Permaculture for Refugees
Nurturing new relationships between people and places

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P4R has held 5 (PDC) courses for refugees and camp managers in Bangladesh, Turkey, Greece and 2 courses for Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) in Iraq and Philippines. These courses provide a systemic approach to transformation - people and nature work together to address food, waste, energy and livelihood.
The objective of P4R is to transform refugee and IDP camps, and settlements globally, into integrated hospitable settlements and towns, where all can engage in productive activities and clean green environments improving both countries of settlement, and eventually the home countries of refugees.

To achieve this we have held a series of Permaculture Design Certification (PDC) courses to train refugees in the skills and techniques for raising their nutrition quality in gardens and animal husbandry, in community building and small-scale production units, in economic autonomy and alternatives to the market economy.
Project outcome

With shared accumulated experience in diverse settings the P4R teaching team brings first-hand knowledge about addressing **resilient systems** and **innovations in the learning process** with people-centered education tools. Our practice addresses the following:

1. **Why permaculture?**
   Permaculture provides an **appropriate response** to the needs of refugees, IDPs and host communities as a **sustainable and cooperative framework**. Non-formal educational methodologies found in permaculture are adaptable and suited to meet challenges such as mass migration, climate change, economic crises, etc.

2. **Why PDC courses for refugees?**
   The courses provide the **capacity for implementation** wherever they are hosted, as well as in their home countries when the possibility arises for them to return.

3. **What is the impact?**
   Courses are applicable, relevant and desirable in all the refugee situations we have covered, eg women, different cultures, religions newly arrived, long term refugees, illiterate and also for highly educated people.

4. **Concept prototype**
   A **coherent strategy** for refugees to take home **practical and realistic designs skills** in a participatory manner. These skills are relevant both in their countries of origin and of settlement.

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**Process and deliverables**

- **Why permaculture?**
  - Appropriate response
  - Adaptable and resilient
  - People and context specific

- **Why courses for refugees?**
  - Coherent strategy
  - Practical & realistic design skills
  - Capacity for implementation

- **What is the impact?**
  - Design principles
  - Near-future scenarios
  - Modification of harsh conditions
  - Reduction of violence

- **Concept prototype**
Inspights overview

**1. Assist refugees in managing confronting problems**
Support in responding to factors such as poor food, dangerous, harmful environments, lack of entity and self-actualization.

**2. P4R Conveys concepts and skills**
Start with a global concept which is then modified into a relevant skill.
For example: topic of water conservation and harvesting becomes a skill to storing water plants, animals, dams and soil.

**3. Assists in maintaining spiritual, mental and physical health**
Reduction of tensions between ethnic groups, reduction of violence and depression, and willingness to be more active and motivated. Gender differences become less pronounced.

**4. Transform degraded non-productive environments**
Healthy environments that are people-friendly, with gentle landscapes are especially important for children and their transition into adulthood.

**5. Monitoring and outcomes**
Local people, permaculturists and host communities continue with monitoring and follow-up work for six months after the training to assess the impacts of the teaching and then submit final reports.

**6. Participatory design**
Refugees are empowered by this training thanks to the innovative and participatory forms of learning to facilitate them towards sustainability and new creative answers for this rapidly changing world.

**7. Reframe educational strategies**
Use mutually respectful methodologies to guide individual facilitation/teaching styles. Radical change towards highly interactive techniques to engage the students with materials as much as possible. Esp necessary with language barriers

**8. Plan for flexibility**
Flexibility is a key factor in the success of any project teaching refugees. There are always challenges that are impossible to predict beforehand.
Assist refugees in managing confronting problems

Students work with each other and teachers on an equal basis. The course reframes the period of limbo in camps of enforced idleness and desperation to a time of learning and building relationships to land and each other.
Convey concepts and skills

Encourage the use of simple, low tech, and appropriate technologies found in nature to address the scarcity of resources in camps and settlements.
Assists in maintaining spiritual, mental and physical health

“Gardening and common knowledge address issues of isolation, mental health, and women’s empowerment in the communities in which we are active”.

Rosemary Morrow, Co Founder P4R, Australia
Transform degraded non-productive environments

“Civilians and the environment withstand the worst of the destructive forces in military conflicts. Meanwhile, the warring parties absorb very little of this cost.”

Afshin Mehrpouya, Associate Professor, HEC Paris Business School, Université Paris-Saclay
Monitoring and outcomes
Without monitoring and the opportunity to follow up, practical work does not embed itself into the camp and people.
Reframe educational strategies

“Adapt to an audience which is very different from the one that we are used to in western industrialized countries, where most people have experienced a formal educational process and the level of trauma is usually much less.”

Antonio Scotti, Co Founder P4R, Barcelona, Spain
Plan for flexibility
Expect the unpredictable

“We use diverse methodologies and feedback mechanisms which help to assess the relevance of the material to their lives”
Rosemary Morrow, Co Founder P4R, Australia
Recommendations for Good Practice

Generated through an evaluation process by 10 experts from the fields of education, permaculture design and sustainability, our advice comes from analyzing and fully understanding what went well and what was challenging, after teaching a course, in light of the initial planning.

- **Teacher training for refugees** to enable and empower them to expand the work in their communities.
- **Regional hubs of permaculture educators** with experience working with displaced people.
- **Establish guidelines** for healthy and safe working and learning conditions before initiating courses.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** by local experts following the courses.
- **Participatory design** of community-based projects help residents reclaim their community and refugees, artists, designers and architects become mediators and co-workers.
Design principles help to reframe negative thinking. Most permaculture principles can be apply equally to individual, social and environmental contexts allowing for more effective and healthy solutions which support sustainable lifestyles.

When looking into the design of possible environments, contexts and activities, design principles help to assess solutions and reduce needed resources.

Some key design principles which students value include:

- **catch and store energy**: apply to resource such as water.
- **apply self regulation and accept feedback**: self control allows us to be accountable and feedback helps us to improve our work and lives.
- **relative location**: critical element in design. For example, where to locate compost? Take into consideration exposure of sun, distance from kitchen etc.
- **integrate rather than segregate**: apply to resource such as water.
- **guild**: group of people living near each other & support each other. Also refers to plant species who are stronger together such as basil/tomato, carob/olive/grape.
Thank you

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