

# **Increasing the Participation of Refugee Seniors in the Civic Life of Their Communities: A Guide for Community-Based Organizations**

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## **What is the Purpose of this Guide?**

This guide is part of a series created for community-based organizations (CBOs), including both those led by refugees (often called ECBOs or ethnic community-based organizations) as well as mainstream providers that serve refugees. The guides are designed to provide CBOs with helpful hints and tools for developing civic participation initiatives for refugee communities.

The purpose of this guide is to equip your organization, as a CBO or ECBO, with the tools to effectively promote the civic participation of refugee seniors. It provides helpful hints, promising practices, and planning tools for developing and carrying out a civic participation project focused on refugee seniors.

## **Why Focus on the Civic Participation of Refugee Seniors?**

Civic participation and civic engagement can take many different forms. However, at its heart, civic participation is about people working together to make the community better.

To build strong communities and a strong democracy, we need all hands and all voices.

### **A Few Definitions...**

#### **What is Civic Engagement?**

- ✓ “Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for fellow citizens or to help shape the community’s future.” *Blueprint for the Next Chapter, Civic Ventures, 2005*
- ✓ “Civic participation is the process that draws newcomers into collective problem solving to improve conditions in matters affecting their lives.” *Pursuing Democracy’s Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America, Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees, 2004*

As the CIL report suggests, refugee seniors are “community treasures.” Like other seniors, they have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer, and the same human desires we all share to feel useful and give back to others.

In their home countries, refugee elders typically held important positions and played important roles in community life and decision making. Yet once in the United States, the process of resettlement and integration too often erodes and neglects those roles. As a result, refugee seniors often experience isolation and even depression when they lose a sense of purpose and status.

How can we help refugee elders “apply” the knowledge and experience they have in this new environment?

Refugee seniors can be involved in and give back to both the refugee community and the broader neighborhoods and cities in which they live. They can be involved in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. *Community Treasures* identifies five main forms of civic involvement for refugee seniors: helping, participating, giving, influencing, and leading (see *Community Treasures*, page 16).

### **Helpful Hint...**

#### **What Does Civic Participation Look Like?**

If refugees get involved in any of the following kinds of activities, that’s civic participation!

- ✓ Organizing or participating in neighborhood meetings, clean-ups, or cultural festivals
- ✓ Volunteering with a community-based organization, church, temple, or mosque
- ✓ Attending city council meetings or giving testimony at public hearings
- ✓ Participating in meetings or forums to discuss community issues
- ✓ Speaking with mainstream groups to educate them about refugees
- ✓ Writing letters to the editor of a newspaper
- ✓ Taking part in rallies, marches, or vigils
- ✓ Voting

There are many things that CBOs can do to help restore and strengthen traditional civic roles within the community, and to remove the barriers to participation in the civic life of the broader community. Refugee seniors have much to offer in both realms. Their participation benefits the health and well being of both refugee elders themselves as well as the communities in which they live.

### **More Information...**

#### **Civic Engagement and Older Americans**

In the past, societal attitudes about aging were a barrier to fostering widespread involvement and leadership of seniors in the civic life of the United States.

However, these attitudes have changed in recent years as members of the “baby boom” generation enter their senior years. Working in partnership with advocates, researchers, and nonprofit organizations, government agencies at all levels are taking steps to promote and support civic engagement among older Americans.

## **What are the Benefits and Challenges to Involving Refugee Elders in Civic Participation?**

Promoting civic participation among refugee elders will benefit the elders themselves, your organization, and the wider community.

For **engaged elders**, the benefits of senior civic participation can include:

- ✓ **Decreased isolation and improved health.** Civic participation can provide opportunities for social connections, as well as productive and meaningful activities. Many studies have shown a positive relationship between community service and health for older Americans.
- ✓ **Greater access to other resources.** Civic participation can be a vehicle for tapping into wider organizational and community resources. By getting involved, seniors can learn about and make connections to resources – from libraries to health programs – that can improve their well-being.
- ✓ **Restored sense of self-worth.** Civic participation can restore the self-confidence that is often eroded with the loss of traditional leadership roles. In addition, it can transform informal helpers and leaders to publically-recognized leaders.

