



Royal Museums Greenwich Refugee Week Evaluation

Report submitted by Brunel University London



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Introduction

Royal Museums Greenwich (RMG) worked with Brunel University London to conduct a qualitative evaluation of RMG's Refugee Week Programme 2019.

The aim of this evaluation was to enhance understandings of how to engage refugee and asylum-seeking populations in wellbeing programming at the RMG. Participant observation was conducted at the National Maritime Museum during Refugee Week on the 20th and 22nd of June.

This report is split into four sections: *Section 1* provides a brief overview of the background and the project, *Section 2* describes the methods used, *Section 3* outlines the research findings, and *Section 4* presents the conclusions and recommendations.



Section 1: Background - Refugees and the Role of Museums

In the UK, a refugee is somebody who has been forced to flee their homeland and is given leave to remain in the country. An asylum-seeker is provided with temporary international protection while their claim for asylum is processed. If the claim is successful, they then gain refugee status and leave to remain. The categories of *asylum seeker* and *refugee* are distinct and significantly impact lived experiences and wellbeing; they are also heavily politicized and contested as they determine access to resources and legal status (Bakewell, 2008). But, for the purposes of this report, the word *refugee*, will be used as an overarching term to describe displaced populations currently residing in the UK.

With increasing numbers of refugees being re-settled in the UK, the wellbeing of these populations is an area of growing concern for policy makers, Governments, and academics. Wellbeing is a contested concept, but in the UK is commonly taken to mean how well we are doing as individuals, communities, and nations (Office of National Statistics, 2019). Wellbeing is influenced by multiple factors including our mental and physical health, what we do, social connections, education, where we live etc. (Office of National Statistics, 2019).

Refugee wellbeing is particularly complex as it is shaped through pre-flight, transit, and re-settlement experiences (Brough et al. 2003; Porter & Haslam, 2005). Many displaced persons arrive in the UK experiencing poor wellbeing as a result of family separation, violence and persecution, long periods of time spent in refugee camps, malnourishment and poverty etc. (Brough et al. 2003;).

Arriving in a new country is often optimistically positioned as a safe haven and the final stage in a refugees journey (Pain & Hopkins, 2008); however, there is growing evidence that this resettlement context can have as equally as negative impact on wellbeing (Porter & Haslam, 2005). Upon arrival in the UK, refugees typically experience intersecting and negative determinants of their wellbeing which are exacerbated through punitive asylum policies, experiences of discrimination, challenges in accessing institutions, English language learning, disruption of social networks, and poverty. Poor refugee wellbeing and inadequate integration outcomes are often positioned as a threat to social cohesion and a drain on social services (Cheng & Phillimore, 2017). As such, there is increased public interest in exploring activities that may contribute to the wellbeing of refugees in the UK.

The role of museums in promoting inclusive access for diverse population groups is coupled with a growing awareness and interest in exploring the

contribution of museums in promoting individual and community wellbeing (Dodd & Jones, 2014). As non-profit public spaces with rich and diverse resources, unique landscapes, and extensive histories of partnership work, museums are uniquely positioned as places to potentially enhance wellbeing (Desmarais et al, 2018).

However, for specific populations with low-income and little cultural knowledge of the UK, such as some migrant and refugee groups, the potential wellbeing benefits may be limited. It is those with higher levels of cultural and economic capital who are more likely to visit and engage with museums (Marsh et al. 2010). As such, within the UK museum sector, there has been increasing innovation and practice regarding local and needs-based assessment and promotion of wellbeing and health initiatives targeted towards less engaged populations such the elderly, migrant, and low-income groups (Dodd & Jones, 2014). There is a growing need for evidence-based impact assessment of such approaches.

In their latest report on *Museums as Spaces for Wellbeing*, The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing stress the mounting importance of capturing evidence regarding the impact of health and wellbeing programmes and projects in museums (Desmarais et al., 2018). In particular, there has been a lack of

rigorous qualitative evidence examining these claims. The collation of rich qualitative evidence may advance understandings of how targeted wellbeing activities within museum spaces may contribute to the wellbeing of socially diverse populations, such as refugees. The evaluation of the RMGs Refugee week is, thus important and timely for informing future work.

2019 is the third year that RMG have planned and delivered events as part of national UK Refugee Week. Refugee Week is the UK's largest week-long festival celebrating the diverse achievements and contributions of refugees. Refugee week programming at the RMG falls under a broader learning strategy which aims to pilot a series of projects linked to national and local strategies for health and wellbeing aimed at engaging diverse populations.

