

20th June 2019

Standing in solidarity with refugees

On World Refugee Day Initiatives of Change, the international charity committed to building trust across the worlds divides, is calling for people to expand their empathy, to learn, read and expose themselves to counter-stereotype images of refugees.

Paul Gutteridge, National Director at Initiatives of Change, said: “We are asking for compassion to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict and persecution. According to recent data from the UN, more than 70 million people are fleeing conflict and oppression globally. Children make up half of that figure. That’s one in every 108 people. Despite these alarming figures the number of resettlement offers are half of what they were last year. Refugees should be seen as a resource and a potential rather than as a burden or threat”.

In celebration of World Refugee Day, Initiatives of Change is hosting an event on 26th June at their head office and conference centre, 24 Greencoat Place, London. Speakers include;

- Professor David Cantor - Founding director of the Refugee Law Initiative
- Atur Dr. Yehoesahfaht Ben Israel - Principal envoy to European African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem
- Helia Lopez - Sociologist and Lecturer at Oxford University
- Saeed Abdelrahman- Chief Operating Officer Ethar Relief
- Gulwali Passarlay - Co-founder and Director of My Bright Kite
- Joseph Ogbonna -Director of Ruuvand Ltd
- Mrs. Mona Mahmoud - Communities officer at Safe Passage International and campaigner for Social justice.
- Dr. Helia Lopez- Sociologist and Independent Researcher

The panelists will come together to discuss and debate why migration and the refugee crisis continues to dominate the political agenda causing fear, populist rhetoric, hatred and division in communities.

Head of the Sustainable Communities Programme, Amina Khalid, said: “A new and positive narrative is emerging to counteract the disunity, mistrust and conflict of our nation. Our panel of speakers will respond creatively to the wider debate and look at what role each one of us can play in changing the narrative. We also have an evening of food from across the globe and performances from the The Nile Youth-Ugandan dance group”.

Initiatives of Change has a long history working with refugees and people of Diaspora. In 2018 Refugees as Rebuilders™, a new and unique training programme, was launched by Rt Hon Tom Brake MP. The programme focuses on ethical governance, social cohesion and the environment. The course aims to empower settled refugees to contribute to rebuilding their countries of origin by giving them access to knowledge and skills regarding nation-building that they may not otherwise receive through academic studies or work experience.

Muna Ismail, Programme Manager and the force behind Refugees as Rebuilders™, said: “With a generous welcome and the right training, we can empower and help refugees contribute both to this country and also eventually to their country of origin. Its purpose is to strengthen the capability and expertise

Building trust across
the world’s divides

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participants already possess and to provide them with opportunities to explore, discuss and reflect on their own experience”.

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Notes to editors

World Refugee Day event: For more information please visit: <https://uk.iofc.org/celebrating-world-refugee-day-1>

When: 26 June 2019

Where: 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD

Time: 18:30 to 21:00

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/2KsQiFX>

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About Initiatives of Change:

- Active in over 60 countries, including the UK, Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a global movement and NGO dedicated to building trust across the world's divides.
- IofC encourages conscience-based decision-making that generates positive change across society, with its programmes centred on ethical leadership, sustainable living and trust-building.
- The UK team undertakes activities in the UK and around the world, in collaboration with other IofC national or regional bodies plus other partner organisations. Current programmes include:
 - Refugees as Re-Builders™, a training programme aimed at refugees who want help contribute to the rebuilding of their country of origin. Subjects include dialogue facilitation, ethical leadership and sustainable livelihood.
 - Creators of Peace, which has been empowering women to be radical peace-builders and powerful agents for positive change within their own communities since 1991. Its workshop and conference-based activity addresses the roots of conflict, providing tools to build bridges of forgiveness across racial, religious and social divides.
 - A national Sustainable Communities programme, formed in 2012 in response to the UK riots of August 2011. The work focuses on strengthening community initiatives and providing practical support that equips people in disadvantaged areas to become agents of change.