



## Empowerment

*“To empower is to give power or to enable. As a process, empowerment fosters capacities in individuals, groups and communities to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes... it takes into account the felt needs of the actors and encourages collective involvement.” (Pant, 2014, p. 3)*

To be able to empower other people is indeed relevant for the intervention with refugees and may be accomplished through different means, such as:

- **Emphasizing the advantages of learning the local language**

Studies have shown that providing the incitement to learning an international language such as English will empower the refugee – enabling him or her to engage in social, cultural and historical contexts in a much more profound way (Tadayon & Khodi, 2016, p. 130). Such a process should be considered to be portable concerning the specific language requirements in the case of a given host country. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the need for the refugee to engage in specific language programs of the host country in order to overcome existing language barriers. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the concerns and rights regarding the preservation of native languages (Tadayon & Khodi, 2016, p. 130), but emphasizing the advantages of learning the local language will provide the refugee with the tools to become a much more involved participant. It will also enable the refugee to express his own thoughts and feelings towards the citizens of the new host society, and even to defend himself against anti-refugee sentiments (Erden, 2016, p. 261).

- **Mentor programs for breaking down the narrative of victimhood**

Women of the third world and the developing countries are often thought of as helpless victims – being materialistic and emotionally dependent on a system based on patriarchal supremacy. In order to ensure the empowerment of female refugees originating from these parts of the world, it is of paramount importance to break down this narrative of victimhood – turning the focus instead on the abilities and capabilities of these women. This can be achieved through the creation of mentor-programs, where local women collaborate with refugees in order to strengthen the latter’s confidence as well as support and highlight their skills (Erden, 2016, p. 253-254).

- **The professionals’ commitment and will to take responsibility during the ongoing search for employment of the refugee**

It is important to create a supportive framework during the employment process of the refugee. The professional should provide thorough help – for example in regards to job searching, to job interviews, and guidance of the refugee towards participation in language-courses that are much more focused toward specific branches of the labour market. It is much more motivational for the refugee to participate in such courses, if he or she can detect a direct thread between verbal

capabilities and later possibilities of employment. Genuine interest of the professional is indeed empowering for the determination of the refugee (Møller, p. 2)

- **Focusing on businesses and industries where labor demand is high**

If the refugee has to be enrolled in some kind educational program before entering the labour market, it is of key importance to assure the refugee a certain level of security regarding the future possibilities of employment. Focusing on businesses with great labor demands provides incentive – giving the refugee an opportunity to become an important asset to the business (Jensen & Jensen, 2018, p. 28).

## Resources

- Erden, Ozlem. (2016). Building Bridges for Refugee Empowerment. Journal of International Migration and Integration
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- Møller, Morten. Empowerment skal drive integrationsindsatsen (in danish). Found the 12th of February 2019 at:  
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- Pant, Mandakini. (2014). Empowerment. In David Coghlan & Mary Brydon-Miller, The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research. London: SAGE Publications Ltd
- Tadayon, Fereshteh & Ali Khodi. (2016). Empowerment of Refugees by Language: Can ESL Learners Afect the Target Culture?. TESL Canada Journal



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