For **your organization**, the benefits of efforts to engage refugee elders in civic participation can include:

- ✓ **Increased staff knowledge and understanding of senior issues and strengths.** By focusing on a civic participation effort, staff will be able to learn more about senior issues, interests, and strengths. This will help them better serve and work with older members of the community.
- ✓ **Deeper relationships with seniors.** A civic participation focus will help staff develop and nurture an authentic partnership with elder leaders.
- ✓ **Increased credibility.** Deeper relationships with elders can enhance your organization's credibility within the community.
- ✓ **Greater collaboration with the community.** Civic participation shifts the focus from "What services do you need?" to "How can we all be involved in making the community better?" Therefore, it fosters collaboration and can provide an opportunity for staff to work together with community members on common causes and issues.

For the **community as a whole**, the benefits of elder civic participation can include:

- ✓ **New ideas and skills** that can be tapped to address community needs and problems.
- ✓ **Additional volunteers** for organization and community events and activities.
- ✓ **More advocates** on issues affecting seniors and the community as a whole.

- ✓ **Role models** for refugee children and youth, and opportunities for them to strengthen their connection to their language and culture through intergenerational activities.

Your organization should also be prepared to face some challenges as you seek to promote and support the participation of refugee elders in the civic life of their community. Some of these barriers are faced by all refugees and immigrants, while some are unique to elders. The CIL report and other refugee and immigrant civic participation efforts have identified the following barriers:

- ✓ **Health issues** that limit mobility and/or time and energy for involvement.
- ✓ **Family responsibilities** that prevent seniors from being able to devote time to other activities.
- ✓ **Language and cultural barriers**, especially for participation with mainstream civic participation efforts.
- ✓ **Attitudes and messages** – from society as a whole and even from their own family members – that lead elders to believe that they are “too old and cannot do much.”
- ✓ **Limited organizational resources** for developing and maintaining elder civic participation programs, in addition to social services.

Above all, effectively involving elders in civic participation requires a shift in mindset by elders, organizational staff, and the community.

*For organizations*, it requires shifting the provider-client mindset and looking at seniors not as service recipients, but as civic actors and agents of change. Also, it requires a shift in thinking about your own role from service provider to authentic partner and facilitator of civic participation. *For elders*, it requires shifting their own perceptions about what old people can do. Overall, a shift from service to civic participation requires a different set of expectations and strategies.

## What Role Can Your Organization Play?

As an organization that serves refugees, your organization is in a good position to engage refugee elders in the civic life of the community. For example, if your organization:

- ✓ Already has a focused program for seniors, then you can think about how to incorporate civic participation activities into those programs. For example, if you offer citizenship classes for seniors, incorporate discussions of civic participation. You could also organize a service day or an advocacy day.
- ✓ Serves refugee seniors through case management, English language classes, or other social services, then you could bring the seniors you serve together to learn how they would like to be involved in the community.

- ✓ Provides services to families with elder relatives at home, then you could reach out to those families to invite elder members of their households to an event or focus group.

ECBOs in particular play important roles as “civic connectors” for refugees because they know and have a foot in both worlds (see *Community Treasures*, page 39). ECBOs have:

- ✓ Strong knowledge of the community, the informal leaders and the infrastructure
- ✓ Trusting relationships with the refugee community
- ✓ Language and cultural fluency

As an ECBO, you can strengthen civic participation within refugee communities and connect refugee seniors to opportunities with mainstream institutions in the broader community. You can work with other nonprofits and government to play a “broker role,” connecting elders to other opportunities in the community.

If you are an ECBO, you may already have refugee seniors among your founders, Board members, and volunteers. That means that you are already engaging seniors and these seniors can help develop strategies for engaging others.

