

HANDBOOK FOR VET-PROFESSIONALS

to enhancing refugee women's skills
for the hospitality sector



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Introduction

Welcome to the Handbook for Vocational Education and Training (VET) Professionals, designed to empower refugee women on their journey to success in hospitality careers. Hospitality is an industry rooted in human connection, inclusivity, and resilience—qualities that refugee women possess in abundance, yet often require tailored support to navigate this path confidently. This handbook aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for VET trainers, equipping them with innovative strategies to inspire, engage, and support refugee women as they transition into rewarding roles in hospitality.

Purpose and objectives

The handbook is carefully designed to address the unique challenges faced by refugee women entering the hospitality workforce. By bridging cultural, interpersonal, and vocational gaps, it promotes empowerment, resilience, and skill-building that align with the demands of the hospitality sector. Whether you're guiding trainees through foundational vocational skills, helping them develop mental well-being, or preparing them to embrace digital literacy, this handbook offers clear, actionable approaches that foster professional growth while nurturing their personal journey.

For Whom is This Guide Intended?

This handbook is tailored for experienced VET trainers, particularly those working with refugee populations. It is a resource for professionals who are passionate about uplifting and empowering refugee women to thrive in culturally diverse, fast-paced hospitality roles. The content builds upon your existing expertise, providing practical frameworks and tools to effectively train, support, and encourage these women to achieve their full potential.

Importance of this Handbook

Refugee women face unique hurdles—including cultural integration, overcoming trauma, and navigating unfamiliar professional environments. With hospitality recognized as an industry offering accessible career pathways, this handbook serves a vital role in bridging the gap between potential and opportunity. Its comprehensive, modular structure ensures that VET trainers can adapt their approach to meet the specific needs of trainees, cultivating resilience and fostering meaningful connections.

How to use this Guide

The handbook is divided into five carefully structured modules to support trainers throughout the training process:

1. **Theoretical Background with Key Topics:** A foundational overview of essential concepts, addressing cultural, interpersonal, vocational, and digital literacy skills.
2. **Guidelines for Training:** Practical recommendations for crafting engaging, impactful training sessions based on each module's objectives.
3. **Case Study:** Real-world scenarios to contextualize learning, encouraging critical thinking and adaptability in training exercises.
4. **Example Exercises:** A collection of activities designed to build core skills in hospitality, tailored to the needs of refugee women.
5. **Impact Assessment for Trainers and Self-Assessment Tools for Trainees:** Tools for tracking progress and evaluating outcomes, ensuring both trainers and trainees achieve tangible results.

By leveraging these modules, trainers can create a learning environment that promotes professional readiness, cultural sensitivity, and personal empowerment, ensuring refugee women are equipped to excel in hospitality careers. This handbook is not just a resource—it's a step forward in fostering inclusive opportunities and lifelong success



MODULE 1

BRIDGING CONNECTION: Interpersonal, Social and Cultural Skills Development

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Bridging connection: Interpersonal, Social and Cultural Skills Development

Strong social and interpersonal skills are the foundation of success in hospitality—and for refugee women, they are also a gateway to confidence, inclusion, and meaningful employment. This module equips trainers to support refugee women in developing communication, teamwork, cultural sensitivity, and community-building skills tailored to four key hospitality roles. Rooted in empowerment and practical application, it bridges personal growth with professional readiness, helping trainees thrive in multicultural work environments and integrate more fully into their communities.

Section 1 – Theoretical background with key topics

Importance of interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills form the **foundation** of success in hospitality, where interactions with colleagues, customers, and managers occur daily. For our target group, for migrant women these skills **not only facilitate professional integration** but also boost **confidence and workplace adaptability**.

Key components of interpersonal skills for hospitality roles

- **Effective Communication**

In hospitality, **clear, direct, and structured communication** is essential for seamless operations. Since refugee women may face **language barriers**, trainers must ensure they develop **practical communication strategies** suited to their daily work environment and equip refugee women with **confident, task-oriented language skills**.

One of the most fundamental skills is **following instructions clearly**, which allows employees to execute tasks efficiently without misunderstandings.

- *A housekeeping trainee must correctly follow a supervisor's cleaning checklist; ensuring rooms meet the required standards without supervision.*
- *A kitchen assistant must understand precise food preparation instructions, especially in fast-paced environments where errors can slow operations.*

Concise and Direct Communication is equally important. Employees must exchange essential information quickly, often using simple sentences or keywords.

- *A front desk operator may need to inform a guest, "Breakfast is served from 7 to 10 AM," ensuring clarity without unnecessary details.*

- A stock manager might report, "Delivery received, missing two boxes of towels," helping teams adjust inventory without confusion.

For structured daily tasks, **repetitive task-based communication** ensures employees develop routine phrases for efficiency. This type of standardized communication reduces misunderstandings and keeps workflows smooth.

- A kitchen assistant handing food orders to a server may confirm with short instructions like, "Order ready Table 5, two salads"

Finally, **emergency & problem-solving communication** requires employees to report issues clearly and quickly to supervisors.

- A housekeeping trainee may need to state, "Water leak in Room 204, urgent maintenance needed," ensuring swift action.
- A stock manager might notify a restaurant team, "No more tomatoes—should we use substitutes?" helping kitchens adapt to last-minute inventory issues.

▪ Active Listening

Active listening is more than just hearing words, it means engaging with colleagues and customers by fully understanding their needs. In hospitality, it is **critical for following instructions, solving problems, and ensuring workplace harmony**.

Focus and Attention: teaching trainees to give undivided attention to customers, supervisors, or colleagues, avoiding distractions.

- A front desk employee listens attentively to a guest's complaint about room conditions without interrupting or assuming.

Clarification and Questioning: encouraging trainees to ask follow-up questions for better understanding, particularly when instructions are complex or unclear.

- A kitchen assistant confirms the chef's request: "Do you mean finely chopped or diced onions?" to avoid errors in food preparation.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing: helping trainees restate or summarize received information to ensure comprehension.

- Housekeeping staff member repeats instructions: "You need extra towels and a pillow replacement in Room 208, correct?"

Non-Verbal Cues and Emotional Awareness: training refugee women to recognize tone, body language, and facial expressions to interpret messages accurately, especially when verbal communication is limited.

- A stock management assistant notices a stressed supervisor's hurried gestures and understands the urgency of an inventory request without needing a detailed explanation.

Patience and Adaptability: emphasizing the importance of remaining patient, calm, and open to different communication styles, particularly in a multicultural workplace.

- *A housekeeping team member listens patiently to a guest who speaks slowly in a different language, ensuring respectful service.*

▪ Empathy

Empathy is a **core interpersonal skill** in hospitality, allowing employees to **connect with customers, understand their concerns, and offer supportive solutions**. For refugee women entering the industry, showing empathy can significantly enhance **guest satisfaction, workplace harmony, and overall service quality**. Trainers should ensure trainees develop **practical techniques** to apply empathy in real-world situations.

Recognizing Customer Needs: understanding that each guest may have different expectations, moods, or concerns.

- *A front desk operator notices a tired traveller checking in late and offers a quiet room and expedited service to ease their stress.*

Responding with Sensitivity: reacting thoughtfully to customer complaints, requests, or difficult situations.

- *A housekeeping team member listens calmly when a guest is upset about a missing towel and responds with reassurance and a quick solution instead of defensiveness.*

Cultural Awareness & Respect: being mindful of different customs, communication styles, and emotional expressions.

- *A restaurant staff member understands that some guests prefer limited eye contact due to cultural norms and adjusts their body language accordingly.*

Showing Empathy Without Overpromising: being kind and understanding while setting realistic expectations.

- *A stock manager kindly explains to a chef, “I understand you need fresh tomatoes today, but we are out - can I offer an alternative ingredient?”*

Modelling Effective Communication as a Trainer

VET professionals do not just teach communication- they model it. For refugee women preparing for roles in hospitality, the trainer’s conduct is often the clearest example of workplace expectations. Demonstrating real-world communication habits builds both competence and confidence in navigating new environments.

Key strategies include:

- **Use of simple, structured language:** avoid idioms and overly complex instructions. Clarity is crucial in roles such as housekeeping or stock management, where accuracy directly affects workflow.

- **Visible non-verbal cues:** open posture, respectful tone, appropriate facial expressions, and consistent eye contact (where culturally appropriate) reinforce meaning and help trainees intuitively understand common workplace behaviours.
- **“Think aloud” approach:** narrating your decision-making during tasks—for instance, in a kitchen setting—clarifies the reasoning behind standards: *“I’m placing this label here so the evening team knows when this batch was prepped.”*
- **Real-life workplace scenarios:** use authentic examples to demonstrate polite yet professional communication. E.g., a front desk interaction with a guest about a delayed check-in or a conversation between kitchen staff during peak hours.
- **Simulations/role-playing exercises:** build in regular opportunities for trainees to practise greetings, problem solving with guests, and teamwork. Switching roles helps build empathy and adaptability.
- **Provide structured feedback:** guide trainees in improving their communication by highlighting what went well and what could be clearer, using behaviour-based feedback: *“You maintained eye contact and used calm phrasing—great. Next time, try to slow down your speech a little to be more understandable.”*
- **Consistency and follow-through:** whether it is giving updates, correcting errors, or acknowledging effort, your approach becomes a blueprint for trainees. Practicing patience and modelling reliability helps create a safe space for language growth.

Gender-Sensitive Communication Strategies to Foster Inclusivity

The hospitality sector thrives on diversity, which makes gender-sensitive communication not just desirable but essential. For refugee women in vocational training, communication norms from their home cultures may differ considerably from those expected in European work environments. Trainers therefore play a key role in making professional spaces not only inclusive, but also actively empowering.

To support this, trainers should consider the following practical strategies:

- **Use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes:** refer to learners and staff with neutral, professional terms - such as *“team members”* or *“colleagues”* - rather than gendered or diminutive forms (e.g., avoid *“girls, ladies”* *“gentlemen”*). In training examples, ensure roles are not linked to gendered expectations - for example, avoid assuming managerial roles are male or support roles are female.
- **Encourage trainees to voice concerns confidently:** many refugee women may initially hesitate to speak up. Trainers should normalise open dialogue by inviting feedback during debriefings, actively listening, and validating their input. For instance, *“I really appreciate your observation—thank you for sharing that.”*
- **Provide examples of respectful workplace communication:** use short role-plays or video clips to highlight how colleagues interact with professionalism and mutual respect. Emphasise tone, non-verbal cues, and choice of words. Model interactions that convey equality - such as discussing responsibilities collaboratively rather than instructing authoritatively.
- **Balance communication dynamics:** in-group discussions, monitor who speaks and how often. Gently encourage quieter voices with prompts like, *“We haven’t heard from you yet -*

would you like to add something?” This helps challenge unconscious hierarchies and promotes participation from everyone.

