

## ACTIVITY - BORDER CONTROL ROLE-PLAY

Read out the following scenario (if you wish, you can invent imaginary names for countries X and Y):

*"It is a dark, cold and wet night on the border between X and Y. A column of refugees has arrived, fleeing from the war in X. They want to cross into Y.*

*They are hungry, tired and cold. They have no money, and no documents except their passports.*

*The immigration officials from country Y have different points of view - some want to allow the refugees to cross, but others don't.*

*The refugees are desperate, and use several arguments to try to persuade the immigration officials."*

- Ask one third of the group or class to imagine that they are the immigration officers from country Y. Give this group the **"Immigration officers' arguments and options"** from the next page.
- Ask another third of the group to imagine that they are refugees. Give this group the **"Refugees' arguments and options"** from next page.
- Tell the players that they can use the arguments on their cards and any other relevant arguments they can think of. If it helps, draw a line along the floor to symbolise the border. Tell them that when the roleplay begins, they have ten minutes to reach some sort of conclusion, which may be one of the options listed, or another solution.
- It is up to you and the group to decide whether the "refugees" and the "immigration officers" will put their arguments as a team, or whether they will individually take responsibility for putting individual arguments.
- Ask the remaining third of the group to act as observers. (Half can monitor the "immigration officers", and half can monitor the "refugees".)
- Give the "refugees" and the "immigration officers" a few minutes before the roleplay to read through their arguments and options and to decide on tactics.
- Start the roleplay. Use your own judgement about when to stop.
- After the roleplay, discuss it using the following questions.

### Questions:

- How did the situation work out? What happened?
- How did it feel to be a refugee?
- How did it feel to be an immigration officer?
- Refugees have a right to protection under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Were these refugees given their right to protection? Why/why not?
- Do you think that a country should have the right to turn away refugees?
- Would you do this yourself? What if you knew they faced death in their own country?

### Choices:

- If there is time, play the roleplay again, but the students who were immigration officers must now be refugees.

### **Immigration officers' arguments and options:**

You can use these arguments and any others you can think of:

- They are desperate, we can't send them back.
- If we will send them back we will be responsible if they are arrested, tortured or killed.
- We have legal obligations to accept refugees.
- They have no money, and will need state support. Our country cannot afford that.
- Can they prove that they are genuine refugees? Maybe they are just here to look for a better standard of living?
- Our country is a military and business partner of country X. We can't be seen to be protecting them.
- Maybe they have skills which we need?
- There are enough refugees in our country. We need to take care of our own people. They should go to the richer countries.
- If we let them in, others will also demand entry.
- They don't speak our language, they have a different religion and they eat different food. They won't integrate.
- They will bring political trouble.

Before the roleplay, think about the following options:

- Will you let all of the refugees across the border?
- Will you let some across the border?
- Will you split them up by age, profession, wealth...?
- Will you do something else instead?

### **Refugees' arguments and options:**

You can use these arguments and any others you can think of:

- It is our right to receive asylum.
- Our children are hungry, you have a moral responsibility to help us.
- We will be killed if we go back.
- We have no money.
- We can't go anywhere else.
- I was a doctor in my home town.
- We only want shelter until it is safe to return.
- Other refugees have been allowed into your country.

Before the roleplay, think about the following options:

- Will you split up if the immigration officers ask you to?
- Will you go home if they try to send you back?

This exercise is taken from *'First Steps - A Manual for Starting Human Rights Education'* which is published by the Human Rights Education Team, at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International.

The Manual can be found on: [http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/hre\\_first](http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/print/hre_first)