



Module 4 – Integration of refugee youth and participants with special needs

Attending a farm visit can provide particular benefits for teachers who educate pupils with difficulties in mainstream learning systems. Classes including children and youth with special educational needs (e.g. refugees, children with migrant background, and children with learning disabilities or social problems) can benefit from outdoor learning experiences that are often different from the experiences which are gained in a conventional learning environment.

Farm officers, teachers and the staff of service agencies who work with refugee children and handicapped pupils must have a basic knowledge of intercultural behaviours and communication. The module will give practical hints and tools for farm visits with these target groups and present best practice examples as to how the experiences and learning opportunities for different refugee target groups and participants with handicaps can be organised to support their specific needs.



What is the goal of this module?

- Unit 1. To describe the refugee and special educational needs target groups.
- Unit 2. To describe the different requirements and approaches to integrating these target groups.
- Unit 3. To present good practice examples to show how farm visits can be organised for the different target groups.

After finishing this module I will have learnt....

1. a basic knowledge about intercultural behaviours.
2. a basic knowledge about the intercultural requirements and special needs which must be considered when planning and running farm visits.
3. good practice examples of successful projects with farm visits for the different target groups.

Unit 1 – Organic farms and integrating of disadvantaged youth



In this unit I will:

1. learn about the benefits of organic farm visits as an educational tool for the integration of disadvantaged youth.
2. learn how to organize organic farm visits for learners with special educational needs.
3. be informed about best practice examples for implementing organic farm visits for better integration of disadvantaged youth.

Introduction into the topic:

This topic introduces the concept of organic farm visits as an educational tool for disadvantaged learners. It also examines the requirements of different disadvantaged young people (e.g. various mental or physical handicaps) and what has to be taken into consideration when participants with handicaps visit an educational farm. Finally, the unit presents best practice examples and shows how organic farm experiences and their associated learning opportunities can be used to support learners and their educational needs.



Chapter 1 – Learning on organic farms

- Lesson 1 – Organic Farm visits offer an innovative outdoor learning space
- Lesson 2 – Recognising different mental or physical handicaps
- Lesson 3 – Special education within the education systems of Europe

Lesson 1 – Organic Farm visits offer an innovative outdoor learning space

Going on a visit to an organic farm offers particular benefits to those individuals who sometimes struggle in mainstream education. Groups of children and young people with special educational needs; such as those **with learning disabilities** or those at **risk of exclusion from mainstream education**, can often benefit from learning in a new environment



Educational farm visits and workshops provide an **important and innovative space** that enables informal and formal learning to take place alongside the more conventional school learning environment. The nature-related and practice-based approach creates new possibilities for teaching children by new methods with **practical and non-cognitive elements**. But maybe more important, these farm visits and workshops offer big potentials for the **integration of disadvantaged youth**.

Young people and their parents are increasingly disconnected from the farms that produce their food. A farm visit can help bridge this gap in understanding, with the knowledge gained helping to positively influence eating habits. This in turn can improve health and well-being, thus having a positive impact upon wider societal / economic sectors; potentially leading to more sustainable development within society.

Organic Farms are ideal for teaching. In particular, they offer a **comprehensive outdoor learning space**. They are a good real-world, practical and sensory model for sustainable agriculture. Also, there is a close connection to the school curricula and learning offers will fit well into the worldwide concept of „education for sustainable development“ (ESD). Teachers and educators can find in Bio-Farm life various links and experience areas, where they can **complete and deepen the knowledge acquired in the schools** for subjects like biology, geography, economics, ecology and environmental protection, sustainability.

Attending a farm visit brings particular benefits for teachers, who educate **pupils with difficulties in mainstream learning systems**. Classes including children and youth with special needs (e.g. children with developmental disorders, learning disabilities or social problems, children with migrant background) get intensive and new experience for the group apart from conventional patterns of learning and competing in classrooms. Visits on Bio-farms can support teachers in integrating those children and young people.



Visits of organic farms offer special possibilities for teachers and educators. Hands on experiences on farms do not only build up knowhow and motivation but also promote fine motor skills, creative ability, they reduce psychosomatic symptoms, boost self-confidence, farm visits develop and improve a lot of different skills.

Lesson 2 – Recognising different mental or physical handicaps

Education of pupils with **special educational needs (SEN)** is an integral part of the European education system.

Support for these children aims at stimulating pupils' psychological and physical development and enhancing the effectiveness of learning. It is intended to correct disorders, reduce gaps in the knowledge or skills to be acquired within the framework of a curriculum, and eliminate causes and symptoms of disorders, including behavioural disorders. It is



crucial to prepare children and young people for life as full members of society (within the family, local community and labour market) by ensuring, through special methods, the most comprehensive development of pupils within their potential.