- **Acknowledge varied comfort levels and cultural interpretations:** some women may be less comfortable with direct eye contact or assertive speech. Create space for different communication styles while still guiding trainees toward industry-appropriate standards. Offer supportive feedback that focuses on function rather than personality.
- **Reinforce professionalism over formality:** emphasise that respectful communication is not about being overly polite or rigid, but about ensuring dignity, clarity, and equality in every interaction—whether among colleagues, supervisors, or guests.

Social skills in hospitality - related to the specific job roles:

- Teamwork and collaboration
 - Conflict resolution
 - Customer service skills
 - Understanding company culture and processes: the influence of organizational norms on teamwork and collaboration in specific roles
- } specific for the 4 job roles

Social Skills in Hospitality: Workplace Integration across Roles

Social skills form the foundation of smooth, respectful collaboration in hospitality environments. While technical competencies are essential, often these interpersonal capabilities determine long-term success, especially for refugee women navigating new professional cultures.

This section provides guidance for VET trainers on developing four core social skill areas—tailored to four key job roles in the hospitality sector: *kitchen assistant*, *housekeeping staff*, *front desk operator*, and *stock management assistant*.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION

In hospitality, operations rely on coordination between departments and roles.

- **Kitchen Assistant:** needs to understand kitchen hierarchy, timing, and fluid coordination with cooks and servers. Trainers should simulate busy kitchen conditions, emphasizing respectful verbal cues (e.g. “Behind you” or “Hot plate”).
- **Housekeeping:** trainees should learn to align shifts with front-desk teams, respecting time constraints for checkouts. Role-play scenarios can reinforce helpfulness and cooperation under time pressure.
- **Front Desk Operator:** coordination with housekeeping and management requires clear, timely handovers. Trainees can practise daily shift briefings and team huddles.
- **Stock Management Assistant:** works closely with kitchen and service teams - emphasize teamwork in inventory routines and reporting shortages proactively.

Trainer tip: use group tasks where success depends on mutual support and clear division of responsibilities. Highlight appreciation as part of collaborative culture.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Misunderstandings can quickly escalate in fast-paced environments. Conflict resolution needs to be embedded in each role's training.

Kitchen Assistant: addressing mistakes without blame is key. Use case studies involving food errors or miscommunication during rush hours.

Scenario 1: A colleague blames you for using the wrong ingredient in a dish during a busy lunch shift. *Response:* "I understand- it was a mistake. I'll fix it now and be more careful next time."

Scenario 2: Two assistants bump into each other several times in the small kitchen space. *Response:* "Let's agree who takes which side, so we don't get in each other's way."

Housekeeping: handle guest dissatisfaction or teammate friction over shared duties. Practise language like *"Let's see how we can fix this together."*

Scenario 1: A teammate says you did not clean the bathroom well enough. *Response:* "Thanks for saying it - I'll check it again and make sure it's OK."

Scenario 2: A guest complains there are no fresh towels in the room. *Response:* "I'm sorry for that. I'll bring fresh towels right away."

Front Desk Operator: diffuse frustration from guests or mismatched expectations from colleagues. Teach calm verbal de-escalation, such as *"I understand this is frustrating- let me see what I can do."*

Scenario 1: A guest becomes impatient because their room is not ready yet. *Response:* "I understand- it's been a long day. I'll check how fast we can prepare the room."

Scenario 2: A co-worker forgot to update you about a guest's request. *Response:* "I didn't know about it - next time, let's leave a quick note so we're both informed."

Stock Management Assistant: Resolve discrepancies with deliveries or internal miscounts tactfully. Use scripts that combine assertiveness with solution focus.

Scenario 1: A delivery arrives with three boxes missing. A team member says it was your counting mistake. *Response:* "Let's check the list again together - maybe something is still in the truck."

Scenario 2: A colleague moves items without telling you, and now the numbers do not match. *Response:* "Please let me know next time before moving stock - it helps me keep track."

Trainer tip: Include short peer role-plays on navigating small tensions and debrief each scenario together.

CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

Hospitality is a people-centred industry where service quality depends on not only what is done, but also how it is done - tone, timing, gestures, and cultural understanding all matter. Trainees need emotional awareness and cultural flexibility to respond to guests in a professional, respectful, and culturally sensitive way.

Kitchen Assistant / Stock Assistant: while not guest-facing, professionalism includes assisting front-of-house colleagues courteously and responding efficiently to their needs. Emphasize “invisible hospitality”: the idea that service quality is supported by behind-the-scenes actions that guests do not see, but *feel*. For example, well-stocked breakfast buffets or clean utensils reflect teamwork and service awareness. Encourage empathy-driven collaboration with guest-facing staff by using polite tone, readiness to support under pressure, and awareness of pace and workflow.

Housekeeping: often interacts with guests indirectly, so non-verbal communication non-verbal cues speak volumes—especially when language is limited.

Discuss the importance of knocking and waiting before entering a room, maintaining a friendly smile, upright but calm posture, appropriate eye contact, and a warm, respectful presence in hallways.

Trainers should guide learners to explore how body language and personal space expectations can vary across cultures and affect guest satisfaction.

Key non-verbal elements to explore in simulations/role plays:

Eye contact: in some cultures (e.g. German, American), direct eye contact signals attentiveness and honesty; in others (e.g. Japanese, many African cultures), it may be considered overly direct or disrespectful.

Smiling: a friendly smile is broadly encouraged in hospitality, but the frequency, intensity, and timing of smiles vary culturally.

Gestures and hand signals: simple actions like nodding or hand gestures may carry different meanings. For example, a “thumbs up” is positive in some cultures but offensive in others.

Posture and proximity: Mediterranean or Latin cultures may be comfortable with closer interactions, while Northern European or East Asian guests may prefer more physical distance.

Simulation/role play suggestion: create guest scenarios involving greetings, giving directions, or entering rooms. Ask one learner to act as a guest from a specific cultural background (e.g. East Asian, Middle Eastern, Scandinavian), while another acts as a staff member. After the interaction, reflect in-group discussion:

1. How did the guest perceive the posture or space?
2. Was the staff’s behaviour effective or unintentionally uncomfortable?

Front Desk Operator: A central guest contact—train for friendly tone, problem-solving attitude, and managing language barriers or repeated questions with patience.

As the first and often most frequent point of contact for guests, front desk staff embody the face and voice of hospitality. Their service sets the tone for the entire guest experience. Professionalism in this role includes cultivating a friendly, welcoming demeanour, a solution-oriented mind-set, and the ability to manage challenges calmly and effectively. Trainers should focus on:

Tone and communication: using polite, warm language that balances friendliness with clarity. Training should include handling recurring questions without irritation and maintaining a consistent, approachable presence.

Cultural and linguistic sensitivity: front desk operators often interact with guests from diverse backgrounds. Practicing strategies for managing language barriers, such as using visual aids or simple English, builds effectiveness and inclusivity.

Problem solving: encouraging a proactive attitude when guests raise concerns - whether related to room issues, local recommendations, or special requests. Simulated scenarios can help build confidence and fluency.

Resilience and patience: front desk workers face high-pressure moments, including long queues, last-minute changes, or guest frustrations. Teaching emotional regulation and stress management skills helps sustain service quality.

Trainer tip: Analyse live demonstrations to illustrate tone and posture. Let us try all of the roles by your group participants to invite them to reflect on how they would feel as guests. You can use videos, part of movies for this analysis.

Highlight the concept of “**visible hospitality**” in contrast to the “**invisible**” roles behind the scenes: it refers to the guest-facing actions that directly shape the customer experience - such as a warm smile, attentive listening, and courteous problem solving. These gestures are not hidden behind the scenes; they are felt and noticed immediately by the guest and serve as the frontline expression of the company’s values. A front desk operator embodies this by being present, helpful, and empathetic from first contact to final farewell. Emphasize consistency, active listening, and a respectful demeanour - even in challenging interactions.

Emotional Detachment & Role Clarity in Guest Interactions

In hospitality, it is essential for employees to understand that guest frustrations are rarely personal. Guests address staff **as representatives of their role**, not as individuals. Trainers should emphasize that:

- Complaints or criticisms are usually about the **service, delay, or expectation**, not the employee’s character.
- Staff should learn to maintain **emotional distance**, staying calm and professional rather than reacting defensively.
- Building **role-based identity** helps employees understand that they are a part of a larger system—and that issues reflect processes, not personal failure.

This mind-set protects emotional well-being and supports sustained, high-quality service—especially in high-stress frontline roles.

UNDERSTANDING COMPANY CULTURE & PROCESSES

Workplace culture in hospitality includes both formal protocols and context-specific social norms. For migrant women entering a new job environment, decoding these unspoken cues can be just as important as mastering technical skills. Trainers play a key role in helping learners understand how company culture influences collaboration, performance, and career development.

Topics to cover include:

- **Punctuality and reliability:** these are not optional habits - they are clear professional expectations. Arriving on time, following break schedules, and notifying supervisors about absences are foundational to team trust and workflow efficiency.
- **Informal norms:** these include how shift swaps are requested, the care of shared equipment or lockers, and expectations around tidying common areas after use.
- **Hierarchy and responsibility:** understanding the workplace structure (e.g., who gives instructions, whom to report to) supports smoother teamwork. Expectations may vary - some teams rely on detailed guidance; others expect initiative.
- **Feedback and communication channels:** trainees should learn who to approach for help, how to give respectful feedback, and when it is appropriate to raise questions or concerns. In many work cultures, asking for clarification is valued and shows engagement - not disrespect.

Role-specific perspectives:

Kitchen: hierarchy is often clearly defined; timing and pace are tightly coordinated.

Housekeeping: independence is high, but tasks are still reviewed by supervisors.

Front Desk: Cultural awareness, professional language, and tone reflect the company's image.

Stock Assistant: Requires flexibility and alignment with kitchen, service, and procurement teams.

Trainer Tip: use visual tools (staff charts, daily schedules) and real-life scenarios to make team roles and expectations concrete. Invite learners to share their own cultural expectations of workplace behaviour, and compare them to the host context. This promotes awareness, mutual respect, and smoother integration into multicultural teams.

Cultural Sensitivity

In today's hospitality industry, cultural diversity is the norm - not the exception. Migrant women entering this field bring valuable perspectives, but may also face unfamiliar social cues or communication styles. Trainers should support learners in becoming culturally adaptable, respectful, and confident within multicultural teams and guest interactions. Cultural sensitivity in hospitality refers to the ability to recognize, respect, and adapt to the diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors of both guests and team members.

Key Elements of Cultural Diversity in Hospitality

- **Cultural behaviours are not “right or wrong”**: they are shaped by context and upbringing. Emphasize curiosity over judgment.
- **Guest expectations vary**: Politeness, personal space, and tipping habits can differ between cultures. Learners should be encouraged to observe and adapt politely.
- **Team diversity is strength**: Colleagues may speak different languages, follow various dietary or religious practices, or express hierarchy in distinct ways.

Cultural misunderstandings occur when individuals interpret behaviours, gestures, or communication styles through their own cultural lens, leading to confusion, tension, or misjudgement. In multicultural teams - as commonly found in hospitality - these misunderstandings are not signs of failure but natural outcomes of different cultural norms interacting.