*Community Treasures* highlights examples from across the country of how ECBOs like yours are creating opportunities for refugee elders to contribute their assets to the community.

## Where Can You Start?

### Some Questions to Help Your Organization Get Started

This section presents some questions that can help your organization – whether you are a refugee-led CBO, a voluntary agency that resettles refugees, or another nonprofit organization that serves refugees – identify the best approaches and strategies for promoting refugee civic participation in your community.

As a starting point, you need to understand the refugee community’s experience with, definitions of, and attitudes toward civic participation. You’ll need to talk to people, listen, and try different approaches to see what works best for your community and your organization.

#### **Questions to ask about refugee elders’ experiences in their home country:**

1. How does the refugee community you serve define civic participation?
2. What was their experience with civic participation in their home country?
3. What were the vehicles for civic participation?
4. What was the role of elders in the civic life of their home country?

## **Questions to ask about refugees' experiences in the U.S.:**

1. What are their experiences with and attitudes toward civic participation here in the U.S.?
2. How have the traditional roles of elders changed as they resettled here? Do they have new roles?
3. How are refugee elders involved in the civic life of their own ethnic community? With mainstream institutions and organizations?
4. What are the most significant barriers to civic participation for refugee elders?

## **Questions to ask about opportunities to engage refugee elders in civic life:**

1. What are some important issues affecting refugees that could serve as a focal point for civic participation? For example:
  - a. Are elders concerned about how their grandchildren are doing in school but feeling disconnected from the school system?
  - b. Are elders concerned about their eligibility for benefits, such as Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid?
  - c. Are they dealing with health issues and barriers to accessing healthcare?
  - d. Are they concerned about the loss of traditional values, culture, and language among the next generation?
2. What are vehicles for civic participation within their own ethnic community here in the U.S.? (Examples might include: places of worship, professional associations, cultural groups, home town associations, political parties, councils of elders, or clan structures)
3. What are the natural gathering places – places that elders feel comfortable and have a sense of ownership – that could become vehicles for civic participation in the future?
4. What assets – skills, experience, or resources – do refugee elders have that could be applied to and be beneficial for civic participation activities?

### **Helpful Hint...**

#### **Hold a Focus Group with Seniors**

To learn more about refugee seniors' interests in and experiences with civic participation, your organization could hold a *focus group*.

A focus group is a carefully planned discussion among a small group of people (typically 8-12) that is facilitated by a trained moderator. The facilitator or moderator uses a pre-determined set of questions to guide the discussion and assure that desired topics and questions are addressed.

## **Questions to ask about your organization's experience and capacity:**

1. What is your organization's experience working with refugee seniors? What have you done and what have you learned?
2. What is your organization's experience with civic participation? What have you done and what have you learned?
3. Do you have a senior program or programs that serve and address seniors' issues/concerns? If so, what are their roles in the program ( for example - clients, participants, partners, or advisors)
4. Could you begin to incorporate civic participation into programs and services you are currently providing to seniors?
5. Or, do you want to create a separate civic participation program? If so, what would it look like? Where would it fit in the organization? How would you fund it?
6. Do you have staff with knowledge, skills, and/or experience that could be tapped to begin a civic participation effort?
7. Have you worked with community members as partners to address their community concerns together? Or, have you tended to address concerns on behalf of the community?

## **Questions to ask about the broader community:**

1. What can you learn from other organizations in your community? For example, are there other immigrant organizations that have been successful in getting seniors involved in civic participation and would they be willing to share ideas and lessons learned?
2. Could you collaborate with another organization to develop a civic participation effort focused on seniors?
3. What opportunities exist for refugee elders to get involved in civic participation? For example, is there a local newcomer or immigrant task force, or local citizen advisory boards that would welcome refugee participation?
4. What existing resources could you tap to support the development of a civic participation effort? For example, is there a school or university that could help with research? Are there people who could provide leadership training?
5. Can you tap national organizations working on issues affecting the refugee community for information and assistance?

