

**Catholic Relief Services  
CRS Campus Connection  
Migration Discussion Guide**

**“So What’s Migration?”**

**PURPOSE OF PROGRAM:** To introduce participants to the general concepts of migration issues.

**FACILITATOR:** Please have a map available.

**GATHERING PRAYER:**

**All:** Loving God, we thank you for bringing us together. Help us learn how to better to serve you and your people. *Please bless our conversation, and grant us the gift of your wisdom.*

*In Christ’s name we pray,  
Amen*

**Reader 1:** The story of migration is about people on the move. Currently, 150 million people live outside of their country of origin. A large proportion of these individuals find themselves uprooted from their homes not by choice, but forced by various political, economic, and social reasons.

International migrants are persons who take up residence in a foreign country. By this definition, international migrants do not include the tourists, business travelers, religious pilgrims, or persons seeking medical treatment who make millions of visits to foreign countries each year. Rather, only those foreigners who remain for an extended stay in a new country are counted as international migrants.

*(World Migration Report 2000, International Organization for Migration)*

**Reader 2:** Though migration is not a new phenomenon, the past 35 years have entered in major economic and social changes world wide that have altered the face of migration. These changes have necessitated greater movement of workers as well as created a significant increase in abusive practices against refugee, migrants and now trafficked persons.

**Reader 3:** As a faith tradition dedicated to lifting up the human dignity of the oppressed and vulnerable, we are called to act on behalf of those who migrate, and to become educated to their needs.

**Reader 4:** When discussing migration, we should be aware of four general categories:

- Refugee
- Internally Displaced Person
- Victim of Trafficking
- Economic Migrant

Although these groups share many inter-locking issues, each one carries their own distinct concerns and situations.

**Reader 1: REFUGEE**

The first category of migration we’ll discuss is the refugee. Here is a story from the crisis in Sudan, Africa.

***(Find the Sudan/Chad border on the map.)***

"They attacked the village at seven o'clock in the morning," recalls Tirab Ivrahim of the July day when Janjaweed militia attacked his village in western Sudan. "At the beginning of the attack, the government and the Janjaweed came all together and took some girls, and burned the village. They killed two villagers, and shot my daughter." Fortunately, his daughter survived.

**Reader 2:** For Ivrahim and the villagers who fled, it was the beginning of a journey that was to place them squarely in the midst of a crisis the United Nations has labeled the *worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world*. For Ivrahim, as with many in the dusty camps, the memories of his flight to the relative safety of Chad are ones of brutality and terror. He vividly recounts how government planes attacked the nearly 3,000 local villagers as they raced towards the border.

"Everyone took their children and ran," Ivrahim said. "We ran away and hid in the forests and mountains. After that, planes came and shot bullets at the places we were hiding."

**Reader 3:** Traveling at night, Ivrahim said, to avoid the bombers that stalked them on their flight, he and his fellow villagers existed on what little food they managed to grab before leaving their homes, and marched so quickly on their flight towards the border that donkeys become exhausted and had to be abandoned along the way. But even as they neared the border with Chad, Ivrahim recalled, their troubles were not over, as Janjaweed militia, most of them mounted on horses, attacked them again nearly within sight of the border.

"When we reached the border, the Janjaweed were there still, and we ran again," Ivrahim said.

**Reader 4:** The current world-wide refugee population now surpasses 12 million people.

A refugee is someone who:

- Is outside his/her country of origin;
- Has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion; and
- Is unable or unwilling to make him/herself available to the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

**Question:**

- *What would be the emotional repercussions of having to leave everything you know in a moment?*
- *Can you think of any current or past events that have caused people to become refugees?*

**Reader 1: INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON (IDP)**

The next category we'll discuss is the internally displaced person also known as IDP. Here is a story about a family from Bogota, Colombia.

***(Find Bogota, Colombia on the map.)***

Dora Yanneth, her husband, Geraldo, and their four children escaped to Bogota after a guerilla incursion on the farm where they worked in Sunampaz, just 20 miles south of the capital.

**Reader 2:** Geraldo says that on the night of their escape the insurgents had them in a meeting with several other families. The guerillas were demanding the forced recruitment of the town's boys, including Geraldo's eldest son. "If one does not agree to this, they kill one or they kill them all," Geraldo commented. The owner of the farm distracted the invaders with shotgun fire, and the families took to the mountains. Gerald led his family north along a river.

**Reader 3:** Having left all they owned behind, the family arrived in Bogota with no place to stay and nothing to eat. A stranger gave them floor space to sleep on, but no food. Dora and the children suffered with illness for months while Geraldo brought them food scraps and looked for work. Through the local parish they then discovered the Foundation for Attention to Migrants of the Archdiocese of Bogota.

**Reader 4:** The Foundation gave them business training and a \$670 investment with which to open their own shoe shop. Dora and Geraldo now earn just enough to support their family and kept the children in school. "More than anything," says Dora, "what we appreciate the most is that we don't feel alone."

**Reader 1:** According to the United Nations:

"Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as result or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."

*(Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement Office of Coordinating Humanitarian Affairs 1998)*

**Reader 2:** A person becomes a refugee only when he/she crosses an international border. In contrast, an internally displaced person remains inside the boundaries of his/her own country. The difference between

refugees and internally displaced persons is technical and legal and has little to do with their reasons for flight. Both categories of persons are often affected by the same causes of displacement.