At the core is the idea of cultural frames of reference: people unconsciously follow behavioural norms shaped by values, beliefs, and previous experiences. When these norms differ - such as views on hierarchy, eye contact, and tone of voice or conflict resolution styles - miscommunication can arise even without ill intent.

The key to addressing these misunderstandings lies in developing **cultural intelligence (CQ)**: the ability to observe, interpret, and adapt in culturally diverse contexts. This includes:

- **Awareness**: recognizing that not everyone shares the same assumptions or interpretations.
- **Knowledge**: understanding the range of norms across cultures.
- **Mindfulness**: pausing before reacting to unfamiliar behaviour.
- **Adaptability**: adjusting one’s communication style to maintain respect and collaboration.

In the hospitality context, where teamwork and guest interactions depend on smooth, respectful communication, trainers play a crucial role in helping learners build empathy, remain open-minded, and reframe difference as enrichment rather than disruption.

Group Empowerment and Community Integration

In VET training for hospitality, building technical skills is essential—but just as critical is cultivating a sense of **group belonging**, empowerment, and professional confidence. Many migrant women face social barriers, so a supportive training environment can play a transformative role in both their learning and long-term workplace integration.

Peer support within training groups boosts motivation and resilience. Trainers should design group activities that encourage cooperation, shared task solving, and reflection on personal growth. This fosters mutual encouragement and helps women see each other not as competitors, but as allies entering a new industry.

Establishing **social and professional networks** during training builds a sense of continuity into employment. Trainers can encourage networking through peer mentoring, team simulations that reflect real hotel or restaurant settings, and guest speaker visits from experienced staff.

Promoting **gender equity** is key to ensuring fair participation within the group and beyond. Trainers should create space for every voice, model respectful collaboration, and intervene if dominant group patterns emerge. In the hospitality sector, where many teams are mixed and hierarchical, women must feel empowered to speak up, take initiative, and navigate professional settings with confidence.

When group dynamics are strong and inclusive, learners are better prepared to enter diverse hospitality workplaces.

Common challenges faced by multicultural teams.

In hospitality, multicultural teams are common and valuable—but they may face challenges stemming from differences in communication, behaviour, and workplace expectations. These misunderstandings are often unintentional but can influence teamwork and morale if left unaddressed.

Cultural Misunderstandings

Cultural norms shape how people **speak, listen, and collaborate**. In diverse teams, misunderstandings may arise from:

- Differences in **formality or directness**: e.g. giving feedback openly vs. indirectly.
- Body language and non-verbal cues.
- Attitudes toward **hierarchy**, initiative, or asking questions.
- **Different working styles**: some cultures value task focus and speed; others emphasize relationships and harmony. Perceptions of time, urgency, and delegation may vary. For example, one team member may take initiative independently, while another waits for explicit instructions out of respect.

Encouraging learners to reflect on these differences helps build awareness and tolerance, which are essential for successful team integration.

Promoting Teamwork and Cohesion – Theoretical Insights

In multicultural hospitality teams, cohesion does not happen by chance - it must be built through intentional strategies that value each team member's contribution while creating a shared work culture. By using the following strategies during training, trainers can present a well-functioning model for the trainees.

- **Establishing clear communication norms**: use simple, direct language and check for understanding regularly. Encourage clarification rather than assumptions.
- **Setting shared goals early on**: define group objectives collaboratively to foster ownership and mutual responsibility.
- **Creating inclusive group tasks**: use structured team roles in training exercises to ensure everyone contributes equally and learns from each other.
- **Rotating leadership**: allow different participants to lead small tasks or present back to the group - this builds voice and reduces dominance patterns.

- **Building empathy through storytelling:** encourage learners to share professional or cultural experiences that shaped how they work - this deepens appreciation across the group.
- **Addressing language barriers constructively:** Promote peer language support and visual aids. Remind learners that communication is a shared effort, not an individual shortcoming.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

It is essential to introduce key rights and ethical workplace principles during the training, including how to recognize and report unfair treatment or exclusion. Learners should feel confident identifying unsafe or discriminatory behaviour and know which formal and informal channels are available to raise concerns.

Signs of Unfair or Unethical Conduct (prohibited under EU Law)

These behaviours may violate EU workplace regulations and should be recognized as red flags:

- **Discrimination** based on gender, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation
- **Unequal pay** for equal work
- **Harassment** (e.g. sexual, racial, or verbal abuse)
- **Exclusion** from tasks or opportunities due to background or gender
- **Retaliation** after raising a concern or complaint
- **Unjustified dismissal** or demotion
- **Unsafe working conditions** ignored by management
- **Excessive unpaid overtime** or denial of legal breaks
- **Being asked to perform tasks outside legal or contractual scope** (e.g. handling raw meat without training)

Common Steps for Raising Concerns in the Workplace

Trainers can support learners understand that speaking up is a right - not a risk. Typical steps include:

- Speak directly to a supervisor or team leader (if safe and appropriate)
- Use internal reporting channels (e.g. HR department, complaint box, or designated contact person)
- Contact a workers' representative or union delegate
- Refer to the company's Code of Conduct or Equality Policy
- Seek help from national equality bodies or labour inspectorates
- Use external support services (e.g. anti-discrimination agencies, migrant support NGOs)
- Document incidents (dates, people involved, what happened) to support any formal complaint

Section 2 – Guidelines for Training

Interpersonal skills

What activities can be used to improve communication and active listening?

- **Task-based role-plays:** simulate real hospitality tasks (e.g. reporting a room problem, clarifying an order in the kitchen). Rotate roles so each learner practices giving, receiving, and paraphrasing instructions using concise, functional phrases.
- **Instruction relay game:** one trainee reads a short set of instructions (e.g. setting up a buffet station), and another executes the task verbally. Debrief by discussing what was clear, what was misunderstood, and where communication could be improved.
- **Listening circles:** in pairs, one trainee speaks for one minute about a work-related scenario. The other listens silently, and then summarizes what was said. Switch roles and reflect on misunderstandings or assumptions.
- **"Find the Error" listening drill:** read aloud a flawed workplace interaction (e.g. unclear or incorrect instructions) and ask learners to identify where communication failed and propose clearer alternatives.

How can trainers incorporate empathy-building exercises?

- **Service perspective mapping:** ask trainees to reflect on a guest experience where they either felt welcomed or dismissed. Share in pairs, and discuss small behaviours that made a difference (e.g. eye contact, tone, flexibility). Connect reflections to hospitality roles.
- **"In Their Shoes" scenario discussion:** present emotionally nuanced service situations (e.g., a guest is angry about a delayed check-in). Ask learners to step into the customer or colleague perspective and respond empathetically using calm, supportive language without overpromising.
- **Non-Verbal emotion match:** practice recognizing facial expressions and body language with silent video clips or photo prompts. Use smileys to ... the ... Discuss how to adjust service tone accordingly, especially when language is limited.

Which gender-sensitive communication techniques could be implemented?

- **Inclusive language check:** review common hospitality phrases and shift toward neutral, professional terms (e.g. replace “girls, clean the dining area” with “team, please take care of the tables”). Use group discussion to explore how word choices shape respect and confidence.
- **Voice activation rounds:** during group tasks, intentionally rotate the “first speaker” to empower quieter participants. Use prompts like: “Who hasn’t shared their view yet?” to promote balanced participation.
- **Respectful role modelling:** show short videos of respectful interactions where instructions are given collaboratively. Stop the clip at key moments and ask: “How did the colleague invite input?” or “Was this style supportive or dismissive?”
- **Feedback framing:** teach phrases that balance politeness and assertiveness, such as:
 - “Can I make a suggestion?”
 - “I noticed something that might help.” This builds confidence in offering input across gender and hierarchy lines.

Social skills

How Can Teamwork Exercises Be Structured for Maximum Engagement?

In hospitality training, teamwork isn't just about task distribution—it's about learning how to listen, coordinate, trust, and adapt to others in fast-paced, high-pressure environments. For migrant women entering new professional settings, light-hearted experiential exercises create an emotionally safe space where collaboration feels natural, not intimidating.

By incorporating playful teamwork simulations alongside job role-specific scenarios, trainers help learners: build social confidence and cooperation skills, navigate mixed-language group settings, practice empathy and adaptability without fear of failure

- **Job role-specific simulations:** use hands-on scenarios that mirror real hospitality tasks to make learning immediate and relevant:

Kitchen assistant - *Lunch Rush Drill*: simulate plating and handovers during peak service times

Housekeeping - *Room Turnover Relay*: teams prep rooms quickly with clear role division

Front desk operator - *Shift Briefing Role-Play*: practice team updates and clear communication

Stock assistant - *Inventory Chain*: coordinate in small teams to track and report supplies

- **Shared Task–Based Activities**

- *Assembling welcome kits*, folding towel animals, or setting up mock buffets
- *Assign roles within each team so learners depend on one another to complete each phase*

- **Reflection–Based Debriefs**

After each teamwork exercise: host *short group discussions* with questions like: “Where did you help someone?” “How was the tone?” “What could have been easier with better coordination?”

Fun, Low-Stress Simulations to Build Team Spirit

Fun, low-pressure exercises can build key social skills like cooperation, communication, and adaptability and are ideal for warming up diverse training groups while staying loosely tied to hospitality:

- **Tower of Tastes:** teams build the tallest structure using napkins, plastic cups, coffee stirrers, etc. *Skills*: creativity, spatial awareness, and non-verbal coordination
- **Menu Mix-Up Relay:** recreate fictional table setups based on fast verbal instructions using mock menus and props *Skills*: active listening, clarity, and improvisation under time pressure
- **Hospitality Puzzle Race:** teams reassemble chopped-up hospitality-themed images, then describe the scene and roles *Skills*: visual coordination, story-building, and teamwork
- **Service Chain Reaction Game:** each participant adds a gesture to a service sequence (e.g. fold napkin → ring bell → greet guest) *Skills*: memory, flow coordination, and group timing

Adaptation Tips

- Use visuals and tactile tools for low-literacy learners
- Reinforce body language (e.g. nodding when receiving help, smiling on task completion)
- Rotate team roles frequently to build inclusive group dynamics and peer appreciation

What conflict resolution strategies can be taught to trainees?

- **Role-Specific Scenarios:** practice workplace challenges and calm language:
"Let's sort this together.", "Thanks for pointing that out—I'll fix it.", "I didn't know—next time let's leave a quick note."
- **Simple Sentence Frames:** use clear, non-blaming responses like:
"I understand + solution" → *"I understand the mistake - I'll correct it."*
"Let's agree on a plan" → *"Let's decide who uses which space, so it's easier."*
- **Peer-to-Peer Role Plays:** in pairs, one presents a conflict, the other responds using resolution tools. Debrief to build emotional awareness and confidence.

Adaptation Tips: visual cue cards for emotions (frustration, confusion) help non-verbal learners. Translate key phrases into local languages.

How can company culture strengthen collaboration?