This report is intended to complement the existing quantitative survey approaches used by the RMG to evaluate the 2019 Refugee Week Activities. This evaluation may assist in developing understandings of how to engage refugee populations in accessing the space and to inform the development of future needs-based community programming at the RMG, of which aims to contribute to the wellbeing of refugee populations.

Section 2: Research Approach

Within the project timescales and to complement existing quantitative survey methods, participant observations were conducted during Refugee Week programming at the RMG during the Welcome and Wellbeing Day on the 20th June and the Windrush and Beyond: Celebrating You, Me, and Those Who Came Before on the 22nd June.

During participant observation the researcher becomes part of the group of people and the environment they are studying to gain insights into how people engage with spaces and interact with each other. Participant observation is a relatively unobtrusive research method, appropriate to understanding experiences of refugees newly arrived in the UK. Most of the participants who attended the Refugee Week events were visiting the RMG for their first time and possessed a low level of English language proficiency.

The first author, spent two days conducting participant observation at the RMGs National Maritime Museum during the events held on the 20th and the 22nd of June for Refugee Week. The team agreed beforehand which activities to attend and that observations should focus on (1) the types of activities and how these were delivered; (2) the organization of places/spaces and the relationships between participants and community

partners in these places and spaces, and; (3) the participants' observed, behaviours, emotions, and interactions with each other, the activities, and community partners. Data was also collected through engagement with and observation of activities taking place, and informal conversations with participants, staff, and workshop facilitators. Researchers and RMG staff recognised the potential problems of passive observation and colonial legacies associated with the gaze of the white researcher operating within oppressed racialized communities, (Smith, 1999).

As such, the first researcher, actively involved herself within the Refugee Week events and took on various roles including volunteering with set up, cleaning, assisting participants, entertaining the children and actively participating in sessions. Basic field notes were written up quickly after specific workshops and detailed notes were written in full at the end of the day. During the larger-scale events e.g. during the open performances, the researcher was more passively involved and was thus able to discreetly write notes.

All activities including the research were implemented in accordance with RMG policies on health and safety, risk assessment and ethics. No direct quotes from individual participants/staff or descriptions that could identify individuals are used. With participant consent, all photos remain property of the RMG.

Section 3: Findings

This section presents the findings from two Refugee Week 2019 events held at RMG as follows:

- 3.1 reports on findings from the **Welcome and Wellbeing Day** for refugee and asylum-seeking populations
- 3.2 reports on findings from the event titled **Windrush and Beyond: Celebrating You, Me and Those Who Came Before**

3.1 Welcome and Wellbeing day for Refugees & Asylum Seekers

June 20th | 11-4pm

AIM: To deliver a day of creative and mindful activities and provide an opportunity for refugee populations to explore the museum.

Participants

Approximately 42 adults and 15 children attended the Welcome and Wellbeing day. The majority of participants arrived with the Migrant Help group and were asylum-seekers currently residing in a hostel. The participants were from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds including Libya, Pakistan, and Somalia, to

name but a few. Many participants were conversing in Arabic. The majority of participants were newly arrived to England, many had lived in the UK for less than 6 months and possessed a low-level of English language proficiency. Many participants attended as families and brought 2-3 young children along to the event, many of who could speak English. There was also a large group of women from Northern Africa who attended as a group with their young children. Furthermore, the participants who engaged with the workshops, typically possessed a higher level of English proficiency and were female.

Use of Spaces

The Welcome and Wellbeing Day was held in the Propeller Space and the conjoining rooms. The Propeller space is a large and open area which was sectioned off by rope. On entering the space, there were three parallel tables set up: (1) the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) at the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) distributing self-care packages; (2) a welcome table with programs and leaflets; and (3) RMG staff and volunteers providing object handling and information about volunteering.

The size of the Propeller space was sufficient for most of the activities, but the seating area got crowded during peak hours when people were eating lunch; this created difficulties at times when

manoeuvring pushchairs and wheelchairs and when the children wanted to play.

The Propeller space was set up in a café-style arrangement. There were circular tables for eating and socializing, a small play area for children, and a semi-circle formation of chairs arranged for the Stories on Our Plate (SOOP) session. Along the back windows, a long table was set up with the lunch and refreshments and there was the evaluation board placed just to the right. The workshops were then held in the two adjoining rooms. This set-up reduced transition times between the workshops and led to increased accessibility especially for participants with pushchairs. The use of closed off spaces for the workshops also helped facilitate feelings of inclusivity. Indeed, only women participated in these workshops.