In order to ensure the effectiveness of psychological and educational support, it is necessary first to identify properly the pupil's needs and then to provide the most suitable types and methods of support which will indeed bring the expected effects.

In general, the following **pupils and students** are defined as those with **special educational needs**:

- with long-term illness,
- with physical disability,
- with specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dysorthography),
- with speech impairment,
- with trauma-induced emotional and behavioral difficulties,
- who are experiencing repeated educational failures,
- who are experiencing community negligence relating to their family's welfare, quality of spare time activities and community socializing,
- who are experiencing adaptation difficulties resulting from cultural differences or a different educational background,
- who are socially maladjusted and at risk of being so.

Lesson 3 – Special education within the education systems of Europe

All pupils who require assistance due to individually identified developmental and educational needs are eligible to receive support. **Special education** is intended for children and young people with disabilities (physically disabled, incl. aphasia, intellectually disabled, blind, visually impaired, deaf, hearing impaired, autistic, incl. Asperger syndrome, with multiple impairments), with social maladjustment or at risk of social maladjustment who require special organization of teaching and learning processes and working methods.

Special education is an **integral part of most of the education systems** in Europe. This is reflected in the legislation, which is common to both mainstream and special education. Special education may be provided in mainstream and special settings – mainstream schools, integration schools and classes or in special schools and residential special schools. It can be also provided, as in the case of all pupils/students, in the form of individualized teaching when their health prevents school attendance.

Special education applies the same teaching methods as mainstream education, although more **emphasis is placed on individual work with each pupil**. While teachers are free to choose specific methods and forms of work as well as teaching resources, they are required to apply some crucial principles of special education (e.g. the need to adjust teaching activities to abilities and needs of pupils and to existing circumstances, the need to increase the level of difficulty gradually, the need to use demonstration and example in the teaching process).

Chapter 2 – Special educational needs and farm visits

- Lesson 1 – The organisation of learning for pupils with special educational needs
- Lesson 2 – Needs according to different handicaps
- Lesson 3 – Conclusions

Lesson 1 – The organisation of learning for pupils with

special educational needs

In general, pupils with special educational needs **learn together with other pupils** either in mainstream schools/nursery schools, integration schools/nursery schools (where all classes/groups are integration classes/groups) or in integration classes in mainstream schools/nursery schools (where classes are either integration or mainstream classes).

Special schools (including residential schools), special education and care centers (with boarding facilities and extended rehabilitation programs) and special sections in mainstream schools are established for pupils who have a written statement recommending special education and whose parents have decided in favor of attendance of this type of school/section.

Depending on the special educational needs and type of disability, pupils with disabilities attend special nursery schools, special primary schools, special lower secondary schools, basic vocational schools and schools preparing for employment, or special general and technical upper-secondary schools.

A school with integration classes has to employ **additional “supporting” teachers** qualified in special education. “Supporting” teachers work also individually with disabled pupils, teaching them various educational techniques, e.g. the Braille alphabet or sign language.

Lesson 2 – Needs according to different handicaps

Lesson 2 in the former chapter showed that disadvantaged young people can have **various mental or physical handicaps**. These different handicaps have to be considered when planning and preparing a visit of an organic farm.

Disadvantaged youth with physical handicaps have **very different practical needs**. An important aspect is the providing of “accessibility” and “freedom from barriers”. Examples are hard cover paths and special toilets for wheel chairs users etc.

Beside these physical requirements and needs a special focus should be made **on behaviour and communication issues**. Teachers, farm guides and farmers have to consider these **special communication needs**, especially for mentally disabled youth. Explanations and teaching units have to be adapted to the special needs of these target groups. Lectures have to be kept simple, whilst the teaching rhythm must fit with their reception skills and the language and contents should meet their interests and power of concentration.

Lesson 3 – Conclusions

- Farm visit brings **particular benefits** for teachers, who educate pupils with difficulties in mainstream learning systems
- Bio-Farms are ideal for teaching and can provide a **comprehensive outdoor learning space**.
- Hands on experiences on farms do not only build up motivation, but also promote the use of fine motor skills and creative ability, whilst also boosting self-confidence.
- Disadvantaged young people can have **various mental or physical handicaps**.
- Disabled pupils with physical handicaps have very different practical needs. An important aspect is the providing of “**accessibility**” and “**freedom from barriers**”.
- Beside these physical requirements and needs a special focus should be laid on **behavior and communication issues**.
- Teachers, farm guides and farmers have to consider **special communication needs**, especially for mentally disabled youth.