- **Daily workflow mapping:** have learners build visual timelines of a typical day for each job role, showing when collaboration happens across departments.
- **"Culture Catch" discussion:** identify behaviours that show respect and responsibility:
 - **Arriving on time** → *supports team timing*
 - **Reporting issues clearly** → *avoids confusion*
- **Simulated interactions with modelling:** trainers demonstrate common exchanges with proper tone, gesture, and hierarchy awareness. Trainees then try the same interactions with feedback.
- **Cross-cultural reflection:** invite trainees to compare workplace expectations in their own culture vs. host country. Use examples like asking for help, giving feedback, or greeting team members.

Adaptation Tips: display company values visually (posters, cards), use multilingual support, and build short discussions into training that allow learners to share their workplace assumptions.

Cultural sensitivity

How can trainers assess their own cultural biases?

Before leading culturally diverse sessions, trainers should reflect on how their own background influences perceptions and reactions.

- **Self-Reflection Journaling:** trainers answer questions like
 - *"What behaviours do I find polite or rude?"*

- “How do I respond to silence, eye contact, and hierarchy?”

Compare these with trainee backgrounds.

- **Bias Mapping:** list common stereotypes and unpack their origin and truth. Discuss how assumptions (e.g. about work pace or dress) may shape expectations.
- **Cultural Swap Dialogue:** in peer exchange, describe one cultural practice and invite a colleague to interpret it. This reveals how perspectives vary.

What are key elements of effective cultural sensitivity training?

Cultural sensitivity works best when it’s relevant, respectful, and grounded in work context.

- **Scenario-Based Exploration:** role-play guest interactions involving differing customs (e.g. varying greeting styles, meal requests during fasting periods).
- **Cultural Contrast Discussion:** compare everyday work habits across cultures (e.g. punctuality, feedback styles, use of humor) and discuss differences neutrally. This can be exercised organically during ongoing training activities - such as after role plays or group work - rather than isolated in a dedicated class. Trainers can pause briefly to highlight cultural patterns observed during interactions and invite learners to share how similar situations are handled in their own cultural context. This approach keeps reflections relevant and connected to practical behaviour.
- **Visual Culture Map:** create posters showing communication styles across regions - direct/indirect, expressive/reserved, individual/group-focused.
- **Language of Respect Workshop:** introduce phrases that build inclusive tone, such as “Let me check what’s common practice here” or “Would you prefer...?”

Adaptation Tip: use multilingual video scenes/movies or hospitality scenes to spark group reflection.

What strategies can trainers use to educate trainees on faith-based customs and their limitations in the workplace?

Trainers should promote understanding while making boundaries clear.

- **Fact vs. Myth Briefings:** provide short, neutral explanations of major faith-based practices (e.g. prayer times, food restrictions), and clarify what's respected vs. regulated.
- **Workplace Scenario Discussion:** e.g. “What happens if prayer time overlaps with peak workload?” Encourage balancing respect with practicality.
- **“Respect, Not Exception” Principle:** emphasize that accommodations may be possible (e.g. flexible breaks) but must align with safety, fairness, and team workflow.

Adaptation Tip: invite guest speakers or community representatives to explain customs firsthand when possible.

How can trainers prepare trainees to balance their cultural practices with organizational requirements?

Help trainees understand that integration does not mean losing identity - it means navigating two sets of expectations respectfully.

- **Dual Perspective Role-Plays:** learners act as staff managing their own practice (e.g. fasting, attire) while responding to employer norms like uniform codes or food handling rules.

- **“Cultural Values vs. Work Values” Charting:** compare values from home culture (e.g. modesty, ritual) with workplace values (e.g. hygiene, equality). Discuss overlap and friction points.
- **Problem-Solving Circle:** present dilemmas (e.g. “Can I wear a scarf in this role?” or “How do I greet guests if physical contact is discouraged?”) and guide group toward respectful solutions.

Adaptation Tip: encourage trainees to ask questions anonymously and build a safe space for clarification.

Group Empowerment and Community Integration

How can trainers encourage group empowerment?

Group empowerment begins when participants feel valued, heard, and part of a shared purpose. Trainers should cultivate peer support and collective confidence through participatory techniques and inclusive atmosphere-building.

- **Shared Story Circles:** in small groups, trainees share personal experiences related to work, migration, or if it is possible, about hospitality or voluntarily. Others listen and reflect on important aspects. → Builds trust, empathy, and mutual respect.
- **Group Decision Activities:** let learners decide together how to structure a training task (e.g. how to divide cleaning duties or arrange a mock front desk, how to order training tasks). → Promotes ownership and collaboration.
- **Empowerment Roles Rotation:** assign rotating roles during sessions—like “group leader,” “motivator,” or “observer” - to help trainees discover leadership qualities
- **Celebration Wall:** dedicate a board or flipchart space for trainees to post achievements (e.g. learning a new phrase, finishing a task early). → Recognizes progress and reinforces group identity

Adaptation Tip: for groups with limited literacy or language skills, use visual symbols, drawings, or role-based stickers to track and celebrate contribution.

What activities can promote community integration in the specific job roles?

Community integration happens when trainees connect their learning to real-world interactions—building social networks beyond the training room and within hospitality teams.

- **Hospitality Buddy System:** pair trainees with a peer or mentor from another job role (e.g. kitchen assistant with front desk staff). Have them shadow each other briefly and debrief on how roles interlink.
- **Local Resource Mapping:** create a visual map of community resources linked to the hospitality field (e.g. job centers, cultural associations, language cafés). Discuss how to access and benefit from each.
- **“Meet the Role” Interviews:** invite former trainees or professionals (even via video calls) to speak about their journey in hospitality. → Builds aspiration and connects participants to real role models.

- **Role-Specific Contribution Games:** learners solve service challenges by combining inputs from different roles. Example: how to prepare a guest room in time for check-in using input from housekeeping, kitchen, and stock assistant.
- **Team Mosaic Activity:** each trainee creates a personal card or tile showing something meaningful about their identity or culture. In small groups, these pieces are assembled into a collective mosaic titled with a hospitality theme (e.g. “What We Bring to Hospitality”, “Together We Serve” or “Our Guest Experience Starts Here”), promoting mutual respect, storytelling, and a strong group identity through visual collaboration.

Adaptation Tip: organize community walk-throughs to nearby hotels or cafes for contextual exposure, if possible.

Common challenges faced by multicultural teams

How can trainers provide solutions to these challenges?

Multicultural teams often encounter misunderstandings due to differing communication styles, expectations, or assumptions. Trainers can respond by building self-awareness, fostering open dialogue, and encouraging proactive communication.

- **Live Conflict Scenarios:** present typical cross-cultural misunderstandings (e.g. direct vs. indirect feedback, differing concepts of personal space). → Have trainees’ role-play respectful response strategies and reflect on emotional triggers.
- **Group Agreements:** create a shared “team code” during training that outlines respectful behaviour, communication norms, and response expectations - co-designed by participants. → Promotes ownership and common ground.
- **Cultural Behavior Cards:** use cards with typical workplace behaviours (e.g. “Ask questions/Doesn’t ask questions,” “Speaks very directly”) and discuss interpretations across cultures. → Builds empathy and reframes assumptions.

Adaptation Tip: let trainees anonymously submit moments when they felt misunderstood and use them as learning examples (with consent).

What are effective team-building exercises in multicultural teams?

Effective team-building in diverse groups focuses on inclusion, mutual appreciation, and low-pressure collaboration.

- **“My Strength, Our Strength” Circle:** trainees name a personal strength (e.g. patience, humor, fast learner), then form mixed-role teams and decide how each strength can support a task. → Builds confidence and interdependence.
- **Cultural Connection Quiz:** create simple questions about customs, greetings, or food across cultures in the group. → Sparks curiosity and breaks stereotypes.
- **Silent Collaboration Challenge:** teams complete a short task (e.g. build a menu display) using only gestures - no talking. → Reveals non-verbal habits and fosters adaptability.

Adaptation Tip: use icons, images, and multilingual support to include all literacy levels.

What role do legal and ethical guidelines play in maintaining respectful interactions and resolving conflicts in diverse teams?

Trainers must equip trainees with basic awareness of workplace rights and conduct to ensure dignity, safety, and fairness in diverse hospitality environments.

- **Mini Legal Briefings:** present simplified summaries of workplace rights (non-discrimination, anti-harassment, fair scheduling, etc.). Use visuals or translated handouts.
- **Boundary Setting Role-Plays:** simulate situations where behaviour crosses a line (e.g. unsolicited contact, insensitive jokes). → Guide learners to respond respectfully and know when to escalate.
- **Ethics Reflection Cards:** give examples of ethical dilemmas (e.g. favoritism, misinformation, privacy) and invite trainees to choose respectful options from a set of responses.

Trainer Tip: clarify that legal and ethical norms protect *everyone* - not just the employer. Encourage open conversation about what “fair treatment” looks like in different cultures.

Section 3 – Case study

Scenario Description

A mid-sized hotel in Vienna hired three migrant women: Sara from Tunisia, Fatima from Syria, and Iulia from Chechenia, as part of a new social employment initiative. They joined an existing housekeeping team that operated on a tightly timed schedule coordinated with front desk operations. While motivated and hardworking, the new team members faced language barriers and had different cultural expectations regarding hierarchy, communication, and task sharing. One common tension arose around the division of tasks during busy morning shifts. The Austrian team leader felt that Fatima was avoiding harder tasks, while she believed she was showing respect by not "taking charge" without being asked.

Analysis and Lessons Learned

The trainer leading this integration process organized weekly feedback circles using visual aids and sentence cards, allowing all team members to express concerns in a safe, structured way. She also implemented short cross-role simulations, where migrants and local staff switched duties temporarily (e.g. prepping rooms, reporting issues to supervisors). Through these exercises, the group discovered that much of the conflict stemmed from indirect communication styles and differing workplace norms. Trainers encouraged the team to create a shared guideline for collaboration - including how to ask for help, rotate tasks fairly, and give feedback respectfully. Conflict resolution scripts and cultural mapping posters were added to the staff room to foster ongoing understanding.

Key Takeaways

- Migrant women often hesitate to assert themselves due to cultural norms around respect and hierarchy.

- Structured role-play and scenario-based reflection foster empathy and clearer communication.
- Creating visual tools and group-designed team codes helps bridge assumptions and builds trust.
- Trainers play a critical role in modelling inclusive behaviour and building space for feedback, especially in fast-paced hospitality roles.

This example reflects the core elements of the module: bridging communication gaps, embracing cultural diversity, empowering participants, and strengthening team cohesion in a real hospitality setting.

Section 4 – Example Exercises

Housekeeping

Role-play scenario: Handling guest requests with cultural sensitivity

Participants act as housekeeping staff responding to a guest's special request (e.g. extra towels, prayer mats, or cleaning preferences based on cultural norms). The role-play simulates potential challenges caused by limited language skills, cultural misunderstandings, and emotional responses from guests. It emphasizes respectful communication, recognition of cultural needs, and confident handling of sensitive interactions.

