

Refugees as Experts

The Buddy-Meetings of Caritas Germany



What are the Buddy-meetings?

- Refugees who arrive in Germany through Resettlement spend their first two weeks in an initial reception center in the village of Friedland.
- Caritas Friedland and the German Caritas Association organize exchange meetings in which refugees who previously arrived through legal pathways act as Buddies for the new arrivals.
- The Buddies speak about their experience and answer questions of the new arrivals.
- The meetings are moderated by a policy officer of the project.
- Through a social media site, newly and previously arrived refugees can stay in contact afterwards.

Why were the Buddy-meetings developed?

- Refugees who arrived through Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission are the best experts: They experienced the reception process themselves, so they know what worked, what didn't, and what to expect from life in Germany. We want to benefit from this valuable experience and share it with new arrivals.



Why does it work?

- Refugees described the Buddy-meetings as very enriching. Through the Buddy's explanations, they could get a realistic impression of their new lives in Germany and of the important steps to take in the first months.
- The Buddies come from the same cultural background & have had similar experiences. This creates an intimate atmosphere in which new arrivals are more courageous in asking questions than in conventional counselling sessions. Refugees reported that the meetings took away their fears and motivated them.

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