plays a central role in finding/obtaining employment in the U.S.
- A crucial way of finding better paying jobs is learning how to speak in English.
- Early employment is essential to survival in the U.S., and that it must be the primary focus for all employable adults (men and women).
- A person's initial job might not be in their chosen profession.
- Employees have rights as well as responsibilities in the workplace.
- There are general characteristics of U.S. professional and work culture to which refugees must adapt in order to be successful in finding and maintaining employment.

# Training Methods



- Lecture
- Visual aids
- Videos
- Activities
- Case studies
- Role plays
- Working models
- Exploration stations



# Visual Aid: “The Importance of Learning English”



**Learning English Will Help You to Adjust to Your Life in the United States**  
Barashada luqada ingriiska waa ku caawinaysa iskuna kaa toosinaysaa noloshada mareeykanka

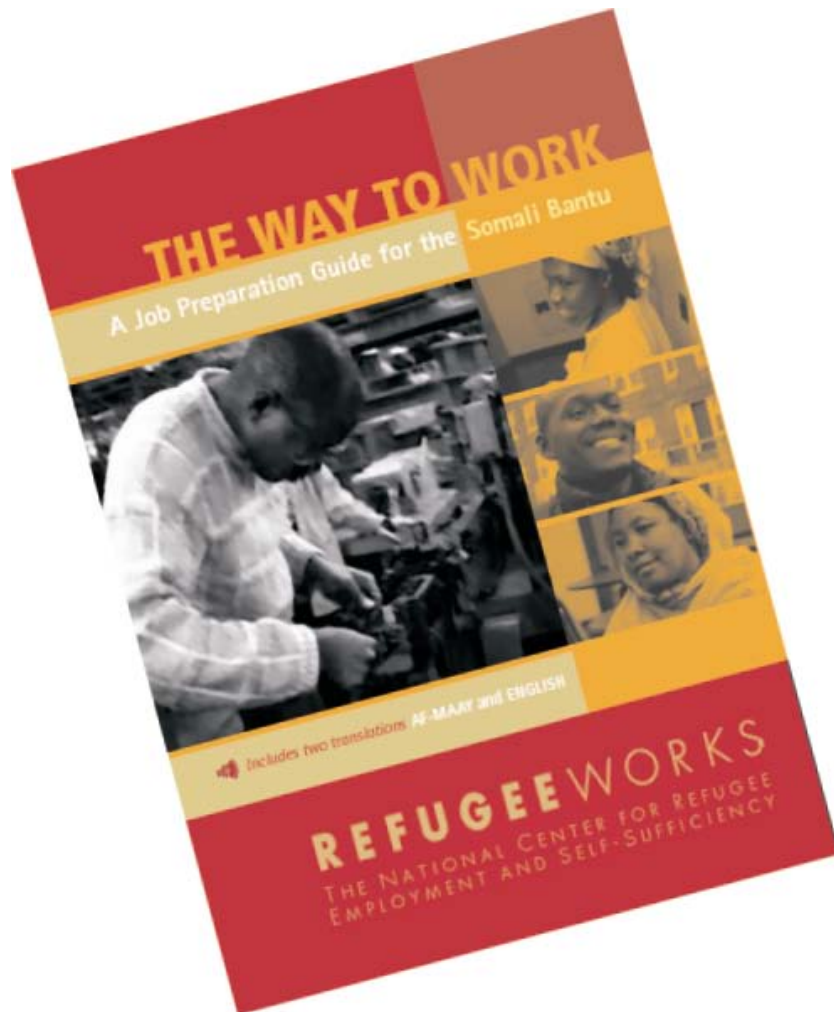
**ESL**  
Aa Bb Cc Dd  
Aa

For more information, please contact us. E-mail: [culturalorientation@cws-rscnairobi.org](mailto:culturalorientation@cws-rscnairobi.org) Website: [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)  
This poster was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

**CWS/RSC Nairobi**  
US Refugee Admissions Program

- Visual Aid Objective:
  - To educate participants that a crucial way of finding better paying jobs is learning how to speak in English.

# Video: "The Way to Work"



- Video Objective:
  - To educate participants that early employment is essential to survival in the U.S., and that it must be the primary focus for all employable adults (men and women).
  - To educate participants that there are general characteristics of U.S. professional and work culture to which refugees must adapt in order to be successful in finding and maintaining employment.

# Activity: “Musical Chairs”



- Activity Objectives:
  - To educate participants that they play a central role in finding/obtaining employment in the U.S.
  - To educate participants that early employment is essential to survival in the U.S., and that it must be the primary focus for all employable adults (men and women).
  - To educate participants that a person’s initial job might not be in their chosen profession.

# Case Study: “Mr. and Mrs. Hassan”



- Case Study Objectives:
  - To educate participants that early employment is essential to survival in the U.S., and that it must be the primary focus for all employable adults (men and women).
  - To educate participants that a person’s initial job might not be in their chosen profession.