Trainees practice how to identify hidden expectations, adapt procedures thoughtfully, and respond with professionalism and empathy.

Learning objectives:

- Practice respectful communication
- Recognize and adapt to cultural expectations
- Build confidence in navigating sensitive guest interactions

Scenario Card Setup:

Roles rotate to allow all participants to experience different perspectives.

Each role-play card includes:

- **Role A:** Housekeeping staff member
- **Role B:** Guest with a specific cultural request
- **Observer:** offers reflection and feedback post-role-play

Cultural Guest Requests with Context

1. **Room Layout Adjustment:** guest asks for the rearrangement of certain room items (e.g. bed, chair, prayer mat) to face a spiritual direction such as Mecca or the East. Important for prayer rituals or symbolic harmony.
2. **Avoid Strong Cleaning Products:** guest prefers natural or fragrance-free cleaning agents due to allergic reactions.
3. **Cleaning Sequence Request:** guest asks staff to begin cleaning in a particular room section (e.g. not the bathroom first) to respect ritual purification orders.

Recognizing Cultural Expectations

Trainees learn to:

- Listen actively for indirect or emotionally expressed requests
- Note gestures, discomfort, or urgency
- Ask clarifying questions without prying: “Would it help if we changed the cleaning order?”
- Assume good intention and remain open to learning

Respectful Communication Phrases

Provide trainees with simple language that supports trust:

- “Thank you for letting me know. I’ll make sure that’s arranged.”
- “I’d be happy to adjust the room how you prefer.”
- “Is this position better for you? I want you to feel comfortable.”

Building Confidence in Sensitive Interactions

Empower trainees by encouraging them to:

- Stay calm and non-defensive in unfamiliar situations
- Treat every cultural request as an opportunity to build trust
- Ask for support from supervisors if unsure how to proceed
- Debrief together after the role-play to share takeaways and strategies

Group Activity: Teamwork Challenge in Cleaning Tasks

Participants are divided into small housekeeping teams and presented with a mock hotel room cleaning checklist that includes guest-specific notes requiring cultural sensitivity and creative problem-solving. They must collaboratively plan, delegate, and execute tasks within a simulated time constraint, reflecting realistic coordination challenges in a hotel setting.

Guest Requests

Each team receives a simulated cleaning scenario card with specific guest instructions, such as:

- **Allergy Note:** “Please do not use scented cleaning products.”
- **Religious Items:** “Kindly leave the prayer altar undisturbed.”
- **Cleaning Order Preference:** “Please begin cleaning with the main room area, not the bathroom.”

Additional constraints like “room must be ready in 15 minutes” or “working with limited supplies” may be included to add pressure.

Roles and Team Setup

Teams of 3–5 participants are assigned roles:

- **Room Lead:** Oversees checklist progress and manages timing
- **Cultural Liaison:** Focuses on interpreting guest notes and advising on adaptations
- **Task Delegators:** Divide physical cleaning tasks based on accessibility, comfort level, and strengths
- Optional: **Observer/Trainer:** Monitors communication, planning, and respect for guest sensitivities

Instructions for Trainers

1. Brief participants on guest scenario and room layout
2. Emphasize that requests must be respected and solutions found collaboratively

3. Encourage teams to:
 - a. Discuss possible cleaning plan
 - b. Assign tasks with clear rationale
 - c. Make adaptation choices (e.g., switching to dry cleaning/rearranging order of tasks)
4. Provide a visible timer for 15–20 minutes to simulate real-life hotel timing
5. Observe how teams communicate under pressure and navigate cultural details

Reflection Questions for Housekeeping

- How did you clarify instructions or ask for help during the kitchen task?
- What did you learn from your teammates' cultural cooking tips?
- How did communication affect the outcome of your dish?
- What will you do differently next time to improve teamwork and understanding?

Kitchen Assistance

Role-play scenario: Communicating in a multicultural kitchen

Participants simulate a busy kitchen shift in a multicultural team. One trainee receives a food preparation instruction (e.g. "slice the vegetables thinly") from a colleague who speaks with a strong accent or uses gestures instead of clear words. The trainee must clarify the task respectfully and complete it under time pressure.

Objectives

- Strengthen verbal and non-verbal communication
- Build confidence in asking for help or clarification
- Promote mutual respect across language differences

Role Assignment

Use scenario cards or verbal instructions to assign (roles rotate):

- **Role A – Kitchen Assistant:** receives unclear instructions and must clarify
- **Role B – Multilingual Colleague:** gives instructions using accented speech, gestures, or limited vocabulary
- **Observer:** notes how clarification is handled and gives feedback on tone, body language, and teamwork

Communication Challenge Setup

Trainer provides:

- **A simple kitchen task** (e.g. "prepare salad with thinly sliced cucumbers and carrots")
- **A twist:** the instruction is delivered with unclear pronunciation or gestures
- **Time limit:** 5–7 minutes to complete the task after clarification

Participants must:

- Ask for clarification respectfully
- Use non-verbal cues (pointing, miming)
- Confirm understanding before starting

Example Phrases for Respectful Clarification

Equip trainees with supportive language:

- “Could you please show me what you mean?”
- “Do you mean like this?” (while demonstrating)
- “I want to make sure I understood correctly - can you repeat that slowly?”

Role-Play Scenario: Managing Guest Complaints with Empathy

Participants work in small teams to prepare a simple dish (e.g. vegetable stir-fry or salad). Roles rotate between **prep**, **cooking**, and **plating**. Each member shares a cultural cooking tip or tradition (e.g. spice use, cutting technique, plating style). The activity fosters cooperation, cultural exchange, and instruction-following in a dynamic kitchen setting.

Team Setup & Roles

Teams of 3–5 participants (roles rotate):

- **Prep Lead:** organizes ingredients and assigns cutting tasks
- **Cook Lead:** manages cooking process and timing
- **Plating Lead:** arranges final dish and presents it
- **Cultural Contributor:** shares a personal or cultural cooking insight during the process

Instructions for Trainers

1. Choose a simple, culturally neutral dish
2. Provide basic ingredients and tools
3. Encourage participants to:
 - share cooking tips from their background
 - practice giving and receiving instructions clearly
 - support each other through the process
4. Set a time limit (20–30 minutes)
5. Observe how teams communicate and adapt

Reflection Questions for Kitchen Assistance

- How did you clarify instructions or ask for help during the kitchen task?
- What did you learn from your teammates’ cultural cooking tips?
- How did communication affect the outcome of your dish?
- What will you do differently next time to improve teamwork and understanding?

Front Desk Operation

Role-play scenario: Managing guest complaints with empathy

Participants simulate a real-life front desk interaction where a guest expresses frustration (e.g. noisy room, delayed check-in, missing amenities). One trainee plays the guest, while another acts as front desk staff tasked with de-escalating the situation and offering a solution.

Learning Objectives

- Practice emotional regulation and conflict de-escalation
- Build confidence in guest-facing interactions
- Develop solution-oriented thinking under pressure

Role Assignment

Use scenario cards or verbal instructions to assign (roles rotate):

- **Role A – Front Desk Staff:** responds to the complaint with empathy and professionalism
- **Role B – Guest:** expresses dissatisfaction, possibly with emotional intensity
- **Observer/Manager:** provides feedback on tone, body language, and resolution strategy

Complaint Scenarios (Examples)

Trainers can choose from realistic guest complaints, which reflect common frustrations and emotional triggers in hospitality settings.

- “My room was too noisy last night - I couldn’t sleep.”
- “I waited 30 minutes to check in. Why was no one at the desk?”
- “I booked a room with a balcony, but I didn’t get one.”

Instructions for Trainers

1. Brief participants on the scenario and emotional tone
2. Encourage the **guest** to express their concern authentically
3. Guide the **front desk staff** to:
 - Use active listening (eye contact, nodding, paraphrasing)
 - Validate the guest’s feelings without defensiveness
 - Offer a solution or next step (e.g. room change, apology, compensation)
4. Debrief with observers to highlight strengths and areas for growth

Example Phrases for Empathetic Communication

Equip trainees with supportive language:

- “I’m really sorry to hear that - it must have been frustrating.”
- “Thank you for bringing this to our attention. Let me see how I can help.”
- “I understand your concern. I’ll do my best to make things right.”

Group activity: Team-building exercise to improve social interactions

Participants rotate through short role-play scenarios involving **greetings**, **check-ins**, and **problem-solving**. Each round includes a **guest**, **receptionist**, and **manager**. The goal is to explore different perspectives and improve verbal and non-verbal communication in front desk settings.

Role Setup

Teams of 3 rotate through:

- **Guest:** expresses a need or concern
- **Receptionist:** responds with professionalism
- **Manager:** supports resolution or observes interaction

Scenarios may include: handling a double-booking error or assisting a guest with a special request (e.g. late checkout)

Instructions for Trainers

1. Provide scenario prompts and role cards
2. Encourage participants to:
 - Use clear, friendly greetings
 - Practice tone modulation and body language
 - Switch roles to understand different responsibilities

3. Debrief after each round to discuss communication styles and emotional impact

Reflection Questions for Front Desk Operation

- How did empathy and tone influence the guest's reaction?
- What helped you stay calm and solution-focused during the complaint?
- How did switching roles change your understanding of guest service?
- What will you apply in future interactions to improve guest satisfaction?

Stock Management Assistance

Role-play scenario: Working with diverse suppliers and colleagues

Participants simulate a stock delivery interaction with a supplier who speaks a different language or has unfamiliar expectations. The trainee must confirm the delivery, identify a discrepancy (e.g. missing or incorrect items), and resolve the issue respectfully.

Learning Objectives

- Practice respectful and assertive communication
- Navigate cultural and logistical differences
- Build confidence in resolving delivery issues professionally

Role Assignment

Use scenario cards or verbal instructions to assign (roles rotate):

- **Role A – Stock Assistant:** receives and checks the delivery
- **Role B – Supplier Representative:** speaks with limited local language or uses different terminology
- **Observer/Colleague:** notes how the discrepancy is handled and provides feedback on tone, clarity, and problem-solving

Delivery Scenario Setup

Trainers provide a mock delivery note with:

- **Item mismatch:** e.g. 10 units expected, only 8 delivered
- **Label confusion:** e.g. product labeled differently than expected
- **Language barrier:** supplier uses unfamiliar terms or gestures

Participants must:

- Confirm the delivery
- Identify and describe the issue
- Resolve it respectfully and assertively

Example Phrases for Assertive Communication

Equip trainees with supportive language:

- "I noticed a difference in the quantity—can we check it together?"
- "Could you help me understand this label? It looks different than expected."
- "Let's find a solution that works for both of us."

Group activity: Collaborative inventory management exercise

Participants work in small teams to organize a mock inventory list that includes **missing**, **mislabeled**, or **duplicated** items. They must collaboratively sort, label, and report discrepancies using a shared tracking sheet. The activity simulates real-life coordination in a stockroom and emphasizes attention to detail, teamwork, and communication.