Chapter 3 – Best practice examples

- Lesson 1 – “The Farm Project” of Abbey Home Farm in the United Kingdom



Lesson 1 – “The Farm Project” of Abbey Home Farm in the United Kingdom

The Abbey Home Farm is located in Gloucestershire, in 50 km distance of Bristol and managed by Will and Hilary Chester-Master. The 650-hectare organic farm is registered by Soil Association and hosts regular educational visits and farm walks. With their “**Farm Project**” they gained interesting experience with **visits of disadvantaged children**.



More information: <http://www.theorganicfarmshop.co.uk/farm>

The Farm Project hosts up to one week long residential visits for children and young people from all walks of life. In July 2015 The Farm Project CIC was established at Abbey Home Farm.

Hilary Chester-Master reports some lessons from her experience with these visits.



“It is important is to choose **the right size of the visiting group**! Hilary works with groups of up to 10 from disadvantaged communities for close mentoring and support, doing real practical jobs on the farm. If the group is too big an adequate care and support is not possible, and the visitors do not benefit. Furthermore, the farmer or farm guide can be overburdened to give individual counseling “.

Feedback by Janet Ackrill, Learning & Intervention Manager, Dorcan Academy

“The year 7 and 8 SEN (pupils with special educational needs) and Pupil Premium children were primarily students with self-confidence, anxiety, and social skills difficulties. The small group of six children meant that the children opened up about their experiences in a way that they felt unable to do within a whole class, or large group environment.



We saw visible differences in the students as their time on the farm progressed. We saw **growth in confidence**, and an **improvement in social skills**. The children bonded together with both their room partners and their working groups and the farm activities allowed for invaluable opportunities for team work. They showed amazing perseverance, which was rewarded with success, and a lot of fun and laughter.

This trip gave the opportunity for positive learning in a wonderful environment which is relaxed and lead by a thoroughly dedicated team at the farm.”

Source: <http://www.thefarm.education/case-studies>

Feedback by Lisa Green, Clifton Green Primary School

“We visited for the second time in 12 months with 10 year 6 students. CG is in an area of high deprivation with many of children entitled to FSM. Many of our children may never get the opportunity to visit places outside of York which is why visiting The Farm Project is such an important part of our school year.

The visit is a chance for the children **to become independent** and to learn **how to work as a team**. The fact that it is a residential allows time to bond and get to know each other and to rely on each other. Educationally the farm provides the entire curriculum in a practical hand on way. The small group size really allows for each child to have a fulfilling experience. The range of activities allows the children to take ownership of the farm for a week. They take their jobs very seriously and feel a great responsibility towards the animals and each other.



The experience helped the children overcome anxieties around some of the animals. Many of the children tasted many new foods which they have not had the chance to do before. The children developed their knowledge of self-care and



became more independent as the week went on."

Source: <http://www.thefarm.education/case-studies>

Feedback by Sharon Batcock, Curriculum Leader, Gloucestershire College

"We visited the Farm Project with a varied group of students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) from Gloucestershire College was a challenge for all involved.

The team at The Farm Project was amazing, so open to questioning and eager to make the stay the best experience for the students. It is refreshing to work with people who are able to see the benefits for the students and who do not see the SEND first and foremost. The ethos of the project is so flexible and relaxed that all of the students came away having had a good experience.

For the college the amalgamation of the skills taught throughout the year that was able to be put into practice in a working environment was key. The additional soft skill learning that took place was second to none.

I would totally recommend The Farm Project for experiential learning and development of **independence living skills** in the sector or SEND within education and for groups of a recreational nature. Positive learning in a positive environment which is relaxed and lead by individualized learning."

Source: <http://www.thefarm.education/case-studies>

Lesson 2 – Curative education school at the Schlüterhof in Germany

The farm **Schlüterhof** near Lüneburg hosts students with care needs, who attend the **Heilpädagogische Hofschule in Wendisch-Evern**. Here the school takes place on the farm. On the basis of Waldorf education, the farm school enables children and young people with special educational needs to learn and live through practical work with nature on a **bio-dynamic farm**.



More information: <http://www.waldorf-lueneburg.de/index.php/news.108.html>

While there are "normal" children who come to the farm in the course of school trips, there are children at the A group of nine children started in September 2007. The integrative school is a funding school of the Rudolf Steiner School Lüneburg. At present, 38 pupils are taught from the first to the seventh grade.