The café style area was an effective central location for the participants to socialize with their families and eat. Participants looked comfortable and relaxed in this space and the atmosphere was vibrant and lively. There was a lot of animated discussion, laughter, and play with the children. For much of the day, participants were based in the café area and sat on their own tables with their families, with the exception of a group of women and their children who were all sat together by the play area. In the morning, outside of the workshops, there was limited socialising between adults from different families, although

many of the children were playing together. During the afternoon, when various female participants were engaged in the workshops, the Propellor space was mostly occupied by males and children and there was increased interaction between the male participants.

There was a small children's area set up with several soft mats, colouring, and toys, although the overall café space could have been more child-friendly. The first researcher spent around an hour playing with some of the children over lunchtime; they had a lot of energy and wanted to run around, explore, and play games. As a result, some of the kids were running around in the already crowded café area and into other parts of the museum.

Lastly, there was not an advertised space provided for participants who wished to breast feed in private. Upon request though, a staff member guided one participant to a quiet space.

Insights on Space

- Continuing to deliver workshops in closed off spaces to facilitate the development of rapport and inclusive spaces
- Continuing to ensure the provision of gender-appropriate spaces
- Increasing the number/size of child-friendly spaces e.g. allocating a separate family room with crafts, games and/or offering activities outside

- Allocating a private space to provide the option for participants who are breast feeding
- Exploring the possibility of a male-only space with traditional board games and tea to replicate leisure time activities in home countries

Participant interactions with the Museum

The first family arrived at approximately 11.45am, then, just after midday, the large group of participants from Migrant Help arrived together. For many of these participants, arriving as a larger group was instrumental to their participation as they travelled together to the RMG. Many of these participants stayed for a couple of hours to eat lunch, socialise with their families, look around the museum, and then left at around 2-2.30pm as a group to explore Greenwich. Indeed, several participants commented about their long commute to reach the RMG and how the journey had taken them over one hour on public transit.

For many of the participants it was their first time visiting a museum in London. When a family was asked about some of the reasons why they responded with: a lack of awareness about the museum, confusion over how to use public transport, and the high perceived costs. In a feedback email sent after the Welcome and Wellbeing day, a community partner commented: “For some [participants] it was their first trip in

London, and they now feel encouraged to go to a museum again”.

Furthermore, two participants commented as to how they rarely leave their accommodation during the day and had not explored London yet. They said that through this event they enjoyed visiting a new part of London with the group. In a feedback email, a community partner commented that: “Some families stayed in Greenwich and explored, and said they had such a lovely time.....Many of us walked over to the Cutty Sark and river after we left the museum, which was a nice way to finish the day”.

Attending with children also influenced interactions with the museum. One participant with three small children under 5 years old, said that they would not normally visit museums, because in their source country, museums are quiet, serious places, and they did not think it was appropriate to bring children. She said that she took her children for a quick look around the RMG, but felt uncomfortable with them running around. Two participants also commented that they did not think that museums were suitable for them. They said they did not enjoy exploring the RMG on their own. However, they really enjoyed the event and thought that holding programmes such as these is an effective way of engaging young refugees.

English Language proficiency was perceived as another barrier to engaging fully with the exhibits in the museum. Two

participants spoke fluent English, but their parents and younger sister possessed a lower level of English proficiency. They commented that they had explored the museum quickly for about 10 minutes, but that their parents could only look at the exhibits and thus did not gain a full understanding. From general observations, participants appeared to move quite quickly around the museum and did not appear to spend time reading the signs and watching videos at the exhibits.

Insights: Participants and the Museum

- Continuing to develop community partnerships and deliver programming in conjunction with these organizations so group trips can be arranged
- Offering guided family tours with a translator
- Exploring opportunities for cross-cultural learning around the place of museums in Britain and across other countries

Wellbeing Activities

There were various scheduled activities taking place throughout the day including yoga, object handling, and Stories on Our Plate. In the café area, there were also ongoing activities such as CAMHS distributing self-care packages and RMG volunteers offering object handling.

Self-Care Packages

The youth advisory group (YAG) at CAHMS designed and distributed self-care packages to the participants. The contents of the package was designed around different themes such as compassion, belonging, identity, and hygiene. Objects included: a list of self-care techniques, soft fabrics, stress-ball (which was also a map of world), fidget spinner, tissues, sanitary pads, wet wipes etc. All of the kits were distributed. The products also came in a functional bumbag, which various participants fastened to their body and wore during the event; several participants also wore theirs home.

