

**Topic:** Cultural Adjustment

**Activity:** A Refugee Senior Case Study

---

<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To consider benefits of being involved and engaged in a community</p> <p>To consider ways in which refugee seniors can contribute to their community</p>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case study (see sample included), one copy per participant</li><li>• Prepared flipchart with reflection questions listed (see samples included)</li><li>• Markers</li><li>• Tape</li></ul>
<b>Lesson Time</b>	30 minutes
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>As with all arriving refugees, refugee seniors face many challenges upon resettlement, including adjusting to life in a new environment, the need to learn a new language, and uncertainty about their future. Yet refugee seniors sometimes face additional, age-related challenges as well, such as impaired mobility, a loss of status within the United States' youth-oriented society, isolation as the employable adults in their family work one or more jobs, etc.</p> <p>This case study is based on the real-life experience of a Karen man who resettled when over 70 years old. While the case study is brief, this refugee senior's story gives a picture of how he has handled resettlement, in ways that may be of use to other senior refugees or their family members.</p>
<b>Practice</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Put participants into small groups of 2 to 4 and distribute case studies. Have participants read the case study, answering the questions presented in the case study along the way. When finished, have the small groups answer the final reflection questions on prepared flipchart.</li><li>2. Bring the large group together and ask for a spokesperson to share the highlights and important elements from the small group discussions. Discuss further as necessary.</li><li>3. When working with less literate participants, the facilitator can read the case study aloud to the group, and then lead a large group discussion about the reflection questions.</li></ol>
<b>Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the main issues presented in this case study? How did Luke handle these issues? How would you handle these issues?</li><li>• What are some of the resources or supports Luke used? How did he use them? What other resources or supports might be available?</li><li>• What are issues that are not raised in this case study, but that may come to bear with refugee seniors? How might those issues be handled?</li></ul>

## A Refugee Senior Case Study

Luke\* is a Karen man in his mid-70s. He arrived in the United States three years ago, to join his daughter and her family.

Luke worked as a handyman in the refugee camp. He enjoyed helping his neighbors while earning a little money. Luke wants to work in the U.S. He wants to work to be healthy and happy, as well as to earn money. But Luke feels that he is too old to work, and many younger refugees are searching for jobs.

So Luke keeps busy volunteering. Luke teaches choir to children at a local Karen community church. He volunteered three times a week while the children were learning new songs. Now he volunteers once a week. He will teach three times a week when teaching new songs again.

Luke also helps around the house and studies English. When Luke came to the U.S., he spoke no English. He knew that he needed to learn English to talk to people. Luke enrolled in an English language class through his resettlement agency. He also studied at home by reading, watching television, and listening to the radio. Luke also practices English with people as he walks to the church and his classes. Luke studies religion in English, and he now teaches some English to other refugees in his community. Luke also joins English speaking practice offered weekly through his resettlement agency.

Luke is very active and engaged in a variety of ways within his new environment. He is also very healthy. Luke feels that he does not get sick because he walks regularly, and because he keeps learning new things and teaching others.

\* This resource is based on the real-life experience of refugees resettled in the United States. All identifying information has been changed to protect privacy.