### **Helpful Hint...**

#### **Get to Know Your Local Area Agency on Aging**

CBOs led by and serving refugee elders should build relationships with and look for opportunities to partner with their local area agency on aging (AAA).

AAAs were established under the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1973 to respond to the needs of Americans age 60 and over in every local community. They provide a range of community-based services that make it possible for older adults to remain in their homes and communities as long as possible.

To find the local area agency on aging that covers your community, you can contact your local city or county government. You can also search the website of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging at [www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org).

## **Next Steps**

Use this document as a starting point. Share it with others in your organization to spark ideas and generate discussion. You may want to consider organizing an *ad hoc planning committee* or *task force* to develop your organization's refugee elder civic participation efforts. Invite members of your organization's Board and staff, representatives of the refugee community you serve, and individuals who might be interested in volunteering to serve on the committee. The committee could be charged with exploring the questions listed above, researching other models in your geographic community, talking to refugees, and developing a plan. *Make sure to include refugee seniors on the committee!*

Your first steps may vary, depending on your organization's starting point. Here are some suggestions for moving forward:

### **1<sup>st</sup> - Listen and Learn**

To develop a civic participation effort for refugee seniors, you'll want to learn more about *both* effective civic participation strategies as well as the civic participation interests of seniors.

If your organization has mostly focused on social services for seniors, start by spending time building your own knowledge about civic participation strategies and approaches. Talk to refugee elders about their experiences with and interests in civic participation, both within their own ethnic community and in the community at large.

To listen and learn, you can use or adapt the attached tools:

- ⇒ *Sample Survey of Refugee Seniors* (page 11)
- ⇒ *Sample Asset-Based Needs Assessment Focus Group Questions* (page 12)

You should also take time to learn more about what other organizations have done or are doing to support civic participation and begin to think about how you might adapt those approaches. (See step 3 below.)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> - Assess Your Organization's Capacity and Strengths to Build On**

Another good place to start is to assess your organization's own capacity *both* to work with seniors and with civic participation. Perhaps your organization has *some* experience with civic participation – maybe you helped mobilize refugees to attend an important city council meeting about proposed funding cuts to services for low-income families or you've done outreach to encourage people to become citizens and register to vote. Think how about how you might turn these activities into a sustained program or effort. For example, maybe a handful of refugees testified at those hearings and would be interested in a leadership development program. Maybe your efforts to encourage citizenship and voter registration could be expanded into a broader civic education program to include community workshops. If your current constituencies are youth and young adults, they need to strategize on how to bring elders in and how to integrate older refugees in their on-going efforts of civic participation.

To assess your organization's capacity, you can use or adapt the attached tool:

- ⇒ *Sample Organizational Capacity Assessment: For Refugee Elder Civic Participation Efforts* (page 14)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> - Map the Opportunities for Civic Participation Among Seniors**

The next step is to get a better understanding of the opportunities for civic participation in your community. This includes “mapping” both the opportunities within the ethnic communities to which elders belong as well as the larger mainstream community. By “mapping” we mean identifying the opportunities and the connections between them. You can do this by putting paper up on the wall, brainstorming and putting what you already know up on the wall, and then identifying who else you can talk to to fill in the gaps.

For example, within the ethnic community, you might want to ask: What are the natural gathering places – places where refugee elders feel comfortable and have a sense of ownership – that could become vehicles for civic participation in the future? What kinds of informal associations already exist? Is there an issue affecting refugee elders in your community that could serve as a focal point for getting them involved?

Looking at the larger, mainstream community, you can ask: What kinds of neighborhood and community groups and associations exist for people to get involved in addressing community issues?

To map the opportunities, you can use or adapt the attached tool:

- ⇒ *Sample Activity For Mapping Civic Participation in Your Community* (page 16)

### **4<sup>th</sup> - Make A Plan!**

Once you've done your homework – you've listened to refugee seniors, you've assessed your organization's capacity, and you've mapped the civic participation opportunities in your community – the next step is to make a plan.