The farm is located in a village, where there are neither shopping nor a village cross. Andrea and Jürgen Schlüter have inherited the farm grounds. In order to set up their farm school, they invited the whole village to their home to present their idea and the project and **to inspire local residents** - with the result that the project receives broad support and is supported on all sides.

Like other examples this project is an anthroposophical initiative. The fact that bio-dynamically working farms play a pioneering role in **"social agriculture"** is not surprising. Rudolf Steiner's pedagogical and agricultural courses were held in close succession, and many biodynamic farm communities have been involved in the integration of people with disabilities for decades.

The development in Norway shows how the education of schools and farms can be developed. Linda Jolly, a horticultural teacher, has been involved in numerous projects and initiatives since the 1980s, for example the **"Living School" project**, Agricultural University of **Norway in Ås**, has published several analyses and reports about the development in Norway (see unit 2, chapter 3, lesson 55).



Lesson 3 – Rural Project at the Stanisław Karłowski Foundation in Poland

In the diverse cultural landscape of Western Pomerania in North-West Poland, the **village project Juchowo-Radacz-Kądzelnia** was organized more than 10 years ago by the **Stanisław Karłowski Foundation**. There, a number of families from Central and Western Europe, with a great deal of pioneer spirit and competence, worked together with Polish workers to build a farm which operates according to the principles of biodynamic farming.

The village project creates new impulses for the development of agricultural regions in Central and Eastern Europe. It does so in close cooperation with biodynamic agriculture and associated aspects such as research, education and training, social therapy, and the formation of social life.

More

information: <http://www.software-ag-stiftung.de/en/themes/natural-resources/featured-projects/projects/the-jucho-wo-village-project-diverse-activities-in-agriculture>

Activities in the areas of **education and social therapy** are developed and realized in close cooperation with biodynamic agriculture as a part of the village project. The educational initiative includes, today, a holiday school in which children and adolescents can participate in creative workshops, as well as diverse activities for school classes from Poland and Germany in the form of agricultural internships and nature experiences on the farm. The nature education programs for schools and kindergartens in the region also enjoy enormous popularity.



The most recently started project **involves social therapeutic work** undertaken in cooperation with six facilities in the region. At the moment, a total of 62 individuals from cooperating institutions take turns working on the farm, for example creating syrups and herbal elixirs; packaging herbs and other products; collecting wild herbs; assisting in the herb and fruit gardens; working in the drying plant; caring for the plants on the foundation's premises; and work in the kitchens. More workshops and residential opportunities for people with disabilities will be created locally in the medium term.

Since 2010 on the Juchowo farm within the framework of occupational therapy are conducted **actions with the disabled people** from the region with the aim to stimulate their professional and social activity. The farm offers great opportunities for integration and collaboration with people with disabilities.

The activities of the therapeutic laboratory are covered by adults with various mental disorders. During whole year these people participate in **occupational therapy workshops** in their hometowns, and in the high season, from April to October, they come in groups (10-20 persons) to the farm. These groups change every two weeks.

People with disabilities are involved in the work of the herbal garden. Their tasks include:

- cultivating herbs, medicinal plants and spices from planting to harvesting;
- collection of herbs and medicinal plants from fields and forests;
- help in the dryer by drying and sorting herbs;
- collection of raspberries;
- help in the production of juices, fruit syrups and herbal extracts.

People with disabilities have felt good in Juchowo farm; they were interested in several working places. Therefore, new forms of activity were created: caring for calves, planting hedges, helping in kitchens, harvesting of carrots, beetroots.



As a result of systematic training in the workplace, there were employed with permanent contract seven persons with intellectual disability and mental disorders. Disabled people, who are coming to us within the framework of occupational therapy, also participate in a variety of traditional ceremonies celebrated on the farm: Saint John's Eve, Harvest Festival, Advent, Christmas, Easter etc.

All people who work with the Foundation **feel valued and needed** on a daily basis on the farm. They found their place here.



Lesson 4 – Putti-Hof in Austria “Green Care - Where people flourish”

Under the motto "living, learning and working in harmony with nature", the **Putti-Hof** in Buchkirchen near Wels (Upper Austria) offers a wide range of social-educational experiences for children, adolescents and adults with and without disabilities. For this commitment, the family business of Heike and Andreas Purtscheller was awarded as the first “**Green Care**” certified farm in Upper Austria. For “**animal-based education on the farm**” the farm received the award “ÖKL-Hoftafel”.