Team Setup & Roles

Teams of 3–5 participants (roles rotate):

- **Inventory Lead:** oversees sorting and tracking
- **Label Checker:** verifies item names and codes
- **Reporter:** documents discrepancies and prepares a summary
- **Logistics Liaison:** suggests solutions and communicates with trainer/supplier role

Instructions for Trainers

1. Provide a mock inventory list with intentional errors
2. Include physical or printed item cards for sorting
3. Encourage teams to:
 - Identify and correct errors
 - Discuss how to report issues clearly
 - Use respectful language when proposing corrections
4. Set a time limit (15–20 minutes) to simulate real-time pressure
5. Observe how teams communicate and delegate tasks

Reflection Prompts for Stock Management Assistance

- How did clear communication help you identify and resolve issues?
- What cultural or language differences did you encounter—and how did you adapt?
- How did your team share responsibility and solve problems together?
- What will you apply in future supplier or stockroom interactions to improve accuracy and collaboration?

Section 5 - Impact Assessment and Self-Assessment Tools

To ensure that refugee women in hospitality training can recognize their growth and trainers can support their development effectively, this section offers practical tools for assessing interpersonal and social skills.

Self-Rating Scale

Self-rating helps trainees build awareness of their own interpersonal strengths and areas for growth. It encourages reflection and boosts confidence by showing progress over time. Trainers can use the results to identify common challenges, tailor support, and celebrate individual achievements. This tool is especially valuable for tracking subtle changes in communication, teamwork, and self-expression that may not be immediately visible.

- Simple checklist with statements like rated from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much)
“I feel confident communicating with people from different backgrounds.”

“I can work effectively in a team under pressure.”
“I can ask for help when I need it.”
“I listen actively and respectfully to others.”
“I can work effectively in a team, even under pressure.”

Reflective Prompts

Reflective prompts encourage trainees to think deeply about their experiences, emotions, and interactions during training. This process helps build self-awareness, emotional resilience, and cultural sensitivity - key interpersonal skills in hospitality roles. Trainers can use these prompts at the end of activities or training days to spark meaningful discussion, support personal growth, and foster a safe, inclusive learning environment.

Can be written, spoken, or shared in pairs/groups depending on literacy levels and comfort, but they don't need to be formal or always written - they can be playful, visual, and tech-friendly. Here are some engaging ways to implement them:

- **Post-it Reflections:** trainees write their answers on colorful post-its and stick them on a flipchart, wall, or even the door as they leave. This creates a visual “reflection wall” and encourages sharing without pressure.
- **Sticker Voting:** use emoji stickers or dots to respond to prompts like “How confident did I feel today?” on a shared chart.
- **Digital Tools:**
 - AhaSlides: great for live polls, word clouds, and Q&A sessions with a playful interface. <https://ahaslides.com/>
 - Poll Everywhere: ideal for real-time feedback and integrates with PowerPoint. <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>
 - Slido – Simple and effective for live Q&A and pulse checks. <https://www.slido.com/>
 - Kahoot! – Gamified quizzes that can include reflection questions. <https://kahoot.com/>
 - Slides With Friends – Combines live feedback with fun formats like photo sharing and emoji ratings. <https://slideswith.com/templates>

Sample Prompts:

“What did I learn about myself today?”
“How did I respond to a challenge or misunderstanding?”
“What cultural insight surprised me?”
“When did I feel most confident or proud?”
“How did someone else support me today?”
“What would I do differently next time in a team situation?”
“What made me feel included or excluded?”
“How did I show respect or empathy today?”

Personal Development Tracker

The Personal Development Tracker is a simple weekly tool that helps trainees set small, achievable goals related to their interpersonal and social growth. By reflecting on their efforts and emotions,

trainees build ownership of their learning journey and gain confidence in applying new skills. Trainers can review these trackers weekly to offer encouragement, celebrate progress, and adjust support where needed.

- **Structure:**
 - **My goal for this week** (e.g. “Speak up in group discussion”)
 - **What I did to achieve it**
 - **How I felt about my progress**
- **Use:** Reviewed weekly with trainer or peers in a supportive, non-judgmental setting
- **Benefit:** Builds self-awareness, motivation, and a sense of achievement

Sample Goals

These goals can be adapted to each job role and trainee’s comfort level:

“Ask a question per day during group training.”

“Learn and use one polite phrase per day in the local language.”

“Share my opinion in a team discussion.”

“Help a teammate complete a task.”

“Stay calm and polite when something goes wrong.”

Mini Peer Review

Mini peer reviews offer trainees a chance to give and receive positive, constructive feedback in a safe and supportive environment. This practice strengthens interpersonal bonds, builds mutual respect, and helps participants recognize their own and others’ social strengths. For refugee women, it can be especially empowering to hear affirmations from peers and learn to express appreciation confidently.

- **Use:** after group exercises or role-play activities; can be verbal or written
- **Trainer Tip:** model respectful language and guide participants in giving kind, specific feedback

Sample Peer Review Prompts

“One thing I appreciated about your teamwork was...”

“You helped me feel included when you...”

“I noticed you stayed calm and respectful when...”

“You explained something clearly and helped me understand.”

“You showed kindness when you...”

“I felt supported by you when we worked together on...”

These short exchanges help trainees reflect on their behavior, build empathy, and develop the confidence to communicate openly—key qualities in hospitality roles.

Mixed Methods for Inclusive Evaluation

To ensure accessibility and relevance across multicultural groups:

- Combine quantitative tools (scales, checklists) with qualitative methods (journals, discussions)
- Use visual aids or translated versions where needed

- Allow for verbal reflection in group settings for low-literacy participants

Implementation Tips

- Keep tools short and easy to use (5–10 minutes max)
- Integrate assessments naturally into training flow (e.g. after bigger session, after a topic or section, after each module)

MODUL 2

RESILIENT MINDS: MENTAL WELLBEING SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE WOMEN



Foto von Anna Shvets: <https://www.pexels.com/de-de/foto/hande-menschen-freunde-zusammen-4672720/>

Resilient Minds: Mental Wellbeing Support for Refugee Women

Module 2 is an essential tool for trainers working with refugee women in the hospitality industry. Many have lived through traumatic experiences that affect their wellbeing and learning, so it is key to accompany them with respect, empathy and support.

The content addresses the psychosocial effects of their experiences in a culturally and gender-sensitive way, identifying stigma, barriers and signs of stress and trauma. It includes real cases, good practices and trauma-informed pedagogical strategies, as well as practical tools to create safe, motivating and emotionally sustainable environments.

Techniques to reduce stress, build self-esteem and foster social relationships that contribute to a sense of belonging are also proposed.

The module does not seek to train therapists, but trainers who take care, listen and structure. Because the quality of the pedagogical bond can make the difference between abandoning a training or turning it into a transformative opportunity.

Section 1 – Theoretical background with key topics

1.1. Mental health awareness:

- Understanding common mental health issues

The main cultures of origin of refugee women in Greece, Germany, Austria and Spain are grouped into two main blocks:

- Muslim cultures, such as those of Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Morocco, marked by traditional values, patriarchal structures and experiences of violence or conflict.
- Latin American cultures, especially in Spain, from Venezuela, Colombia or Peru. Although they share the same language, they face similar emotional and structural challenges.

Both groups are exposed to migration trauma, gender stigma and barriers to accessing psychosocial support.

In the general population, the most common disorders are anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to WHO (2022), more than 13% of the world's population has a diagnosable mental disorder.

According to the DSM-5 (APA, 2013):

- Generalised anxiety: persistent excessive worry for at least six months, with symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, irritability, insomnia and muscle tension.
- Major depression: depressed mood much of the day, loss of interest, fatigue, disturbed sleep or appetite, excessive guilt and thoughts of death.
- PTSD: occurs after traumatic events, with re-experiencing, avoidance, cognitive disturbances and constant alertness.

In refugee women, these disorders are more frequent and severe, due to gender-based violence, forced migration, loss of family environment and structural discrimination. A meta-analysis by Turrini et al. (2017) reports that 30-40% of refugees have symptoms of PTSD, and 40-50% have symptoms of depression or anxiety, with women being more vulnerable.

In the case of Latin American women, prolonged migratory mourning is common, combining the loss of territory, ties, language and social status. This is accompanied by feelings of guilt, nostalgia and isolation, compounded by racism and xenophobia. As one participant in an IOM study (2020) recounted: "Here I am nobody. In my country I was a teacher, here they look at me as if I don't know how to do anything."

Muslim women face additional barriers: cultural stigma that associates psychological problems with spiritual weakness or divine punishment makes it difficult to seek help. Moreover, Islamophobia in Europe generates insecurity, discrimination and pressure to hide signs of religious identity. A young Syrian woman interviewed by Abdelhady (2019) stated: "I changed jobs three times because my bosses did not want me to wear the veil".

In summary, the most common mental health disorders in refugee women are clinically based, but are strongly conditioned by the context of violence, discrimination and life instability. Understanding these dynamics is key to effective and culturally adapted intervention.

▪ How can trainers address common mental health issues?

Although trainers are not mental health professionals, they play a key role as reference figures in training settings. Their daily presence, listening skills and accompanying role can make a significant difference to the emotional well-being of refugee women.

Their work focuses on identifying signs of distress, creating safe spaces and respecting cultural differences. To this end, the following tools are highlighted:

- **Active listening and emotional validation:** Based on Rogers' (1961) proposal, active listening involves genuine attention, without interruptions or judgements. Emotional validation is recognising that the other person's feelings make sense, even if they are not fully understood.
- **Cultural understanding and adaptation:** Every culture expresses suffering differently. It is essential to avoid one-size-fits-all interpretations of emotional behaviour and to be open to expressive diversity.
- **Emotionally safe environment:** Creating a safe formative space involves establishing clear rules, respectful relationships and tolerance for error. This is especially important for people living with trauma, who may be hypervigilant or fearful of judgement.

- **Referral to specialised resources:** The trainer should not act as a therapist, but can detect warning signs and facilitate access to professional support. It is important to bear in mind that barriers such as language, institutional fear or lack of documentation can make it difficult to seek help.
- **Trainer self-care:** Accompanying processes marked by trauma can be emotionally draining. Recognising signs of compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002) and having regular spaces of care among the team - such as short mutual support meetings - helps to sustain an ethical and sustainable intervention.

▪ *Influence of company culture on mental health*

The work environment has a direct impact on the mental health of working people. For refugee women, this influence is even more significant due to their structurally vulnerable situation. An inclusive, safe and empathetic corporate culture can be a protective factor against emotional distress. Conversely, authoritarian, disorganised or discriminatory work environments can exacerbate symptoms of anxiety, withdrawal or trauma.

Corporate culture refers to the set of values, norms, behaviours, relationships and internal dynamics that characterise an organisation. It includes how decisions are made, how employees are treated, what is expected of them and what kind of relationships are fostered.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2022), psychosocial factors in the work environment such as leadership style, workload, internal communication or recognition influence mental well-being as much as physical or economic conditions.