If you already provide services to seniors, how could you incorporate civic participation into your existing programs and services? If you already have civic participation activities, how could you reach to and engage elders in these? Do you want to create a separate civic participation program? If so, what would it look like? Where would it fit in the organization? How would you fund it? If you have little experience, maybe the best place to start is simply by bringing seniors together in a weekly or monthly social group to connect, begin to break down the isolation, and talk about issues and interests.

To help you make a plan, you can use or adapt the attached tool:

- ⇒ *Small Group Activity: Building A Shared Vision for Refugee Elder Civic Participation* (page 19)
- ⇒ *Refugee Elder Civic Participation Project: A Planning Work Sheet* (page 20)

## **Conclusion**

Above all, think about how you can build on your existing programs and activities, the concerns and interests of refugees, and the skills and experience of individual community members. You may find that the different refugee communities you serve already have structures for civic participation but don't define them as such. Take time to learn about and build on these existing structures for participation. Most of the components for civic participation may already be there, and you may need only to provide guidance. Remember that there is no one right way to increase refugee civic participation. It's OK to start small, try different approaches, and learn as you go.

# Tools You Can Use



## Sample Survey of Refugee Seniors

**How You Can Use This Tool:** Your organization can use this survey to make an initial assessment of the different ways that seniors might want to get involved. You could hand it out as a written survey or have volunteers fill it out with seniors.

**Instructions:** Here is a list of ways that older people participate in or help their communities. Please check ways that you might be interested in helping others.

This does not require you to participate. We just want to know your interest. Check all that apply.

- Helping other elders
- Helping neighbors
- Helping recently arrived immigrants or refugees
- Helping to organize a cultural event
- Helping to teach children or other adults
- Participating in an ESL or citizenship class
- Helping at a community organization
- Helping at your church, temple or mosque
- Volunteering to serve on a committee or a board
- Donating money or items to charity/non-profit organization
- Helping to improve services and benefits for immigrants and refugees (Examples: Talking to community organizations, meeting with agency officials, etc.)
- Taking part in rallies or protest
- Voting
- Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

*If you are already helping your community, please describe what you do:*

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**

# Tools You Can Use



## Sample Asset-Based Needs Assessment Focus Group Questions

**How You Can Use This Tool:** Your organization can use this guide to conduct a focus group with refugee elders.

### Introduction

Hello and thank you for coming. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I am from X (name of organization).

Today, I would like to ask you some questions about the roles of older people in your community and your ideas and experience in participating in the community and helping other people. This is a discussion group called a “focus group.” This is not a test or a request for you to participate in a program or activities. We are not interested in immigration status and I will not ask any questions about this topic. This is an opportunity for you to share your ideas, opinions and experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. You do not need to answer any questions that you don’t want to answer. Every opinion is valued and no one will be criticized for expressing an opinion that is different from other people’s opinions.

I thank you all for sharing your ideas and opinions. Do you have any questions about this group discussion?

### Sample Focus Group Questions

1. If you feel comfortable, please introduce yourselves. What is your name? Where were you born? How long have you lived in the U.S.?
2. Please describe the kinds of activities that you now participate in through X (name of your organization). These can be educational classes, social activities, recreation programs or other types of activities.
3. Do you participate in activities at other places? If so, can you describe? (e.g. programs at other agencies, religious institutions, informal social gathering, etc.)
4. I’d like to learn about how you or people you know help your community. Can you describe types of things you or other elders do to help your community? What do you do and why do you do it?

(If no answer, share some examples.....”Some people may be helping their neighbors or recently arrived refugees...Some people may be giving money or offering help to their church, mosque or temple. Some people may be concerned about certain issues in the community and trying to address them. Or there may be other things you and others do to help their families and communities”....)

5. I would like to learn about (X – name of their native country.)

What are the roles and responsibilities of elders in your home country?

What did you do in your home country to help others?