# Role Play: "Job Interview"



- Role Play Objectives:
  - To educate participants that they play a central role in finding/obtaining employment in the U.S.
  - To educate participants that there are general characteristics of U.S. professional and work culture to which refugees must adapt in order to be successful in finding and maintaining employment.



# Case Study #2

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Jewish Family and Children's Services

# Organization Information



- JFCS is a:
  - Well-established social service agency in Pittsburgh area.
  - Resettlement affiliate for Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS).
  - Resettles between 100-200 refugees per year.
  - Employment program that includes orientation and is available to all clients.

# Matching Grant Program Basics



Alternative to Public Cash Assistance with the goal of attaining employment within 4-6 months of arrival.

# Progress Report

- 180-day Placement Rate: 100%
- 180-day Retention Rate: 100%
- Other program rates:
  - 88%, 92%, 95%



# Geographic Resources

Manufacturing

Finance

Energy

Affordable Housing

Safe and Clean

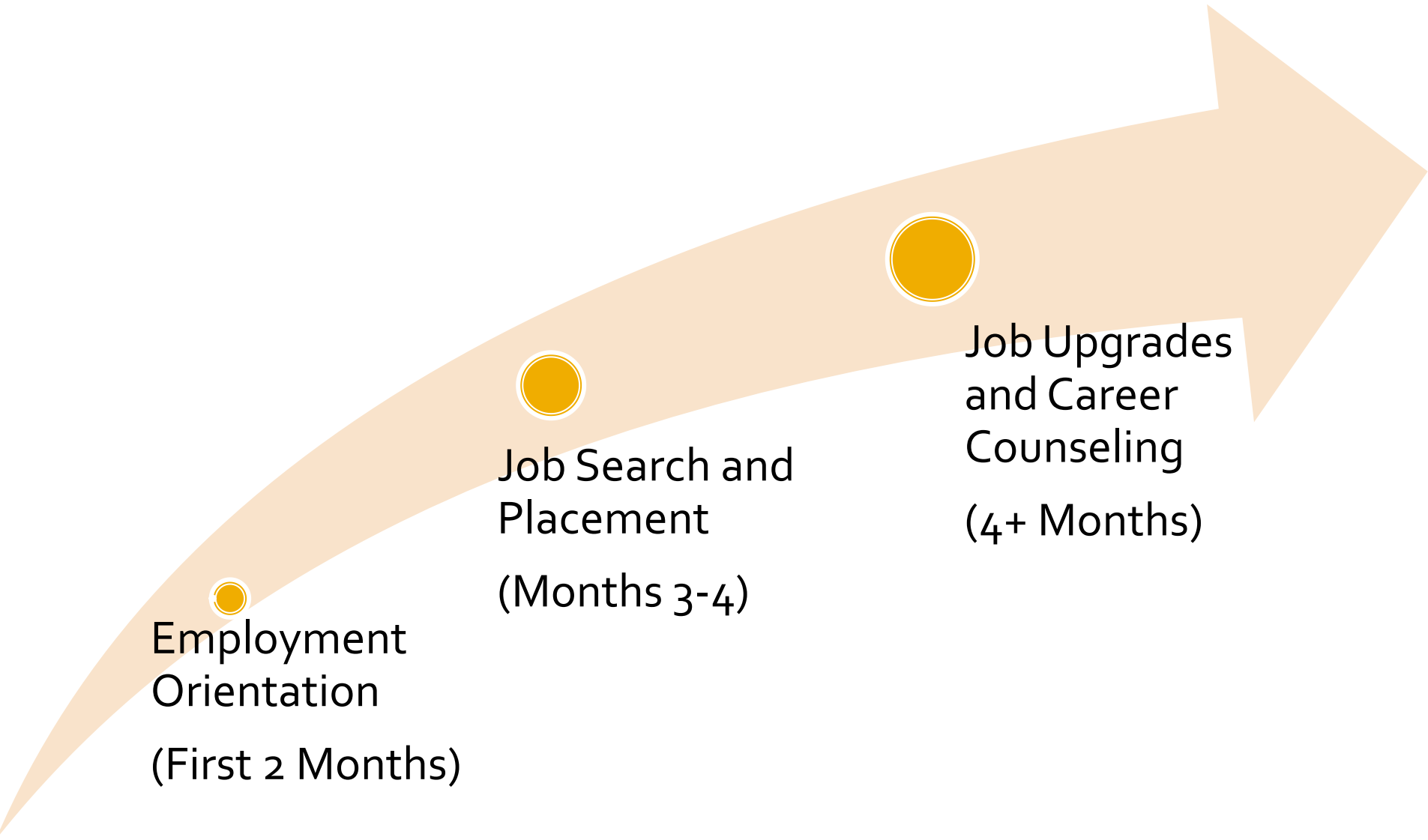


# Incoming Populations

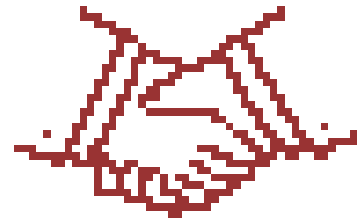
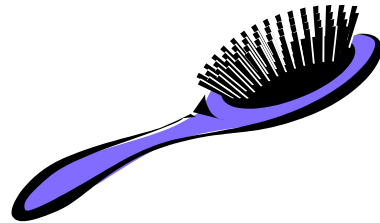
- Burma
- Bhutan
- Iraq



# Orientation Timeline



# Employment Education





# Collaborations

- Refugee community groups are biggest allies.
- Mentoring programs provide a great opportunity to build resources for future arrivals.
- Career Development Center, program of JFCS of Pittsburgh

# Employer Relations

- Solid job matches mean solid placements.
- Show them the stats. Retention rates speak volumes.
- Follow-up support.
- Transparency is the key.

# Resources

Colleen Mahar-Piersma, Cultural Orientation Resource Center  
Rebecca Armstrong, RefugeeWorks

# COR Center Resources

[www.culturalorientation.net](http://www.culturalorientation.net)

202-362-0700

## Tools and resources

Numerous online lesson plans  
(from overseas and domestic sources)



### Overseas: Overseas Service Provider Toolkit

#### Employment

[The Responsibility is Yours](#) [5-10 minutes] (Submitted by IOM Middle East)

[Identifying Personal Strengths](#) [15-20 minutes] (Submitted by IRC Southeast Asia)

[Employment Dilemmas](#) (10-20 minutes) [Submitted by the CWS/OPEs in Accra and Nairobi]