Participants seemed to enjoy engaging with the different objects. Some participants curiously removed the objects from the bag, spread them across the table, and then picked them up, touching them one by one e.g. stroking the soft fabric, squeezing the stress ball. A female participant commented how it was nice to take something home with her as she did not have many possessions with her in England. Through observations, many participants seemed to enjoy the visceral experience of touching the objects and carrying around the bag with them.

Stories on Our Plate (SOOP)

The SOOP session was one of the first sessions scheduled during the day. SOOP aims to promote the sharing of food and storytelling through delivering a supper

club ran by refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant chefs.

The SOOP workshop was set up in the Propeller Space and a semi-circle of chairs were arranged. A table was arranged with cook books, and desserts from a migrant-owned café in London. The facilitator brought along lime & ginger slices, chai chocolate brownies, and chocolate chip cookies for participants to sample. The desserts were delicious but did not appear to provide a segue for discussion. Participants typically picked up the desserts, then took them back to their table to eat them.

It was presumed that the facilitator was going to deliver a structured workshop at 11am around storytelling, belonging, and food. Participants ended up arriving later, but when they did arrive, the facilitator did not gather participants and deliver a workshop, instead the facilitator went around to individual tables and offered desserts while describing the SOOP project. Through observations, when the facilitator was speaking to two different families at their tables, they were struggling to understand what he was saying due to the language barrier. After these encounters, the facilitator seemed uncertain about going up to tables and interacting with participants and instead spent time talking with other staff, facilitators, and volunteers.

Holding workshops around food, storytelling, and belonging is a fascinating

topic for future programming. It may be interesting to explore possibilities for holding a more structured workshop, in a separate room, delivered by chefs from migrant/refugee backgrounds.

Yoga

The yoga sessions were held in the Group Space and delivered by Ourmala, an organization that delivers trauma-informed yoga for refugee and asylum-seeking populations.

Three yoga sessions were scheduled throughout the day and the first session at 11am was allocated as a women's-only class. There were two instructors. During the 11am class, two participants attended; they were existing clients of the yoga instructor. The second session was offered at 1pm, there were five participants and myself taking part in this session. Two of the participants had never tried yoga before, and they were recently arrived from Northern Africa. The other three participants were of South Asian descent and had attended the instructor's yoga classes in Hackney before. They attended the event specifically for the yoga class and left afterwards.

The room was a good sized-space; it felt intimate yet spacious. The high-quality mats were set up in two rows facing the front of the class and were not easily visible through the glass section of the window. This ensured that other participants could not watch the class,

which contributed to a more inclusive space. The space was also women-only.

The instructors were intentional in designing and facilitating an inclusive space for this population. At the beginning of the session, the facilitator went around the group and asked for people to introduce themselves, their background, and to describe their yoga experience. The instructor ensured that she had the correct pronunciation of each person's name and that she utilized first names every time she interacted with participants. The facilitator then gave a short introduction to yoga and asserted how the practice is suitable for all body types, religions, abilities etc. and emphasised how it is an individual, highly adaptable practice. She also explained that she would ask for consent before touching bodies and correcting alignment, and if participants felt uncomfortable at any time, they could lie down on their mat.

The sequencing of the class was as follows: breathing exercises, sun salutations, warrior sequences, and a short guided meditation. The intensity of the class was steady and before each section, there was a short introduction to the benefits of the sequence and different progressions/adaptions were suggested. No music was playing during the session and the only time we were asked to close our eyes was briefly during tree pose to demonstrate courage and during the meditation.

The assistant instructor circulated the room providing one-to-one assistance and primarily spent her time assisting the two participants who had never engaged in yoga before and the first researcher (of whom has terrible alignment!). Throughout the session, the participants appeared to be engaged; they were smiling and making eye contact with each other and the instructors.

After the class, participants stayed an extra 10 minutes engaged in group discussion. One of the women who had never participated in yoga before disclosed to the group that she been feeling stressed since living in London but felt relaxed after the session and would consider participating regularly. This participant and the other who were new to yoga then asked several questions including: "What are the benefits?" "How often should I do it?" "Where can I do it?" These questions later turned into a group discussion about yoga and wellbeing.

English language proficiency, childcare, and lack of knowledge of yoga appeared to present barriers to participation. Only two of the participants who specifically attended the Welcome and Wellbeing Day took part in the yoga sessions and they possessed a higher level of English proficiency. Childcare arrangements were another barrier. One of the participant's commented that she would have liked to have participated in the yoga class, but she had her three small children and did not feel it was suitable to

bring them into the workshop. Furthermore, participants may have also lacked knowledge about yoga and felt uncomfortable participating.

