

We hope you will continue partnering with us. If you would like to hire additional refugees, please contact us. We work closely with employers to provide qualified candidates for job openings.

Refugees:

- \* want economic stability and seek to regain self-sufficiency, making them excellent prospects for hire
- \* have initiative, skills and a strong work ethic
- \* are dependable because they want long-term employment and are willing to take entry level positions in order to enter the work force

The following tax credits and incentives may be available to you for refugees you hire in the future:

- \* **On-the-Job-Training:** The Department of Labor pays up to 50% of a new employee's salary up to \$5,000 for an agreed upon period of training  
*For more information visit <http://labor.idaho.gov/publications/WIA-OJT.pdf>*
- \* **Idaho Office for Refugees:** When funding permits, we provide on the job training support to businesses when hiring refugees who qualify for these funds  
*For more information e-mail [twolfson@idahorefugees.org](mailto:twolfson@idahorefugees.org) or call 208.336.4222 x 6*
- \* **Federal Bonding:** Provides insurance free of charge to protect employers from employee theft for up to \$5,000 for the first 6 months of employment.  
*For more information visit <http://www.bonds4jobs.com>*



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# Employer's Handbook



Photo Credit: Global Gardens

Your resource guide to working with refugees: how to create an effective multicultural workforce

Dear Employer,

Thank you for partnering with us! Our goal is to provide you with resources and information to help integrate your refugee employees into your workforce. We understand that you run a business and that hard-working, dedicated and responsible employees are fundamental to your success.

We stress that all refugees are unique individuals with varied backgrounds, and we hope that the content included in our handbook serves to help you better communicate, train and retain refugee employees. We do not desire special treatment for refugees, and it is not our goal to assign you any extra responsibilities. We wish to provide you with a resource to educate and inform.

Our agencies are here to support you, so if you have additional questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact us. In addition, we appreciate your feedback and will continue to update our handbook to better serve your needs.

Thank you!

### **Idaho Office for Refugees**

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## Somalia



For Somalis, the family is the ultimate source of personal security and identity. The importance of family is reflected in the common Somali question, *tol maa tahay?* (What is your lineage?). Historian Charles Gesheker notes, "When Somalis meet each other they don't ask: Where are you from? Rather, they ask: *Whom* are you from? Genealogy is to Somalis what an address is to Americans." Somalis strongly believe in independence, democracy, egalitarianism, generosity and individualism, like many Americans. Unlike Americans, however, Somalis generally do not express their appreciation verbally. Somalis respect strength and often challenge others to test their limits. Saving face is very important to them, so indirectness and humor are often used in conversation.

\*The Somali Bantu are an ethnic minority in Somalia and have a long history of marginalization.

## Sudan



Cooperation within the group is critical, and it is considered taboo to promote one's self interest above the community interests. One Sudanese case manager notes that the most important cultural note for the Sudanese is to learn the importance of time in the U.S. (e.g., making and keeping appointments and following schedules). A Nuer source said the Sudanese do not accept the concept of "no." They may need guidance setting realistic goals, managing time and making decisions.

This cultural information was researched and gathered from a variety of sources. For more information, visit <http://www.cal.org/co/domestic/> or [www.everyculture.com](http://www.everyculture.com)

## Iraq



Patriarchal society, privacy and family are valued, emphasis is placed on not bringing shame to the family.

In Muslim society, there is a much greater difference between public and private behavior than in Western societies. In traditional families, it is an invasion of privacy, for example, for a man to ask another man how his wife is; one asks instead how his family in general is, or how his children are.

## Liberia



Some forms of communication may cause misunderstanding in the United States. For instance, when a Liberian elder is talking angrily to a child and looking him or her in the eye, it is unacceptable for the child to also look the elder in the eye. To do so would be considered a form of defiance. In the United States, however, a person who doesn't look someone in the eye may be considered shifty and untrustworthy.

Generally speaking, Liberians value frankness, and employers should be polite but open and direct. Areas of life that Americans generally consider private, such as age and personal finances, can be public topics of conversation among Liberians. Liberians may not hesitate to ask someone how old he or she is or how much money he or she makes. Again, this should not be seen as disrespectful. Respect is shown through proper forms of address (i.e. Mr. , Mrs., Ms., etc).