### US Resettlement: Domestic Service Provider Toolkit

#### Employment

**Case studies:** These case studies and accompanying lesson plans highlight employment challenges and strategies of resettled refugees. [Cultural Orientation Resource Center]

#### [Employment Expectations and Goals](#)

#### [Employment Difficulties for a Refugee from Iraq](#)

**Critical Incidents:** Brief stories about a refugee facing a particular challenge and an accompanying lesson plan to guide discussion among refugees receiving orientation. [COR Center]

#### [Disadvantages and Advantages in the Job Search](#)

#### [Adjusting to the Idea of Work](#)

#### Lesson Plans:

[Motivations to Work While on Public Assistance](#) (Two sessions of 1.5 hours each) [Created by participants of the US CO Professional Development Workshop in New York, NY, November 2009]

*Training for the Non-Trainer: Tips and Tools*

*Refugee Discussion group:*  
questions, answers, and resources



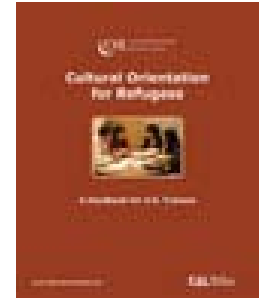
# COR Center Resources

[www.culturalorientation.net](http://www.culturalorientation.net)

202-362-0700

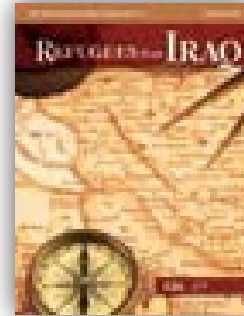
## Tools and resources

*Cultural Orientation for Refugees: A Handbook for U.S. Trainers*



## New groups

Backgrounders and Culture Profiles



## CO overseas

CO program profiles and highlights

## Resources for refugees

*Welcome to the United States* guidebook & DVD



## Coming soon:

Online videos of interviews with resettled refugees



# Other Resources

- Picture Guides for Hospitality and Healthcare Vocabulary – available on [www.refugeeworks.org](http://www.refugeeworks.org)
- National Mentoring Partnership [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants [www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)

# Contact Information

# REFUGEEWORKS

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

A PROGRAM OF LIRS



**Rebecca Armstrong, Research and Training Coordinator**

**770/892-5445**

[rarmstrong@refugeeworks.org](mailto:rarmstrong@refugeeworks.org)





**CAL** CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS  
Improving communication through better understanding of language and culture

**Sanja Bebic**, Director, Cultural Orientation Resource Center

**Colleen Mahar-Piersma**, Associate Director, Cultural  
Orientation Resource Center

202-362-0700

COR@cal.org

CWS/RSC Nairobi

[culturalorientation@cws-rscnairobi.org](mailto:culturalorientation@cws-rscnairobi.org)



# CLOSING REMARKS

---

Thank you for participating in today's  
webinar!

Please take a few minutes to complete  
the evaluation survey when it arrives  
in your inbox.