In the hospitality sector, one of the most precarious sectors, some common characteristics may pose psychosocial risks for refugee women workers:

- Rigid hierarchical structures and authoritarian treatment.
- Lack of recognition or invisibility of effort.
- Communication based on orders, with no room for listening.
- Ambiguity of roles or ill-defined tasks.
- Pressure for productivity and a fast pace without breaks.
- Sexism, racism or Islamophobia normalised in the team.

On the contrary, a healthy corporate culture promotes emotional well-being, integration and job retention, which are key elements of a healthy corporate culture:

- Empathetic leadership.
- Horizontal and clear communication.
- Recognition of effort.
- Prevention of discrimination.
- Emotional support and accompaniment.

Proposals for training environments and host companies to support the mental health of their workers could include the following:

- **Emotionally safe environments:** Eliminating shouting, humiliation or authoritarian practices. Promoting clear and respectful rules of coexistence.
- **Mandatory training** in rights, equality and gender perspective.

- **Protected internal communication channels:** Welfare referents. Suggestion boxes or group spaces.
- Positive **recognition** policies.
- **Restorative circles** of listening and support.

Real-life testimonies provide insight into the impact of corporate culture on the emotional health of refugee women. Below are contrasting examples by country, reflecting discriminatory practices (negative) and inclusive and humanising environments (positive):

- Spain: "I asked if I could pray for 10 minutes and they told me that this was not spiritual tourism. (Anonymous testimony collected by Red Cross, 2020).
- Spain: "In the cooperative they asked me how I was every morning, not just whether I had done the task. I felt like a person, not just a labour force". (Testimony included in evaluation interviews of the Mescladís socio-occupational insertion programme, Barcelona, 2022).
- Germany: "I had experience as a pastry chef, but they only let me wash dishes. They told me that they couldn't put me in front of the public wearing a veil". (Flüchtlingsrat Berlin, 2020).
- Germany: "My tutor in Kiezküchen asked me if I felt comfortable in the kitchen, if I needed to adapt my uniform. I felt cared for, for the first time since I left Syria". (Testimony from the Arrivo Berlin Women programme, quoted in the 2020 impact assessment of Kiezküchen, Berlin).
- Austria: "My boss offered me two different jobs and asked me which one suited me best. I had never been asked that before. (Caritas Wien, 2021).
- Austria: "I spent weeks cleaning toilets in a hotel without anyone talking to me. Neither the bosses nor the colleagues. It was as if I didn't exist. (Testimony documented in focus groups conducted by Caritas Wien within the programme Integration und Arbeit für geflüchtete Frauen, 2021).
- Greece: "My boss patiently showed me the machine and told me that I was a fast learner. I cried with emotion. (Melissa Network, 2022).
- Greece: "They shouted at me all the time because I didn't understand Greek well. They never explained anything to me. I left in tears after the third day". (Testimony recorded during fieldwork with refugee women in hospitality in Thessaloniki as part of Solidarity Now's Hospitality Routes to Integration project, 2021).

▪ Recognizing signs of stress and trauma

Stress and trauma are common experiences among refugee women, caused by violence, forced migration, discrimination and life insecurity. These factors directly impact their emotional health, learning and socio-occupational integration. While trainers should not diagnose, it is essential that they identify signs of distress and act with empathy and respect. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model, stress is a dynamic process in which the individual assesses whether the challenges of the environment exceed his or her personal resources. When this appraisal is negative and persistent, it can lead to physical, emotional and cognitive symptoms.

In refugee women, stress is often chronic and cumulative, linked to factors such as forced displacement, loss of home and ties, language and cultural barriers, structural discrimination or legal insecurity.

- **Frequent symptoms of stress:**

- Physical: headaches, back or stomach aches without medical cause, insomnia, persistent fatigue...
- Cognitive: difficulty in concentrating, forgetfulness, slowness or blockages...
- Emotional: irritability, anxiety, crying, withdrawal...
- Behavioural: isolation, absences, avoidance of certain tasks, etc.

Example 1: During a cooking class, a Colombian woman fails to follow a simple recipe, avoids eye contact and at the end says: "I'm not sleeping, my head can't take it any more".

Example 2: In a stock activity, a Syrian woman tenses up when asked to repeat a calculation. She raises her voice and then isolates herself. The trainer avoids confronting her and adapts the task after a discussion with her.

- **Lazarus and Folkman identify two main stress coping strategies:**
 - Problem-focused: the person tries to change the situation (e.g. learning the language, looking for a job).
 - Emotion-focused: seeks to alleviate discomfort (e.g. crying, praying, avoidance).

When the environment is perceived as hostile or uncontrollable - for example, due to migration status or traumatic experiences - it is common to resort to emotion-focused strategies. Far from being a form of passivity, these behaviours can be adaptive.

Example 3: An Afghan woman avoids practices in closed rooms and asks for visible tasks. Although this can be interpreted as avoidance, it is a form of self-protection against previous trauma.

Psychological trauma occurs when an extreme event overwhelms coping capacity and leaves a permanent sense of threat. According to the DSM-5 (APA, 2013), symptoms are grouped into:

- **Re-experiencing:** flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive memories.
- **Avoidance:** refusal to remember or talk about the event, avoidance of associated places or people.
- **Emotional and cognitive disturbances:** detachment, guilt, loss of interest.
- **Hyperarousal:** hypervigilance, restlessness, irritability, insomnia.

Observable symptoms in refugee women of psychological trauma: emotional blockage, feeling of constant danger, difficulty to trust, avoidance of tasks or environments, etc.

Testimonial (UNHCR, 2021): "Every time someone shouts in class, I block myself. It reminds me of when the soldiers broke the door of my house".

Indirect signals to be observed by trainers:

- **Physical:** bodily tension, absent gaze, somatic complaints...
- **Cognitive:** disorganisation, frequent errors, confusion, etc.
- **Emotional:** crying, mood swings, apathy...
- **Behavioural:** withdrawal, changes in participation, avoidance of tasks or people...

Example 4: A Venezuelan woman starts to fail at simple tasks and isolates herself. The trainer, on approaching her, discovers that her family is facing possible deportation.

- Typical sources of stress in the 4 job roles

Refugee women entering employment in the hospitality sector often occupy operational positions that combine high physical or emotional demands, low autonomy and little recognition. These conditions, if not managed sensitively, can intensify pre-existing psychological distress, increase job turnover and hinder integration.

Kitchen assistant.

- **Sources of stress:** Fast pace, pressure for deadlines. Direct and hierarchical communication, often without positive feedback. Continuous exposure to heat, noise and strong smells. Lack of adequate rest or breaks. Technical language in another language.
- **Observable symptoms:** Irritability, muscle tension, persistent fatigue. Avoidance of high-paced tasks or group work. Hypervigilance or startled by shouting. Physical complaints (dizziness, headaches, gastric problems).
- **Real-life example in Greece:** A Syrian woman, a kitchen assistant in a restaurant in Athens, left her job after a week. In her testimony collected by Melissa Network (2022), she explained: "They were shouting at me all the time. I didn't know if I was doing something wrong. I had a stomachache every day before I came in".
- **Example of good practice in Germany:** In Kiezküchen (Berlin), kitchen managers are trained in non-violent communication, and mentoring pairs are established for new female employees. This reduces initial anxiety and promotes integration (internal evaluation, 2020).

Housekeeping.

- **Sources of stress:** Physically demanding, fast-paced work. Strict standards of cleanliness and presentation. Loneliness in performing tasks (individual work). Contact with intimate spaces or personal remains, which may reactivate traumas. Rigid supervision or supervision based on surprise inspections.
- **Observable symptoms:** Extreme tiredness or difficulty in initiating tasks. Avoidance of certain rooms (with smells, intimate objects, clutter). Crying, withdrawal or absence after emotionally demanding tasks. Hypervigilance or discomfort when alone in closed rooms.
- **Real-life example in Spain:** At a training workshop for hotel cleaning in Malaga, an Afghan woman refused to enter a room alone. She later revealed that she had been locked in during her escape. The team adapted the activity to always work in pairs (source: internal Red Cross memory, 2020).
- **Example of good practice in Austria:** Das Columbus Café offers rotating contracts for room, kitchen and cleaning duties to avoid overloading a single role. It also allows scheduled breaks every 90 minutes, reducing fatigue and anxiety (Caritas Wien, 2021).

Front Desk Operation.

- **Sources of stress:** Continuous interaction with customers in different languages. Exposure to conflicts with dissatisfied customers. Demands on appearance and personal presentation. Pressure to solve problems quickly. Lack of formal training in the use of computer systems.
- **Observable symptoms:** Insecurity, excessive hesitation in speaking. Fear of making mistakes in public. Insomnia, panic attacks before shifts. Avoidance of interactions or rigidity in body language.
- **Real-life example in Germany:** An Iraqi woman hired as a receptionist was mocked for her accent. Reporting in Flüchtlingsrat Berlin (2020), she said: "Every word came out as if everyone was judging me. One customer told me I sounded like a terrorist."
- **Example of good practice in Greece:** The Philoxenia Inn Hotel (Kavala), in partnership with Melissa Network, implemented a co-reception programme, where new workers share tasks with a Greek colleague during their first weeks. This reduces the fear of error and allows them to learn functional vocabulary in context (Melissa Network, 2022).

Stock Management Assistance.

- **Sources of stress:** Invisible tasks, with little recognition. Expectations of high accuracy and inventory control. Closed, cold or poorly lit spaces. Little social interaction, isolation. Physical burden of moving goods.
- **Observable symptoms:** Back pain or muscle complaints. Irritability, frustration at not being listened to. Errors in counting, loss of concentration. Withdrawal or feeling of worthlessness.
- **Real-life example in Austria:** An Eritrean woman worked in a hotel warehouse without receiving clear instructions. She was aggressively corrected for ordering mistakes. In interviews conducted by Caritas Wien (2021), she recounted: "Nobody told me anything, they just left me in the warehouse. I thought it was a punishment."
- **Example of good practice in Spain:** In the Mescladís cooperative, tasks are rotated between kitchen, warehouse and customer service to avoid solitary routines and weekly team meetings are held to listen to everyone's contributions (Mescladís, Report 2022).

1.2. Stress reduction techniques: suggestion & examples to handle stress-sources

▪ Mindfulness and relaxation techniques

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques are accessible and culturally adaptable practices that help reduce stress, improve concentration and promote emotional self-regulation. For refugee women, these tools can be especially helpful in counteracting hypervigilance, exhaustion and repetitive thoughts stemming from traumatic experiences or chronic stress. According to Kabat-Zinn (1990), Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention to the present moment with acceptance, without judgement. Its effectiveness in emotionally charged environments has been widely demonstrated (Goyal et al., 2014; Creswell, 2017), including in refugee intervention contexts (Schulz, 2021).

- **Mindfulness exercises:** Mindfulness is about training the ability to be present in the present moment without judgement. It does not require a lot of time or absolute silence, and can be applied in real work contexts.
- **General exercises in training:** Start of the day consciously, 3 minutes of deep breathing with feet on the floor, observing the body and the mood without forcing it. This can be done in a group or silently on arrival.