## Nepali



The majority of Nepalis are Hindu. Hindu Bhutanese and Nepalis follow a caste system. Lower castes tend to act passively around higher castes, and interactions between different castes is uncommon.

### **International Rescue Committee**

Kevin Warburton  
7188 W. Potomac Drive  
Boise, ID 83704  
(208) 344-1792  
kevin.warburton@rescue.org



### **World Relief**

Emerald Douthit  
6702 Fairview Ave  
Boise, Idaho 83704  
(208) 323-4964  
edouthit@wr.org



### **Agency for New Americans**

Dean Hagerman  
1614 W. Jefferson St.  
Boise, ID 83702  
(208)-338-0033  
dhagerman@mtnstatesgroup.org



The Idaho Office for Refugees helps coordinate efforts of refugee resettlement agencies. All refugees are assigned to an agency listed above.

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Photo Credit: Global Gardens

### Eritrea



Roughly half of Eritreans are Muslims and half are Christians. Eye contact in the first encounter is generally viewed as a sign of disrespect; avoiding eye contact and looking away are considered as virtues equated to reverence and respect.

### Ethiopia



Handshake is generally much lighter and longer, as opposed to the firm, brief shake in Western cultures. Greetings should never be rushed. Take time to inquire about the person's family, health, job, etc. In general, Ethiopians are humble and respect that quality in others. They generally speak in soft tones as loud voices are seen as too aggressive. Ethiopians tend to be non-confrontational and offer what they believe is the expected response rather than say something that might embarrass or offend someone.

### Iran



US culture tends to value task completion, accomplishment, productivity, individuality and order. Iranian culture, conversely, emphasizes people, human relationships, family ties, togetherness and attending to things based on priority of importance rather than according to schedule. The straight-to-the-point and business-like manners of some Americans may seem rude to some Iranians, who value greetings and social interactions before getting down to business.

## Burundi



Burundi has two distinct ethnic groups: the Hutu and the Tutsi. In the US, hand gestures and facial expressions are well received and considered a cultural norm. However, Burundis see frequent gesturing as an indication of lack of calmness and control of one's emotions, and many refrain from doing so. They also feel that one should keep a neutral face and composed tone of voice. Eye contact is considered normal when greeting others, but when speaking, they often do not hold the other person's gaze, as this is considered to be impolite. Many are not used to Western concepts of time and punctuality.

## Congo



Greetings are very important in Congolese life; saying hello and inquiring about the other person's situation must be attended to before other matters are discussed. They may not make constant direct eye contact, as this is deemed impolite and sometimes intimidating. Congolese do not have a habit of openly questioning or criticizing their bosses.

## Columbia



Direct eye contact is seen as a positive thing. Men will sometimes wait for a woman to extend her hand first for a handshake in a business setting. In Columbia, time is a more flexible concept than it is in the US. As a result, Columbians may not see the point or objective of a structured, regulated meeting that follows a strict agenda. In general, Columbians are viewed as indirect communicators, and confrontations are not done openly.

## Definition of a Refugee

As defined by the Refugee Act of 1980, refugees are people who have fled their homelands and are unable or unwilling to return "because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion."



**For more information** about refugee status and asylum, visit the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

## As an employer what specific services can I expect from the agencies?

We encourage you to ask for specific services that will help integrate your new refugee employee into your workforce. Our goal is to help refugees become self-sufficient and successful employment is the key to both your business and refugee futures.

General services we provide include:

- \* Pre-screened applicants whose skills match job openings
- \* On-the-job coaching
- \* Assistance in filling out all the necessary paperwork including I-9, W-2 and 8850 Work Opportunity Tax Credit forms
- \* Vocational English training
- \* Interpretation services for training



Photo Credit: IOR

## Afghanistan



A key difference between Afghan and mainstream American cultures is that the latter stresses the independence of the individual while the former emphasizes the individual's dependence on the family.

Afghans are generally reluctant to share personal and family issues with nonfamily members, though women may discuss their problems with friends, including non-Afghans.

An Afghan's family is a matter of great privacy. It is considered a breach of manners among liberal Afghans, and an act requiring revenge among conservatives, for a man to express interest of any sort in another man's female relatives.