Overall, the class was a good introductory yoga session, the atmosphere was welcoming and inclusive, the instructors were culturally aware, tailored the session appropriately, and the participants appeared engaged and satisfied. In the future, considering barriers such as childcare and language proficiency may help further increase accessibility.

Object handling

The last session was the object handling workshop held in the Briefing Space. The facilitator had lived experiences of migration and frequently drew on them throughout the class. The facilitator actively structured the session and space to foster inclusivity. Holding the workshop in a separate room helped facilitate the development of trust between participants and allow for meaningful conversations to take place. In addition, only female participants took part, which further contributed to an inclusive session. Indeed, the female-only space was perceived as important to participants: A participant was able to breastfeed away from the open café space and a young participant commented that her father may not have allowed her to participate if males were present.

For new participants to enter the space they had to share part of their identity as a formalised process of joining the group. Upon entering the workshop there were two refugee participants in the room, a four week old baby asleep in a push chair, and a member of RMG staff. The facilitator went around the circle and asked myself and the other participants to introduce themselves and describe an object meaningful to them, which reminded them of a special time and place. Participants described family photographs, artefacts, and jewellery.

The facilitator rotated steadily between various activities to engage participants. The first activity included creating a physical gesture e.g. such as a pose, and then moving around the room performing each other's gestures. Second, the group got into pairs and participants were asked to share with their partner two things that they love, one thing they hate and to describe their favourite place. The pairs then recalled their partner's stories and fed back to the group.

Half way through the session, a staff member brought six more participants and a baby to join the session. One participant possessed a low level of English proficiency and the facilitator asked their other family members in the workshop to translate.

For the remainder of the session, the facilitator rotated between short, fun, activities which included singing, dancing, movement, and creative writing. There

was an effective mix of group and individual activities. Towards the end of the workshop, the facilitator gave an empowering speech around the contributions of refugees and migrant women to Britain and drew on personal experiences. The facilitator then played the song *This is me* by Keisha and encouraged the group to sing along and repeat certain lyrics such as “I am brave, I am bruised this is who I am supposed to be. This is me”. This activity felt empowering; throughout the song, the group were making eye contact with each other, laughing, dancing, and shouting the lyrics as loudly as they could.

When some of the participants first entered the workshop, they looked slightly uncomfortable and awkward about being asked to engage in some of the group tasks. But this quickly subsided as participants seemed to relax and embrace the creative activities. The workshop was a good ice breaker and by the end of the session, different groups of participants were smiling and talking to each other; they seemed to really enjoy the workshop. The facilitator is empowering and high-energy and was able to capture the attention of the group and create feelings of group cohesion and inclusion.

After the session, two of the participants said how much they enjoyed the workshop as it was fun and they could be creative and themselves. They said they would like to come to the RMG for

more events like this. They also commented that during the workshop, they felt like they were part of a group. The emphasis on social connection and trust building exercises in this session facilitated in creating a sense of place and cohesion.

Insights on Activities for Wellbeing

- Continuing to deliver targeted programming for participants from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds. This may promote a space of inclusion among people who share similar experiences of resettlement away from the demands of the dominant culture and integration
- Continuing to take active steps to ensure safe and inclusive spaces: e.g. offering women’s and men’s only programming, employing facilitators whose background is representative of the target audience, and ensuring that sessions begin with thorough introductions to facilitate rapport development
- Offering child-friendly programming: many participants who took part in the workshops either did not have children or left their children with the partner. For example delivering family-friendly workshops and/or informal family games throughout the day such as tag, parachute games etc. led by a staff member or volunteer.

- Providing a translator service - many participants possessed a low level of English language proficiency and this was a barrier to participating in activities and engaging with exhibits
- Decentralizing English within the workshops through the delivery of more applied activities or delivering workshops in the participant's first language

RMG Evaluation: Feedback Wall

In conjunction with the RMG, the research team set up an interactive feedback wall in the propeller space by the refreshments table. A table was set up with stickers, coloured markers, and A3 paper printed with different questions on them including:

- "Have you visited the museum before?" and "Would you come to the museum again? Y/N"
- "What activities would you like to see in the future?"
- "Have you enjoyed today?", "If so, what have you enjoyed about today?"
- "How do you think this event could have been improved?"