More information: <http://www.zebrua.at>

In September 2011, the family founded the private childcare “**Nature children in the garden at Putti-Hof**”. In this care, life in the annual cycle with nature, for example, the planting, grooming, harvesting and processing of vegetables or by the correct handling of animals in the context of the “Animal-Assisted Pedagogy”, is passed on to the younger generation. The peasant woman Heike Purtscheller is a pedagogue, has passed the ÖKL certification for the “Animal-Assisted Pedagogy”, a Waldorf education course and the LFI certificate course “Schule am Bauernhof”. The farm cooperates with teachers of Caritas St. Elisabeth.

For people with disabilities, there is the opportunity to participate in skill-based activities based on a colorful daily structure. Depending on their interests, they can help, for example, in the repair shop, in the garden or in the barn, and develop a healthy sense of self-worth. This is where “**Animal-Assisted Pedagogy**” flows in.



For example, traumatized adolescents can often **rebuild trust in people** through contact with animals. Furthermore, adolescents with dual diagnoses (for example mental and cognitive impairment) are prepared for everyday work by work in the field of agriculture. For adolescents in difficult situations, there is a time-sensitive training course with a sensitive emergency pedagogy. Seminars and workshops for people with and without disabilities take place on a variety of topics, such as dairy farming or teambuilding.

With the project “**Green Care - Where people flourish**”, agricultural and forestry enterprises become partners in the social, health, education and economic systems. In cooperation with social welfare organizations and institutions, the farm becomes a place of work, education, health and life and offers a variety of services and services for young and older people, persons with disabilities, physical and mental stress. The focus is on the interaction between human, animal and nature. The association Green Care Austria form together with nine chambers of agriculture a competence center.



Source: <http://www.zebrua.at/>

Activities of Putti-Hof:

- Child care 3-13 years
- Learning support for children from 6 years;
- Farm subscription for children 3-13 years;
- "School on the farm" for kindergartens, schools and as a training for pedagogues on topics in the annual cycle;
- Animal-based education on the farm in individual and group settings; Day structure for people with disabilities for workshops with skill-oriented activity;
- Work training and preparation for young people with mental and / or cognitive impairment in agriculture;
- Emergency pedagogy for young people;
- Seminars and workshops for people with and without disabilities on various topics;
- Agricultural internship for pupils, students and interested people;



Lesson 5 – Wald am See - "Animal-Assisted Pedagogy" in Austria

The **organic farm "Wald am See"** is located in Kitzbühel directly on the Schwarzsee (a designated nature reserve) and covers 17 ha, of which about 12 ha are grassland and 5 ha forest. The farm is nestled in the fields and the forest overlooking the lake. A side street leads to the courtyard and to the houses behind.

This Tyrolean organic farm is run as a branch office of a special education school. Since the school year 2014/15, the Federal Ministry of Education, Art and Culture has been carrying out the school experiment "Animal-Assisted Pedagogy" for the General Special School in St. Johann i. Tyrol approved.



More information: <http://www.waldamsee.at/>

With the certification for the **"Animal-Assisted Therapy, Pedagogy and Social Work on the Farm"** (ÖKL) "Wald am See" is the first certified farm in Tyrol.

The offers as a Green Care diversification project ranges from "Animal-assisted education" and competence development, school on the farm, workshops, project days, farm holidays ... to meet animals, experience with nature and agriculture, as well as educational and recreational purposes.



Source: <http://www.waldamsee.at>

After the successful project "Every Monday a farm day", since the school year 2014/15 the pupils of the general special school in St. Johann i. T. 2 school days a week at the farm "Wald am See" instead of at school. Following on from the "animal-assisted units" with llamas, donkeys, sheep, ponies, etc., and the resulting increased attention, increased concentration and improved perception, reading, writing, arithmetic and more are also being used in the newly adapted premises learned, practiced and consolidated.

Exercises of daily life and everyday practical skills find space and time on these days. The habitat around the yard, the use of the trained and certified animals and the nature with its different cycles become the subject of the lesson and the classroom.

"Animal-assisted education" refers to the targeted use of farm animals for educational, therapeutic or social purposes. The farm offers a **holistic experience** which, in addition to intensive animal contact, also includes basic agricultural activities and processes in educational / therapeutic processes.



Source: <http://www.waldamsee.at>

Unit 2 – Farm visits and refugee intergration



In this unit I will:

1. learn how organic farm visits can support the integration of refugee youth.
2. receive some practical suggestions for implementing organic farm visits.
3. get to know best practice examples of implementing organic farm visits.



Introduction into the topic:

Farm guides and teachers who work with refugee groups must have a basic knowledge of the situation and different cultural backgrounds and needs of refugees. The unit gives overviews about the educational benefits to refugees when visiting organic farms and practical hints for the preparation and implementation of these activities. Ethnic, cultural and country-specific caused behaviors that might be in conflict with farm visit conditions should be known and considered. Furthermore, the unit presents diverse best practice examples of organic farm activities in several countries and the feedback of those teachers and farmers involved in the visits.