**Reader 3:** As displaced people find limited options outside of their home country, close to 25 million people were internally displaced with the highest levels occurring in Africa. IDPs continue to be among the most vulnerable people on earth with little to no legal or institutional systems in place to respond to their protection needs.

**Question:**

- *Comment on Dora's statement of "not feeling alone." Why would the experience of being a migrant make you feel alone?*

**Reader 1: VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING**

The following is a first hand account from a teenage girl who was the victim of human trafficking in India.

*(Find Nepal and Mumbai, India on the map.)*

I come from Tanahu District of Nepal. I found myself a job in the "Brick Factory" and there I made a friend. She introduced me to her relative who worked in India. Soon he proposed to marry me. Initially I refused, but eventually I agreed to marry him. He insisted that I move with him to India. He said, "I have a very good job in India."

**Reader 2:** I traveled with him to Mumbai, India. On arriving in Mumbai, he took me to a big house and left for some work. That was the last time I saw him.

I found myself in the world of brothels and realized that it was hell. The brothel keeper told me that she paid Rs10,000 (\$215) for me. Most of the customers coming to the brothel were so drunk that they did not even look like men let alone act like them.

**Reader 3:** One day a customer tried to stub out his cigarette on my hand. This infuriated me and I opposed it. This made him very angry. He picked up the beer bottle and smashed it over me head. I screamed and cried out for help. The brothel keeper instead of scolding the customer started hitting me and yelled "He is the customer and you will tolerate whatever he says and does to you." I tried to escape but the guard caught me and I was locked in a room for more than 24 hours without food or water.

**Reader 4:** Finally one day, I was rescued by the police. This ended my nightmare and I was hopeful for a better future than this. When I was eventually brought back to Nepal, I was really sick. The staff from the rehabilitation center took me to the hospital where I was diagnosed with TB and full blown AIDS.

**Reader 1:** The United Nations defines trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

*(The UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crimes and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children)*

**Reader 2:** A significant proportion of people who end up being trafficked originate as economic migrants, refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with few legal alternatives to migrate. Human trafficking is a \$10 billion+ growth industry with conservative estimates ranging from 700,000 to 2 million people (primarily women and children) trafficked into prostitution and labor slavery annually.

**Question:**

- *When someone is the victim of human trafficking, what do they lose?*

**Reader 3: ECONOMIC MIGRANT**

The final category we'll discuss is that of the economic migrant. Here is a story about a young father from Mexicali, Mexico.

*(Find Mexicali, Mexico on the map.)*

Twenty-five-year-old Luis Hernandez, spent months in the city of Mexicali, Mexico, looking for a job in an export processing plant called a *maquiladora*. Finally, he gave up and told his family he couldn't sit by watching his children go hungry. He had to try to get across the border and find work. Six days later, his family got word that he had died of dehydration in the desert outside Ajo, Arizona. His older sister, Sonia Cannel Hernandez, explains that if her brother could have found a job making even 700 pesos a month in Mexico (\$70 U.S. dollars), he would have stayed home with his wife and two small children. "No one wants to leave their families to live in the U.S.," she says. "They do it because they don't see any other options."

**Reader 4:** As rapid economic change eliminates economic survival alternatives, economic migration for many has become a necessity rather than a choice. This is of acute concern in Latin America and the United States. The largest percentage of immigrants arriving to the United States are from Latin America. Current US migration policies are leaving economic migrants increasingly abused and dying in transit.

Also as a result of economic migration, families are being divided and splintered across the Mexico-US border. The desire for family reunification often comes as a consequence of economic migration. According to the International Organization for Migration:

Splitting families apart deprives each member of the fundamental right to respect of his or her family life. As the family unit is often the principal support to its members, separating families also undermines other rights. Children and women, in particular, become vulnerable to exploitation when they are separated from their relatives.

(World Migration Report: 2000, International Organization for Migration)

**Question:**

- *Make a list of the economic options you have. Compare that with the experience of most economic migrants before they immigrate to the US.*

**Reader 1:** The remainder of our Campus Advocate sessions will focus specifically on the regional immigration issues between the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Reader 2:** To approach the current regional migration situation we root ourselves in Catholic Social Teaching. Within our tradition their exists the right for all of us to live in dignity in our own home and country. This foundational starting point is often referred to as "the right not to migrate."

**Reader 3:** The right not to migrate (while not an anti-immigration concept) is the basic position that people have the right to find economic, political and social opportunities to sustain their families within their own countries in order to live in dignity, and not be forced to migrate.

**Reader 4:** This principle is grounded in the conviction that economic, social and political policies must be designed to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable sectors. Which in this case refers to those most likely to be uprooted.

**Reader 1:** For Catholic Relief Services, the approach to migration has to include both the reduction of the need to migrate and protection of those who have little choice but to do so at this point in time. The long-term goal is equitable development, with migration as a choice rather than a necessity.

**Reader 2:** Catholic social thought affirms that sovereign states have the right to create reasonable limits on immigration. But where conditions for dignified life do not exist and individuals cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, those individuals have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive.

**Question:**

- *What is your attitude of "the right not to migrate?"*

**Sending Forth Prayer**

**All:** Creator God, as your spirit moves through us, may our hearts be opened to those who find themselves far from their home communities, and unsure of their future. In your loving name we pray...Amen.

This program has been developed by staff members of US Operations at Catholic Relief Services.  
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