

Promising Practices in Pre-departure Orientation:

1. **Develop curricula and supporting activities with destination country.** Key messages should be identified in consultation with receiving countries, and include the cultural, linguistic and socio-economic challenges that refugees will face.

2. **Recognize the transitional continuum: link pre-departure and post-arrival activities.** Information should be shared throughout with those engaged in reception and integration.

3. **Consider the timing of courses.** Schedule courses as close to departure as possible to increase relevancy of the lessons, and maximize refugees' focus and retention.

4. **Develop trainings that are participatory and learner-centric.** Refugees learn best and the lessons are more meaningful when the course is experiential and highly participatory. One example is for refugees to teach one another, an approach that increases retention and builds self-esteem and self-confidence.

5. **Address content, skills and attitudes.**

While accurate information about the country of destination is relevant, it is equally important to build productive attitudes for successful adaptation, including pro-activity, self-sufficiency, and resourcefulness.

6. **Train in refugees' native language.** Whenever possible, pre-departure orientation courses should be conducted in refugees' native language, ideally by trainers who share refugees' cultural background. Both of these points are particularly relevant when working with pre-literate and or vulnerable refugees.

7. **Address psychosocial issues in pre-departure training.** Pre-departure orientation goes beyond dispensing information about receiving countries; it should also address the psychosocial well-being of participants, taking into account the social, anthropological, cultural and the psychological aspects of resettlement. As such, it is vital to develop pre-departure courses which are holistic and address the concerns of participants. Topics include cultural adaptation, culture shock, communication, family dynamics, gender, and cross-generational issues among others.

8. **Create a non-threatening learning environment.** A welcoming training atmosphere of inclusion– in which all participants are shown respect– fosters a greater sense of belonging and encourages risk-taking and learning. Many refugees have little or no formal education, and therefore it is critical that trainers consider both the educational and cultural backgrounds of their participants in planning lessons.

9. **Promote gender equality.** It is important to provide an open and secure learning environment in which gender equality is promoted. This sends an important message that the destination country values the role that both men and women play, and paves the way for future social interaction and learning opportunities where women's participation is not only encouraged but expected.

10. **Reaffirm the dignity and positive contributions of every refugee.** Refugees should be made to feel valued for their rich cultural background and experiences and, conversely, receiving communities should be made aware of the positive contributions that refugees offer, including social, economic and cultural contributions.



Palestinian girl at Al-Waleed Refugee Camp, western Iraq. © IOM, 2008 (Photo by: Craig Murphy).