Chapter 1 – Education is the key to integrating refugees in Europe

- Lesson 1 – The “refugee crisis”
- Lesson 2 – Farm Visits to assist better access and integration

Lesson 1 – The “refugee crisis”

In 2015 Europe experienced the “refugee crisis” with hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing war and persecution in Syria and the wider Middle East and Africa. Transit and destination countries have experienced great challenges in managing the refugee flow. These challenges raise question of how to manage the situation beyond providing the basic need of food and shelter?



Source and more information:

Bodewig, Christian (2015). Education is the key to integrating refugees in Europe. Located at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2015/11/23/education-is-the-key-to-integrating-refugees-in-europe>

What is the definition of refugee?

According to the **Convention relating to the Status of Refugees**, held by world governments in Geneva in 1951, a refugee is someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." This definition includes people who have experienced persecution because of political beliefs or religious activities or because they are members of a particular ethnic group.

The **1951 Refugee Convention** and its **1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees** established the legal standards for refugee protection, and **143 states** have signed both. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1951, is the branch of the United Nations charged with the international protection of refugees.



More information: <http://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>

United Nations records show that more than half of all Syrian refugees are under the age of 18. If host countries are able to ensure quick access to quality education and training opportunities, they should hopefully be able to equip this young, but disadvantaged generation of refugees with the tools to succeed.

Some of the refugees – especially the children and young people - might come with **war trauma**, suggesting that schools need to offer psychological support. But beyond that, refugees will benefit from measures that make education systems more inclusive. The “Learning place Bio-Farm” has a great deal of potential to offer refugees new perspectives outside the mainstream school system.



Lesson 2 – Farm Visits as a chance for easier access and integration

In the Study “How do Children and Youth learn through Farm-School Cooperation?” Linda Jolly and Erling Krogh from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences analysed the benefits of farm visits in Norway, where several farm and school projects are working with visits of refugees.

Their experiences show a great deal of **benefits for the integration of refugee youth**. On farms where the farmers open their farm and become engaged in working with children and youngsters, refugee children can find an opportunity to rediscover some familiar elements from their mother country and perhaps demonstrate their skills and knowledge.



More Information: “How do Children and Youth learn through Farm-school Cooperation?” Linda Jolly, Erling Krogh, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

<http://www.skillebyholm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/101334.pdf>

Work tasks on the farm can provide an **opportunity for individuals to be seen in another way**, whilst also to making contact in spite of language barriers, as well as improving language skills. Just as the practical work inspires youngsters to write and tell about what they have done on the farm in their mother tongue, the refugee children also want to communicate in the language of the country they have come to. Learning words through sensory experience and achieving visible results is an important stimulus for language training.

Some of the young refugees, especially those who come alone without their families, have never been to school. Not only the language, but the whole idea of learning sitting still on a school bench, is foreign for them. There are examples of projects with farm work where the chance to contribute in a meaningful and visible way serves as **a bridge to a new country and a new way of life**.



The fact that the farm might provide a sense of recognisability from the home country might also stir up difficult emotions of longing. Furthermore, it might be difficult to communicate due to language barriers and difference in cultural backgrounds, which might lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, it is important that the staff is capable of handling such issues and it is often a good solution to cooperate with relevant NGO's or others who have experience with the target group.

The organic farm sector offers a lot of **low skill working opportunities**. This growing economic branch that needs motivated young people - drivers for the box delivery services, salesman, cooks, bakers etc. are needed to run the farm. Farm visits that show the different working opportunities on the farm can be the first incentive for youth refugees to think about organic farms as a working place.

Chapter 2 – Practical Considerations

- Lesson 1 – The status of refugee children
- Lesson 2 – Cooperation with refugee initiatives
- Lesson 3 – Conclusions and practical hints

Lesson 1 – The status of refugee children and its impacts

Target group of refugee and asylum-seeking children in Europe actually **consists of several sub-groups**, including:

- asylum seekers,
- recognised refugees,



- beneficiaries of subsidiary protection,
- persons with “tolerated stay”
- persons with a right of continued abode after several years of “tolerated stay”
- persons with other forms of regular stay (e.g. residence permit)
- persons with “irregular stay”.

These different statuses **imply very desperate life conditions and situations** and cause very different perspectives, expectation and motivations of the target groups for integration purposes. Persons with “irregular stay” live in a great uncertainty and may not be so motivated for long-term activities like recognised refugees.

