

**Topic:** Employment  
(US CO Workshop Participants in New York, NY, November 2009)

**Activity:** Volunteering in America

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<b>Objective</b>	<p>Refugees attending this lesson will learn the concept of volunteerism and opportunities for it to be put into practice. They will understand the potential benefits of volunteering, including community service and involvement, skill-building and résumé improvement, and an enhanced ability to interact with the larger community.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>This activity plan caters to English-speaking clients with a higher level of education.</p>
<b>Lesson Time</b>	<p>One session, 2-3 hours total, beginning with a potluck dinner. Children are invited and volunteers will provide free childcare during the presentation to allow adult participants to focus.</p>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PowerPoint with photographs of different volunteering experiences, both overseas and domestically. This can give clients an understanding of the broad range of opportunities available.</li><li>• Handouts with local volunteering opportunities</li><li>• Guest speakers from different organizations to discuss volunteer opportunities within their organization (for sample, a representative from a local library, a local soup kitchen, and a local mentoring program)</li><li>• Guest speakers who are former clients who have benefited from volunteer experiences</li></ul>
<b>Practice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. During the presentation of photographs, the facilitator explains the concept of volunteerism, simplifying as much as possible. The facilitator also points out the variety of available opportunities.</li><li>2. Guest speakers from organizations give brief presentations of the volunteer opportunities within their particular organizations. The speakers explain the broad range of volunteer opportunities available and contribute real-life examples of the opportunities clients can access. Additionally, speakers can describe the process of becoming a volunteer and the steps clients should take to inquire about their own volunteering interests.</li><li>3. Additional guest speakers share their experiences being a volunteer and the role this has played in helping them achieve their professional goals. The purpose of this portion is to reinforce the potential benefits that one could receive from a volunteer experience and to help clients begin to think about areas where they may be interested in volunteering.</li><li>4. Distribute handouts to participants.</li></ol>

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<sup>1</sup> The concept for this activity plan arose out of a broader interest in assisting clients who are unable to find or retain employment despite their best efforts. Along with providing the above-mentioned benefits, volunteering can provide these clients with much-needed activity to provide a sense of productivity and accomplishment, even in the worst of economic times. In addition to tangible benefits for refugee clients, another benefit of this activity plan is the exposure of the local community to the clients. Many community members may not understand who a refugee is or their plight. This activity provides a good opportunity for the local community to have exposure as well.

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<p><b>Cultural Notes</b></p>	<p>5. Ask the representatives from the community organizations to remain at the end of the session, to answer any questions clients may have about current openings or opportunities within their organizations. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and talk about their own skills and interests.</p> <p>Depending on the ethnicity of the clients attending the session, it should be noted that certain individuals may be sensitive to the type of work required of a volunteer. Again, the variety of different opportunities should be stressed. Also, different cultures may have a different level of understanding of the concept of volunteerism. In describing this concept, it may be useful to understand the background of clients and their exposure to something similar in the past.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p>	<p>Feedback from the clients about their interest in this type of program; feedback from organizations or agencies that use clients as volunteers.</p>
<p><b>Variations</b></p>	<p>1. Create additional sessions for different languages and different education levels, paying particular notice to the presentation of volunteer opportunities.</p>

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