## Bhutan



see Nepali (Bhutanese refugees are ethnically Nepalese)

## Burma



Burmese feel that losing one's temper is a sign of bad manners and poor upbringing, and such behavior is not easily forgiven.

Understand that the up-front behavior that Americans take as honest communication is not regarded similarly by the Burmese. Burmese tend toward discretion with others, at least until friendships are formed. Do not be upset if someone answers a question with "No" when an affirmative answer might seem more appropriate. Saying "no" is often a way to be modest (Karen)\*. Direct eye contact can be another cultural difference, as looking a speaker in the eye can be considered an act of challenge (Chin)\*. Sunday is a day reserved for worship for the deeply religious Christian Karen.

\* The three major ethnic groups in Burma are the Burmese, Karen and Chin.

## Cultural Overviews

The following pages are dedicated to briefly overviewing cultural norms and differences, in the hopes of providing you with advice and a general frame of reference when interacting with refugees. Although these cultural descriptions are a good way to educate yourself on different behaviors and customs, it is also important to note that individuals within cultures and countries may vary from these descriptions. In the same way that all Americans cannot be grouped together, we are mindful that general descriptions may not fit all refugees you encounter in your work environment.

\* If you are interested, looking up religious and cultural holidays may provide more insight about refugees



*Photo Credit: Global Gardens*

## Interpreters

An interpreter is helpful during job training to ensure understanding about job expectations, company beliefs and policies and protocol.

To get an interpreter, contact:

- \* Local agencies: provide free interpretation services for refugee employees who qualify. Contact the agency that your employee is with
- \* boiseinterpreters.com: a database of local interpreters
- \* AT&T Language Lines: phone connections with foreign language speakers  
<http://www.language.com/yourworldyourlanguage/>

### **Working with Interpreters & Translators**

- \* Position yourself so you have direct eye contact with the employee and both of you can hear the interpreter.
- \* Plan for more time when using an interpreter
- \* Avoid any private conversations with the interpreter in the employee's presence.
- \* If possible, use the same interpreter for any follow up sessions.

## Refugee Documents

All refugees are authorized and legal to work. A refugee may have an unrestricted Social Security card, an EAD (Employment Authorization Document, Form I-766), or a Form I-94 with a refugee admission or asylum approval stamp.

Additionally,

- \* Refugees are authorized to work indefinitely
- \* They receive Social Security cards without employment restrictions
- \* According to USCIS instructions, they may write “N/A” or leave the expiration date blank on Section 1 of their I-9 Form
- \* According to the Refugee Receipt Rule, a Form I-94 presented by a *refugee* serves as a receipt for a List A document



Photo Credit: IOR

For more information, call the Office of Special Counsel at 1-800-255-8155 or visit [http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc/pdf/publications/RefugeeAsylee\\_employer.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc/pdf/publications/RefugeeAsylee_employer.pdf)

## Cultural Awareness

When creating a multi-cultural workforce, cultural misunderstandings can occur. Making generalizations about people from certain sections of the world should be made with caution, as each country and ethnic groups within countries have unique cultural traditions. It is often easy to stereotype people from different cultures; we find employers that treat refugees as individuals are the most successful.

Cultural Differences to consider:

- \* While making and maintaining eye contact in the US shows confidence and trust, in other countries, making eye contact with authority figures (like a boss or employer) or elders is a sign of disrespect.
- \* US culture values directness and assertiveness, however, some other cultures approach things in a more round-about way (For example, instead of getting straight down to business, in some cultures it is appropriate to spend time talking and asking after each other's family.) Be aware that cultures can be direct or indirect in their dealings.
- \* In some cultures, saving face is very important, and some refugees might agree and say yes automatically in response to directions or questions when they might not fully understand. Conversely, some refugees might say no when they do understand things as an act of modesty, so as not to seem like they are bragging.



## ...Continued

### Gender Roles

Although in the US it is common to encounter women in positions of power and authority, in many cultures people (especially males) are not accustomed to answering to female bosses. This cultural difference may play out as initial disrespect or failure to listen to females in an authority position. This can be prevented by openly acknowledging the understanding that gender roles are different in the US, and that for successful work environments, female and male bosses must be given equal amounts of respect.