However, participants did not engage with the feedback wall. Many of the participants possessed a low level of English proficiency and may have also felt uncomfortable writing on the wall. This provides evidence that there is a need to explore alternative evaluation techniques

when working with refugee populations in the future to ensure their voices are heard.

3.2 Windrush and Beyond: Celebrating You, me and Those Who Came Before

22nd June | 11-4pm

AIM: To celebrate Windrush Day and the achievements of refugees, both past and present, in the UK.

Participants

During the morning, the celebrations for Windrush day and Refugee Week were taking place at the same time in the National Maritime museum. There were around 30 members of the Caribbean Social Forum present. Some of the members expressed complaint about this arrangement as they felt the events should be held on separate days to more specifically celebrate the achievements of the Windrush Generation. In the afternoon, the Windrush day celebrations moved to the University of Greenwich. After this time, many of the participants at the museum were general members of the public and appeared to be families with children. There were also smaller numbers of couples and seniors. The overall number of recorded participants who took part in workshops throughout

the day included 150 adults and 136 children.

The event fell on a hot day, and as result, the museum was fairly quiet for a Saturday, while the grounds of the museum and the park were busy. In the afternoon, the museum seemed to get busier and there were more participants engaged in the workshops. Furthermore, many of the participants were unaware that the Windrush and Beyond event was taking place and had intended to visit the museum anyway. This feedback was echoed by workshop leaders.

Activities and Spaces

The various activities were spread across the museum, with the arts-based workshops primarily being held in learning spaces and the performances in the Great Map space. The neighbourhood tour van was also situated by the riverside entrance. The next section will provide a brief overview of the various activities and spaces.



Memories of the Mother Land

This event was held in the Voyagers Gallery at 11am in celebration of

Windrush Day and involved sharing stories around migrating to England.

A semi-circle of seats and benches were set up facing the large boat exhibit and there was a chair placed in the middle for the speakers. At the beginning of the workshop, there were around 25 participants and this number grew to around 38. The majority of the participants were members of the Caribbean Social Forum, and appeared to know each other. There were approximately five children present and several members of the general public who arrived throughout the session and were stood at the back watching.

The session began with introductions, three members of the Caribbean Social Forum then shared their stories about their journey to England, settlement, and life stories so far. The audience members appeared to be highly engaged and the majority were making eye contact with presenters and laughing at various points.

Performances

There were a series of performances held throughout the day in the Great Map Space. I observed the Windrush Choir's morning performance.

The Great Map is a large, light, open space, able to accommodate large crowds. The choir set up at the back the space and there were several rows of chairs facing forward, but most people were standing. This formation encouraged

people to drop-in, as they could easily cross through the space, and watch from the café area too. Holding the performances in the Great Map space, allowed the music to be heard across the museum and this attracted people to come and watch.

At one point there were around 90 people watching. The Caribbean Social Forum were sat on the rows of seats and were engaged and singing along. Several participants were also stood up and dancing throughout the performance. Other participants were standing and spread around the Great Map space watching the choir. Many of these participants were families with children and they typically watched for around 5-10 minutes.



Belonging Arts-based Workshop

This workshop was focused around objects and belonging.

The workshop was held in the Learning Space, a large classroom in the museum. The room is situated off a high traffic area, but many people walked past

the door, unaware that a workshop was taking place. The door to the classroom was closed throughout the day and there was a small sign advertising the event. The closed door and separated classroom space may have created the impression of a private workshop.

The room is large, well-lit, and was set up with long communal tables, which was an effective way of encouraging discussion and group work. On the table by the door, to simulate discussion, there were pictures of busts that the lead artist had co-produced several years prior when working with refugee youth on a previous exhibit and also examples objects that these participants had chosen to bring when fleeing their homelands.

The session was focused around objects and belonging, intended to encourage discussions regarding what objects would you bring with you if you were forced to leave your home quickly. The participants then had the opportunity to mould these objects out of clay and place them in a pre-made boat ready to take home with them. To try and stimulate discussion, facilitators asked the participants questions about why they had selected certain objects and what meaning these objects may hold to themselves and to refugee children.

The workshop facilitators commented they were fairly quiet throughout the day and that around 15 boats had been produced by 15 child and 25 adult participants. Although, because it was quiet, the facilitators commented that they were able to spend more time engaging with families, discussing how objects contribute to a sense of belonging and home-making. One of the families spent 45 minutes in the space. All of the participants were families with children.