Another aspect is the need of differentiation between refugee target groups according to war trauma and flight experiences. Refugees from conflict zones often continue to experience trauma from persecution, imprisonment, torture and resettlement as well as lack of food, water, and shelter for a long time. Thus, it is important to understand the **challenges of refugee families and persons engaged in integration activities**.

Psychological distress from war is harmful to refugee children and adults regardless of racial or cultural background. Refugees may experience a sense of helplessness and despair. The most common mental health issue for refugees is **post-traumatic stress disorder** and related symptoms of depression, anxiety, inattention, sleeping difficulties, nightmares, and survival guilt.

A further differentiation consideration has to be taken into account according to local, regional and national origins as well as to the **cultural and ethnic backgrounds** of refugee children and families.



[https://www.unicef.org/eca/Infograph_Child_Relocation_and_Asylum_02_11_16_\(002\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eca/Infograph_Child_Relocation_and_Asylum_02_11_16_(002).pdf)

Farm guides, farmers, teachers and NGO staff involved in organic farm visits should be informed about the **diverse background and experiences of refugees**, their living condition, and life situations, in order to find adequate ways of accessing the target groups and to create appropriate activities and support.

Organic farm visits are only helpful for the integration and support of these target groups if these different conditions are known and considered. Facing all these challenges and the communication between staff, youth and parents is a fundamental when preparing and implementing organic farm visits and activities.

Lesson 2 – Cooperation with refugee initiatives

With the growing number of refugees, many initiatives for support and assistance have been founded and established in EU countries, especially in Germany and the other countries most affected.

Many people established with these initiatives a “welcome culture” with a broad spectrum of activities such as:

- voluntary assistance and support for refugees
- welcome appointments
- accompaniment to official meetings
- language courses
- trips, city tours and museum visits

For the preparation and implementation of organic farm visits, **cooperation with local or regional refugee initiatives** can be very useful. They initiatives ease the access to an appropriate target group, can give information about the background, living condition and expectation of them, and can motivate young refugees to participate at activities on an organic farm. Additionally, they can help to solve bureaucratic challenges and possibly help with financial funding.

Lesson 3 – Conclusions and practical hints

Visiting the countryside **offers an inside into the European culture**, food practices and languages. Therefore, organic farm visits can support refugees of all ages, including children, families and adults. There are many incentives for individuals to learn new vocabulary that is connected to the countryside and agriculture community; and the farm



offers educational benefits that support the building of social relations, learning and self-confidence.

Many of the successful initiatives on those organic farms that are working with refugees, have a **close cooperation between NGO's**, such as the Red Cross, governmental organisations and the farm itself. Due to the difficult situation of the target group the best projects draw on experiences from a range of stakeholders.

Furthermore, there are several good examples of longer projects that offer a chance for individuals to work or volunteer on the farm **over a longer period of time**.

Some lessons from farmers' experience with visits:

- Refugees are hard to reach and best done through **support networks or groups**.
- Refugees can have **practical and emotional connections with farms** which can be positive. sometimes though, these connections can stir up unhappy memories or strong emotions of loss.
- It is important is to choose the **right size of the visiting group**!

Chapter 3 – Best practice examples of farm visits for refugees

- Lesson 1 – “The Farm Project” of Abbey Home Farm (UK)

Lesson 1 – “The Farm Project” of Abbey Home Farm (UK)

The Abbey Home Farm is located in Gloucestershire, in 50 km distance of Bristol and managed by Will and Hilary Chester-Master. The 650-hectare organic farm is registered by Soil Association and hosts regular educational visits and farm walks. With their “**Farm Project**” they gained interesting experience with **visits of refugee groups**.



More information: <http://www.theorganicfarmshop.co.uk/farm>

They worked together with the organization ‘**Victims of Torture**’ to host a group of refugees from London. They brought 5 refugees with director and musician to create a performance of their stories. They have also hosted groups from a refugee center in the local town of Swindon where young men came out to the farm on day visits. Another group has been to the farm for a respite stay or holiday. These refugees are mainly from Africa and the Middle East.



Hilary Chester-Master reported some lessons from her experience with this visit:

- Refugees are hard to reach and best done through **support networks or groups**.
- Refugees have **practical and emotional connections with farms** which are positive connection, but can stir up unhappy and strong emotions of loss.
- The farm is best used as a **platform for refugee groups** to use rather than completely farm led.



Refugees can be dealing with lots of issues that come to the surface and can place quite **a lot of emotional demands on the farm host**. The benefits of a safe space and a therapeutic opportunity to chat and on issues around farming are very good.