Is there a word in X (the native language) to describe these types of activities? In English, it can be “community service,” “volunteering” or “community organizing.”

6. Are there things you want to do more in the community? What are the challenges/difficulties for doing that?

7. It seems like there are many things you are already doing or you are interested in doing in the community. (Summarize some of the activities participants described.) How can an organization like X (name of organization) help you do that? Any advice for organizations that want to support your community involvement?

Is there anything you’d like to add?

**Thank you for your participation.**

# Tools You Can Use



## Sample Organizational Capacity Assessment: For Refugee Elder Civic Participation Efforts

### What is Our Experience Working with Refugee Seniors?

1. Does our organization currently have a program targeted to refugee seniors, such as a senior wellness program or a meal program?  
 Yes     No
  
2. Does our organization have other programs – not targeted to seniors – but in which seniors participate, such as a social services program or a literacy program?  
 Yes     No
  
3. Overall, how frequently does our organization come into contact with refugee seniors?  
 Frequently     Sometimes     Rarely
  
4. To what extent are refugee seniors involved in leadership positions within your organization – for example, in serving on program or community advisory boards or as active volunteers?  
 Frequently     Sometimes     Rarely
  
5. Do we know refugee elders who are leaders in the community with whom we could meet to discuss ideas for a refugee elder civic participation effort?  
 Yes     No     Note Sure

*Your Responses:* If you answered “Yes” and “Frequently” to most of these questions, your organization is well-positioned to engage seniors at a deeper level.

*Reflection Question:* What have we learned from our work with seniors about their needs, assets, and interests?

## What is Our Experience with Civic Participation?

6. Does our organization currently have an ongoing civic participation program, such as leadership program, a civic action committee, a community service project, or a civic education program?  
 Yes     No
  
7. If we do not have an ongoing program, have we engaged in any one-time only or periodic civic participation efforts, such as mobilizing the community to participate in the census, attend an important state budget hearing, or get-out-the-vote effort?  
 Yes     No
  
8. Overall, what is our organization's level of knowledge and experience with civic participation strategies?  
 High/Strong     Medium/Moderate     Low/Weak
  
9. Overall, what is the level of knowledge and experience with civic participation strategies among organization staff?  
 High/Strong     Medium/Moderate     Low/Weak
  
10. What is the level of *interest* among staff in developing civic participation strategies?  
 High/Strong     Medium/Moderate     Low/Weak

*Your Responses:* If you answered “Yes” and “High/Strong” to most of these questions, your organization is well-positioned to develop a structured civic participation effort for refugees.

*Reflection Question:* What have we learned from our civic participation work to date? What works and what are the challenges?

# Tools You Can Use



## Sample Activity For Mapping Civic Participation in Your Community

**Purposes of the Activity:** 1) To help learners become familiar with civic participation activities and organizations in their own community, 2) To introduce learners to civic participation vocabulary, and 3) To provide an opportunity for learners to practice this vocabulary through conversations with their neighbors and co-workers.

**Time Required:** Two one-hour class discussions

**Materials Needed:** Vocabulary List, Take-Home Assignment, Newsprint

### Important Civic Participation Terms...

**Advocacy** – Speaking up for people and the issues that affect them by supporting or opposing a cause, idea, action, or policy.

**Civic Participation or Engagement** – Joining with others to carry out activities that solve problems and benefit everyone in a local community or a nation.

**Community Organizing** – Bringing together the people affected by an issue or problem to identify a solution, develop an action plan, and then work toward that common goal.

**Public hearing** – A meeting held by a government board, commission, or city council that is open to the public. Community members can offer their input on an issue through giving **testimony** at a hearing.

**Rallies, marches, protests, vigils** – These are all activities where community members gather together in a public space to express their support or opposition to an issue or government action.

**Volunteering** – Offering your time and talents, without pay, to help your neighbor or to help a particular group or organization that serves the community.