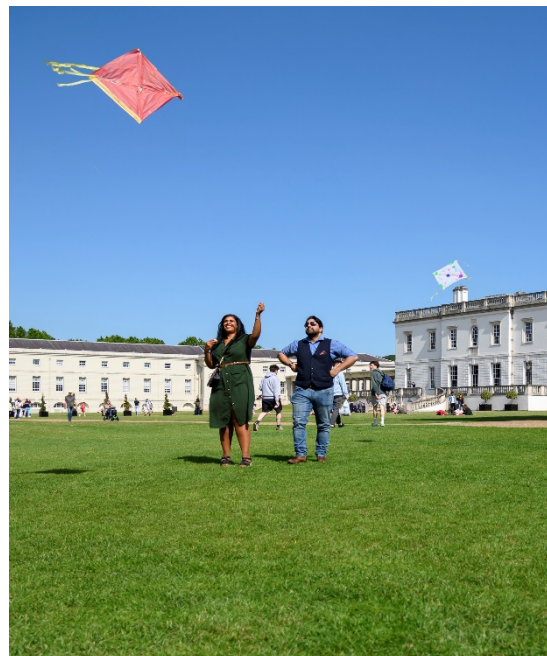


Afghani Kite-Making Workshop

The session provided participants with the opportunity to learn how to design kites Afghani style.

The workshop was held in the Briefing Space. The facilitator and his assistant were from asylum-seeker backgrounds. Eighteen children and 29 adults participated in this workshop throughout the day. Throughout the morning, the workshop was quiet, with around 5 families dropping in and making kites. One of the families who participated

said how much they enjoyed the session and how it was nice to have something tangible to take home and play with outside. During the afternoon, the workshop was busier. The facilitator said that participants had produced about 20 kites throughout the day. One of the participants who attended with his two children, described how much he enjoyed making the kites as it brought back childhood memories from his homeland, Russia. While outside after the workshop, this family and the facilitator made a kite out of a plastic bag, Russian style. Furthermore, the father said that he did not know the Windrush and Beyond event was happening at the RMG but asked if there were any other arts-based activities like this happening at the museum.



Me, You, Our Perspective

This workshop was facilitated by Nations of Migrations Awakening the Diaspora

(NOMAD) and aimed to explore imagery and symbolism associated with migration by creating a collaborative sculpture. The facilitators were youth with lived experiences of migration. This workshop was held in the Great Map Space and 17 children and 27 adults participated throughout the day. The researcher did not observe this workshop taking place, although she did have a brief chat with the workshop facilitators. They commented that holding the workshop in the Great Map space was effective at attracting participants as it was easily visible and many people walked past after the performances. They also described the afternoon as busier than the morning.

On the downside, the facilitators described how it was difficult to have in-depth conversations with participants as the space was open plan and therefore quite noisy. They also discussed challenges of running the workshop at the same time as taking part in the panel discussion in the afternoon.

Objects in Focus: Maps and Refugee Journeys

This session was held under the figureheads and was focused around exploring the role that maps play in people's refugee journeys. The table featured various hand drawn and printed maps that people had created and used to help them flee their homes. The facilitator was engaging and took the time to explain clearly the different maps and how they shaped refugee journeys.

The facilitator commented that the location of the workshop was effective as people would come and see the figureheads and then stop by the table. Approximately 15 children and 30 adults participated.

Navigating Systems Panel Discussion

The panel was held in the Seminar Room, facilitated by a local refugee activist, and discussions were focused around navigating oppressive institutions. The workshop was originally planned as a separate event during Refugee Week.

The room was set up initially with rows of seats facing the front, but this was later changed to a circle of chairs at the front of the room; this format was effective as it facilitated group dialogue. The panel started around 30 minutes late, during this time, two participants ended up leaving after they had waited ten minutes.

The panel was an informal discussion which began with the participants introducing themselves and their involvement with refugee communities. Ten participants including the researcher took part in this session. At the start of the session, there were eight participants. Three participants, including the researcher, self-identified as White, while the other five participants came from a racialized refugee backgrounds. Two other white participants and an RMG staff member later joined the discussion about half way through.

The topic of the discussion was focused around experiences of oppression within institutions such as law, education, the media, museums etc. Participants drew upon personal experiences of oppression within institutions and shared some of the experiences of clients that they engage with. There was consensus that action is needed around promoting decolonial practices within institutions. Acknowledging local, lived experiences and engaging refugee populations in co-producing policy and programming was discussed as imperative in facilitating social change.