It is important is to choose the **right size of the visiting group**! Hilary had one organization who said they would send 17 young refugee men to stay which would not have been appropriate for the farm to deal with.



If the group is too big an adequate care and support is not possible, and the visitors do not benefit. Furthermore, the farmer or farm guide can be overburdened to give individual counseling and for close mentoring and support.



Lesson 5 – S.E.E.S – farm-based education at Avnstrup asylum center (DK)

S.E.E.S (= Social, Economic, Ecological, Sustainability) is a prototype of a farm-based educational initiative for asylum seekers at **Avnstrup asylum center**. It is cooperation between Chora Connection, the Red Cross and Gaia Education, that educates adult asylum seekers in sustainability and organic food production through gardening and farm visits amongst others. The project thereby aims at connecting the emergent need for refugee education and green transition.



Photo and more information: <https://gaiaeducation.org/project-based-learning/denmark-2017>

The project has been running in 2016 and 2017 and has educated 39 asylum seekers with different nationalities. The project is located at Avnstrup asylum center in the municipality of Lejre, 60 km outside of Copenhagen. The project is a prototype supported by the Danish Immigration Service.

The following case description is based on **interviews with the founders**, Karen Blincoe and Emil Blauert, and on the project's website: <http://choraconnection.dk/prototype/sees/?lang=en>

Teaching methods

According to the project founders, the project wishes to address some of the overall problems related to the disintegration between body and mind, food production and humans, as well as disintegration of the outside and inside of the asylum centers.



all photos: Chora Connection

The project therefore aims **to connect brain, heart and body through hands-on education** in sustainable development, using the surrounding society as its 'classroom'.

Through a six-week course, the participants are taught about **organic food systems, sustainability and entrepreneurship** through the combination of theoretical and practical teaching and relating this to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals.



As part of the course, the participants establish and/or maintain a garden, based on the principles of permaculture and visit organic farmers. While new knowledge is an important aim, the teachers are equally focused on identifying and supporting participant's own awareness of their strengths, and to build trust and confidence in themselves.

Many participants found the outdoor activities very valuable. Besides achieving new knowledge, the garden work also enhanced well-being and a feeling of togetherness and belonging. Working in the garden together supports the building of friendships across different cultures. It also provided recognizability and a way of escaping the challenges and worries of their current situations as asylum seekers.

"As a child I grew up on the countryside, so I am used to being around cows, sheep and so on. Being around the animals calms me, just like the flowers and plants. **Being in the nature gives you energy**" (Participant,



choraconnection.dk/prototype/sees/).



Since the climate in Denmark only allows a relatively short growing season, they are currently considering establishing growing-containers that will allow cultivation all year. Experiments with cultivation of mushrooms have been successful in other projects and these experiences can be drawn upon.

Collaboration with farmers

The participants also **visited local organic farmers as part of the teaching**. These meetings both served as inspiration and ways of bridging the theoretical teaching with practice. Through these visits, the participants are also introduced to the history of Denmark as a farming nation and some of the current challenges in the Danish farming sector.

The meetings also motivated the participants to start dreaming and look more optimistically at the future. Being able to learn something new and start looking ahead was an important relief for many participants after years of life as fugitives.

Many expressed a wish to work in organic farming in their future and felt very motivated to make a difference whether in Denmark or another future country.

To the farmers the project offered **important learning about how to open up their enterprise**, how to communicate about it and provided thoughts about how to integrate or cooperate with people with profiles that are not traditionally part of the farm.

The collaboration with the asylum center can thereby push reflections about how to modernize the business organization and become an interesting workplace for new professions or backgrounds.

According to the project founders, the project thereby connects the emergent need for refugee education and green transition and supports a perspective on refugees as resources rather than a burden.



At the end of the course, the participants are handed a **diploma to document their new skills and competences**.

More information: <http://choraconnection.dk/prototype/sees/?lang=en>

Advices for developing similar projects

Emil Blauert, co-founder of the project, explains that the best way to get started is to involve people who are close to practice and **develop a small-scale project** that can develop and grow as you go along. To start large-scale, national projects can be a slow and resource demanding process and therefore it is often better to develop local solutions – at least to begin with.

For this project, they identified relevant collaborators by making a brainstorming of the competences they needed and afterwards found people who could match these. They invited these possible collaborators to a workshop in which they developed and visualized the idea together. The visualization was important since it made the project concrete and practical, and thereby supported engagement and belief in the project.

Another important experience is **to emphasize the motivation of the project** – to be explicit about one's passion and thereby engage people and maintain the excitement.