## **Part I: Preparing for Take-Home Assignment**

To prepare the learners to complete their take-home assignment, first generate a classroom discussion to familiarize learners with civic participation concepts and vocabulary.

1. Ask learners to pair up and discuss the following: What does civic participation mean to them? Share 1-2 two experiences they had in their home country with civic participation.
2. Then, as a full class, come up with a definition of civic participation and share examples.
3. Next review the take-home assignment and the vocabulary list to make sure students are clear on the assignment.

## **Part II: Take-Home Assignment**

Explain to the learners that this assignment will require them to have conversations in English with several people they know. Instruct them to:

1. Choose 2-3 people you know who you think will be comfortable answering questions. You could pick a neighbor, someone you work with, or someone from your place of worship. Try to find someone who is not a member of your ethnic community.
2. Ask each one of these people if you could speak with them for about 15 minutes to ask them some questions about *civic participation*.
3. Conduct a short interview with each person. Start the interview by stating: “I am doing a homework assignment for my class. We are learning about civic participation and I’d like to ask you some questions about your experience with civic participation.”

You can also work with the learners to create their own questions. Possible questions might include:

- What does civic participation mean to you?
- Have you ever been involved in any organizations or activities to help the community and solve community problems?
- If you have, can you tell me about the organization and activity and how you were involved?

## **Part III: Creating a Civic Participation Map**

Once the learners have completed their assignment, have them share and discuss what they found by creating a civic participation map. Put several sheets of newsprint on the wall. Draw a rough map of your community. Ask the learners to come up to the map and list all of the different types of organizations and activities that they heard about. If the organization or activity takes place in a particular neighborhood, they can place it in that neighborhood on the map.

Once all the learners have shared their lists, have a discussion about what they found. Possible questions you could ask include:

- Are people in your community involved in civic participation?
- Which civic participation activities and organizations would you like to get involved with?
- How are the civic participation activities you heard about similar to or different from ones from your home country?

Keep your “map” on the wall and learners can add to it throughout the year as they discover new civic participation opportunities in the community!

# Tools You Can Use



## ***Small Group Activity:*** **Building A Shared Vision for Refugee Elder Civic Participation**

### **Instructions:**

1. Work in small groups. First, agree on roles: choose a **facilitator**, to coordinate the work of the group and also participate; a **recorder**, to record the work of the group; a **reporter** who will prepare to report to the large group; and a **timekeeper**.
  
2. Once in your small group, each participant should take a couple of minutes to think individually about the following questions:
  - a. What are all the different ways that refugee elders currently involved in civic life in your community (city or county)?
  
  - b. What would “full civic participation” look like? In other words, where and how would members of the refugee community be involved?
  
  - c. What would be different if refugee elders were fully involved - What would be the benefits to refugee elders? Their families? The broader community?
  
  - d. What are the barriers or obstacles to increasing civic participation among refugee elders?
  
2. The facilitator should go around in “round robin” fashion and ask each participant to share one response to each question, so that all member of the group have a chance to share their ideas.
  
3. As a group, discuss and agree on your most important responses to each of the four questions. The recorder should summarize your responses on newsprint and the reporter should be prepared to share your group’s most important responses.

**You have 30 minutes for this activity.**

# Tools You Can Use



## Refugee Elder Civic Participation Project A Planning Work Sheet

### PART I

**Goals:** What are 2-3 goals or measurable outcomes you would want to achieve through this project?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Possible Activities:** What are 2-3 possible activities that you might want to carry out to meet your goals? (e.g., workshops, training, community forums)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Resources:** What resources do you already have and what additional resources might you need to start and sustain your project? (Think about people, space, materials, curriculum, etc.)

Already Have:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Need:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## PART II

**Challenges/Barriers:** What challenges or barriers will you face?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Steps to Address the Challenges/Barriers:** What steps could you take to address the challenges/barriers? What kind of help will you need? Who can help you?

1.

2.

3.

**Partners:** What other organizations or institutions would you want to partner with and what would their role be?

1.

2.

3.