However, there was one challenge to such ideas about co-production with refugee groups from a church representative whose views were not shared. This example demonstrates the wider challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers. Comments were publicly voiced by an individual critiquing the refugee community for their lack of trust and gratitude in institutions, like the church, seeking to support them, and suggesting that migrant/refugee organisations were ineffectively run. These comments disrupted the flow of the discussion and limited the extent to which topics could be critically discussed. Participants started to become closed off and visibly frustrated. The space was no longer viewed by participants as a safe space for open discussion and sharing of experiences.

Incidences such as these are difficult to predict and, indeed, this is a public forum after all. Whilst unintended and unwelcome, the views provide a reminder of the negative attitudes that migrants/refugees face which reinforces ethnic divisions, prejudicial views about refugees, and narratives of passive refugee populations. In the future, events such as these could be held as invite-only sessions. Furthermore, in order to manage such incidents within a public and open forum, it may be advisable to lay ground rules and group norms for discussions in promotional materials and certainly at the start of the session emphasising respect, dignity safe spaces in free speech.

Insights for Activities

- Continuing to ensure that many of the facilitators are representative of the target audience or the topic being explored and that channels are in place to ensure appropriate incentive is provided for facilitators from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds
- Tailoring events to the target audience and purpose. The activities were aimed at a wide variety of audiences
- Celebrating diversity by delivering separate events to highlight the achievements of refugees and migrants
- Engaging the refugee community in processes of co-production

when designing events for general public

- Increasing awareness - many participants were unaware that the event was happening.

Suggestions include: more targeted advertising, increased signage inside/outside, holding workshops outside

Section 4: Conclusions

The section above described the findings and insights gained from conducting participant observation at RMG during Refugee Week. The findings reflect RMGs established expertise in partnering with local community organizations to deliver wellbeing programmes for diverse population groups including refugees. The feedback from participants and staff members at the Welcome and Wellbeing day was positive and many steps were taken to ensure that spaces were inclusive and needs-based. Future developments to ensure effective programming should emphasise tailoring activities to defined target audiences which recognise and celebrate cultural difference and diversity.

Below, we present four recommendations to enhance the delivery of Refugee Week programming and future wellbeing activities for refugee populations at RMG:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ensuring safe and inclusive spaces | 2. Celebrating difference and diversity |
| 3. Offering creative translator services | 4. Defining the target audience and purpose |

Ensuring safe and inclusive spaces

RMG took many active steps to promote safe spaces during programming for refugee populations. For future programming, we suggest (1) continuing to offer gendered spaces for workshops and socialization for both male and female populations. We suggest delivering workshops in in closed-off rooms, with facilitators from representative backgrounds; (2) continuing to mitigate barriers to participation through providing travel expenses, refreshments, and co-ordinating the group attendance of community partners; (3) increasing the number of child-friendly spaces and provisions to ensure greater accessibility; and (4) initiating discussions at the beginning of activities with participants and staff around ensuring safe spaces and respecting cultural diversity.

Creative translator services

Many of the participants who attended the Welcome and Wellbeing Day had a low level of English language proficiency and were unable to engage fully with workshops and exhibits. To increase accessibility, the RMG could consult with community partners to suggest needs-based solutions. Our suggestions include (1) providing translator services during guided museum tours; (2) offering translator services for programming and materials; (3) delivering workshops in participant first languages.

Celebrating diversity and difference

It is imperative to recognize and celebrate the cultural difference and diversity of migrant and refugee experiences. Refugee and migrant experiences differ greatly as migrants typically possess higher levels of economic and human capital and exert choice in the decision to migrate – a choice uncharacteristic of refugees (Castles, de Hass & Miller, 2009). The findings of this report suggest the need for: (1) tailored and targeted events that are co-produced with the target audience so that they represent cultural diversity appropriately; and (2) employing facilitators from migrant and/or refugee backgrounds when delivering programming or conducting advocacy work for this population and that channels are in place to ensure appropriate incentives and support for facilitators.

Defining the target audience and purpose of programming

When delivering programming for a variety of identified groups, we suggest targeting and tailoring these programs to the needs and interests of the diverse groups. Within the context of programming for refugee populations, we suggest delivering specific programming, away from programs aimed at members of the general public, to promote inclusion and the help fulfil the unique needs of this diverse population.

As such, we recommend continuing to engage in processes of co-production with community partners when designing future wellbeing programming for refugee populations. Processes of knowledge co-production may enhance understandings of what wellbeing means in the lives of refugees, thus facilitating the delivery of needs-based programming aimed at promoting wellbeing.

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