## Benefits to Employers

### Pre-screening

Before coming to the US, all refugees undergo a rigorous screening process by the Department of Homeland Security.

### Classes

Refugees who have arrived through local resettlement agencies have taken cultural orientation, employment, and English classes.

### Employees At Will

Employers are not responsible for providing housing or transportation and maintain full control over all personnel decisions.



*Photo Credit: IOR*

## Advice for Employers

Tips and advice gathered from refugee employers:

- \* Use visual cues or hands on training whenever possible
- \* Use interpreters with limited English speakers for anything complicated, especially in the beginning of job training to make sure everyone is on the same page. Interpreters can help clarify and emphasize company policies (logging hours, absences, breaks, business philosophy, etc.).
- \* Don't expect refugees, who oftentimes have not lived or worked in the US for very long, to understand employers' priorities. Employers should communicate priorities and expectations to workers.
- \* If you have English-speaking refugees and are using them as interpreters for others in their language group, be sure to ask if they are comfortable translating information to their peers.

\* The above information was collected from various businesses and companies who employ refugees, including Symms Fruit Ranch, Sustainable Futures and Kids are Special People.

## Things to be Aware of

### PTSD

Some refugees suffer from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) from their excruciating experiences of fleeing their country, torture, violence, separation from loved ones and time spent in refugee camps.

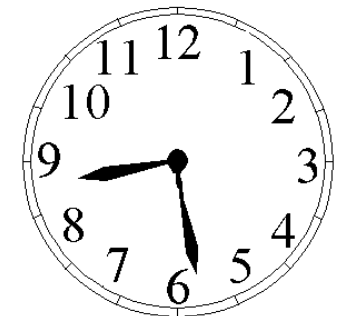
Triggers for PTSD can involve

- \* Panels (like at an interview or meeting), which can be reminiscent of a torture or interrogation session
- \* Alarms (fire or security alarms), which may confuse or scare refugees when they hear the sudden, loud noise. We recommend explaining protocol about fire drills/alarms to refugee employees before they happen, so that they know what to do and where to go.

### Time

In Western culture, time is seen as a limited resource which is constantly being used up. In other cultures, time is more plentiful, if not infinite.

In time-limited cultures, punctuality is extremely important. It is insulting to waste someone's time, because "time is money." In cultures where time is plentiful, like India or Latin America, this is not the case. To avoid misunderstandings, communicate clearly to employees that punctuality is imperative for your business, and communicate expectations about being on time.



## Working with Limited-English Speakers

Nonverbal communication often proves to be more effective than words. Showing the refugee how to perform a certain task instead of just explaining how to do something can result in better understanding. Focus on visual, hands-on training rather than relying only on verbal communication.

Other tips include:

- \* Allow plenty of time for the speaker to communicate a thought or question
- \* Ask the speaker to repeat if you don't understand
- \* Listen actively, (i.e. repeat back what you think the speaker said)
- \* Speak slowly and clearly, but not condescendingly
- \* Avoid idioms, jargon and slang
- \* Organize your thoughts before speaking, use short sentences
- \* Give the listener an opportunity to repeat back what you said
- \* Keep your thoughts in logical order; give directions one step at a time
- \* Write down directions in addition to saying them orally. Many limited English speakers will be able to read more than they can speak; they also can use written directions at a later time
- \* Use visual aids and maps whenever possible
- \* Be aware of body language
- \* Listen carefully and expect to understand the limited English speaker

*Source: 2012 Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning*

## Tax Credits and Incentives

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC): Federal tax credit incentive up to \$2,400 that Congress provides to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment, including most refugees ages 18-39. The amount an employer may claim depends on the hours the employees work. Your company may be eligible for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

How to apply:

- \* **Complete IRS Form 8850**, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the WOTC.
- \* **Complete ETA Form 9061**, Individual Characteristics Form
- \* **Mail** the signed and dated IRS Form 8850 and ETA Form 9061 **no later than 28 calendar days after the new hire begins work** to:

Idaho Department of Labor  
WOTC Unit  
317 W. Main St.  
Boise, ID 83735

*For more information* visit [US Department of Labor](http://www.doleta.gov/business/Incentives/opptax/) at <http://www.doleta.gov/business/Incentives/opptax/>