- **Transition between activities:** a 2-minute pause to close your eyes, breathe and release accumulated tension.
- **Emotional closing of the day:** a word or symbol that expresses how each one is leaving, or a positive phrase as an exit ritual.

Let's look at a practical example in Spain: In the Mescladís cooperative (Barcelona), a daily practice of "welcome breathing" was introduced at the start of shifts and a 3-minute break with quiet music in the middle of the working day. According to their 2022 evaluation, 78% of the workers rated this measure positively as helping them to "start in a better mood" or "feel more focused".

Cultural considerations and adaptations: In Muslim women, Mindfulness practice can be integrated with religious elements, such as breathing accompanied by a verse from the Koran or an invocation. In Latin American women, visualisations can include landscapes or scenes from the country of origin, family or religious elements (candles, flowers, nature).

▪ Addressing the time management and work-life balance

Overburdened responsibilities, job insecurity and difficulties in meeting personal and family obligations create constant stress for many refugee women. In addition to their productive role, they often take on the care of children, family members and households - both in the host country and in the country of origin - which increases their mental and emotional burden. Promoting healthy time management and facilitating work-life balance improves their well-being, promotes retention in training and employment, and reduces dropout.

Practical proposals for training and work environments:

- **Organise and prioritise tasks:** teaching tools such as the Eisenhower matrix helps reduce overwhelm and improves autonomy.
- **Promote realistic routines:** establish stable, flexible and understandable schedules, adapted to personal and family rhythms.
- **Encourage self-reflection:** with short questions such as "What do I need today to be better organised?"
- **Making invisible work visible:** reflecting as a group on the mental and domestic burden that impacts on training or employment.
- **Encourage structured flexibility:** allow for adjustments in schedules or family breaks without creating stigma.

Examples of good practice:

- **Spain - Red Cross Malaga:** In a job placement programme, refugee mothers were offered personalised accompaniment to coordinate school, medical and work schedules. Catering companies offered adapted schedules at the start. One participant commented: "I felt I could work without failing my children".
- **Germany - Kiezküchen (Berlin):** Participatory time planning was implemented. Workers negotiated shifts according to their family needs, which increased regular attendance by 30 %, especially among single mothers.

- **Austria - Caritas Wien:** Visual sessions on time management, tailored to women with low literacy, were integrated. Part-time internships were available for those caring for family members. One Syrian woman noted: "I didn't have to choose between taking care of my mother and learning a job."
- **Greece - Melissa Network:** Group spaces were provided to share work-life balance strategies. In collaboration with hotel companies, rotating shifts and planning workshops with multilingual physical calendars were established, improving autonomy and reducing absenteeism.

Refugee women cannot manage work stress without time, support and recognition. Including time management tools and policies sensitive to gender and migration context is essential to promote their emotional well-being and real integration.

▪ Health and safety protocols importance on stress reduction

Health and safety at work should not be limited to preventing physical accidents. They must also include mental health protection, especially for vulnerable groups such as refugee women. Unaddressed chronic stress can lead to disorders that directly affect performance, attendance and retention. Including psychosocial stress prevention in workplace protocols not only improves workers' health, but also creates more humane, sustainable and effective environments.

Key elements for emotional health protocols:

- **Psychosocial risk assessment:** incorporate questions on stress, anxiety, emotional burden and work relationships. Ensure that they can express themselves confidentially or anonymously.
- **Structured breaks:** set up breaks every 90 minutes for physically demanding tasks (cooking, cleaning, storage). Provide quiet spaces where they can relax without being judged.
- **Training in self-care and emotional first aid:** teaching how to detect signs of burnout, anxiety or retraumatisation. Ensure that caregivers and trainers receive basic training in how to accompany without harming.
- **Emotional crisis protocol:** define how to act if a worker goes into crisis: respect her space, offer water, allow her to leave, and warn her discreetly. Avoid minimising phrases ("it's no big deal").
- **Psychological support network:** include referral to entities that offer free or affordable psychosocial care, with a gender and intercultural approach.

Examples of good practice:

- **Spain - Red Cross Malaga:** Designed an internal protocol to deal with emotional crises in training, with an action sheet for the teaching team and an agreement with a psychological care centre. This measure reduced the number of dropouts due to emotional distress.
- **Germany - Kiezküchen (Berlin):** Breaks are integrated into the work schedule. A "decompression space" with music and plants was made available during the working day. It came about after a survey showed high levels of fatigue.
- **Austria - Caritas Wien:** Incorporates a monthly review of psychosocial risks, carried out by an external person in a confidential atmosphere. Based on the results, tasks and shifts are adjusted. The approach is preventive and not punitive.

- **Greece - Melissa Network / Hotel Philoxenia Inn (Kavala):** Includes flexible breaks and monthly supervisions with explicit questions on emotional well-being. Since its implementation, absenteeism has been reduced by 40 %.

Stress prevention should be an essential part of any occupational health protocol. Protecting the emotional wellbeing of refugee women is not an extra, but a condition for their viable, dignified and sustainable integration into the workplace. Sensitive institutional intervention contributes to more inclusive spaces and higher quality work.

1.3. Trauma-informed teaching methods:

Working with refugee women in training contexts requires more than empathy: it involves understanding how trauma impacts on learning, relationships and participation. Many have experienced violence, forced migration or loss, the emotional aftermath of which can influence how they interact and learn.

Trauma-informed care does not seek to treat past wounds, but to provide a safe, stable and predictable educational environment. This approach reduces the fear of re-victimisation, and promotes confidence, self-esteem and meaningful learning, thus fostering more humane and sustainable integration processes.

▪ What are the principles of advanced trauma-informed care?

Working with refugee women in educational settings requires an understanding of how trauma can affect the way they learn, relate and participate. Trauma-informed care does not aim to intervene clinically, but to create safe, stable and predictable spaces that support confidence, self-esteem and meaningful learning. Based on the model developed by SAMHSA (2014), this approach is structured around six key principles, which are also applicable in educational and training contexts:

Principle no. 1. Physical and emotional safety: The environment should avoid triggering traumatic memories, both physically (light, noise, enclosed spaces) and relationally (respectful treatment, no shouting or judgement). Practical application: Avoid public exposure of mistakes, do not force people to talk about personal experiences, ask for consent before pairing up or engaging in physical dynamics.

Principle 2. Trust and transparency: Information must be communicated clearly: what is going to happen, when and why. Consistency and stability strengthen security. Practical application: Show the schedule for the day, anticipate changes, clearly explain assessments or new activities, and maintain consistency between what is said and what is done.

Principle 3. Support and empowerment: Providing choices reinforces a sense of control and self-esteem. Practical application: Allowing choice between tasks, verbally acknowledging progress, providing space for participants to give feedback on pace or content.

Principle 4. Collaboration and shared decision-making: Encouraging a participatory and non-hierarchical approach fosters trust. Practical application: Create rules of coexistence in the group, agree on breaks or distribution of space, ask how they feel before starting certain dynamics.

Principle 5. Consideration of history and cultural context: Respect cultural and personal identities, avoiding one-size-fits-all interpretations of how a person should participate. Practical application: Accept the use of the mother tongue in emotional moments, allow different forms of participation (observing is also participating), do not impose physical contact or personal narratives.

Principle 6. Prevention of re-traumatisation: Avoid dynamics that relive experiences of control, violence or excessive exposure. Practical application: Do not include conflict simulations, do not push to share personal experiences, review content to avoid triggering elements.

▪ *Creating a safe and supportive learning environment*

For many refugee women, learning is only possible when they feel physically, emotionally and relationally safe. Experiences of violence, loss or displacement can leave scars that affect their participation, concentration or confidence. A safe environment does not eliminate difficulties but provides a space where people can express themselves without fear of judgement or exposure. Safety is not achieved through written rules alone, but through a consistent, empathetic and structured attitude on the part of the training team. Creating such an environment requires attention to everyday details that influence the perception of well-being.

Key strategies:

- **Establish clear and predictable routines:** showing the schedule of the day, respecting times and anticipating changes creates stability.
- **Create agreed group norms:** involving the group in their design strengthens agency and commitment.
- **Offer multiple forms of participation:** allowing a choice between speaking, writing, drawing or observing reduces pressure.
- **Taking care with verbal and non-verbal language:** avoiding shouting or sarcasm, using a calm tone and an open body posture promotes trust.
- **Allow emotional pauses:** provide space to withdraw without feeling watched or judged.
- **Avoid forced exposure:** do not demand to share personal stories or engage in physical dynamics without consent.
- **Introduce smooth transitions:** warning before changing activities helps to regulate anxiety.
- **Validating emotions without forcing their expression:** acknowledging discomfort without demanding explanations strengthens the bond.
- **Using visual or multilingual materials:** reduces language barriers and facilitates inclusion.
- **Take care with classroom layout:** favouring circular or horizontal arrangements promotes community and visibility.

Examples of good practice

- **Spain:** In a course in Seville, an optional daily round with the question "How are you doing today?" This strengthened group cohesion and enabled early detection of discomfort.
- **Greece:** after a blockage during a dynamic without prior explanation, the practice of anticipating each activity and offering non-invasive alternatives was adopted.
- **Germany:** Arrivo Berlin Women uses an emotional panel with icons to express how each participant feels on arrival, allowing the pace of the day to be adjusted.

- **Austria:** Caritas Wien works in small subgroups, alternates technical tasks with creative activities and prioritises a classroom layout that promotes safety and horizontality.

Fostering a safe environment does not require large resources, but sensitivity and commitment. When a refugee woman feels valued and respected, her ability to learn, relate and build a future with dignity flourishes.

1.4.Boosting self-confidence and social integration:

Self-esteem and a sense of belonging are essential for refugee women to participate fully in society and overcome the isolation that often accompanies migration. Building self-confidence requires generating real experiences of achievement, recognition and participation, not just motivational messages. Social integration, moreover, is built in relation to others, by feeling valued and accepted.

- Confidence-building activities

Many refugee women enter training processes with weakened self-esteem, marked by experiences of violence, rejection or failure. Regaining self-confidence requires more than motivation: it is about generating real experiences of achievement, recognition and positive participation.

Real examples:

- **Greece:** At Melissa Network a 'talent day' was organised where each woman shared something of her own with the group. It was identified as one of the most empowering experiences of the programme.
- **Spain:** At Cruz Roja Cadiz, students from a cooking course prepared a menu to share with other people at the centre. The recognition of their dishes strengthened their self-esteem. One participant said: "My food was a bridge, not a barrier".
- **Austria:** At Caritas Wien, the "achievement circle" is used, where each woman expresses aloud a source of pride at the end of the module. The trainer also gives an individual positive remark.
- **Germany:** At Arrivo Berlin Women "appreciative feedback" sessions were implemented after the internship. Colleagues and trainers share briefly what they admire in each other. This had a great impact, especially on more withdrawn women.

- Encouraging social connections

Social relationships are a key component of emotional well-being and a critical factor in the social and occupational integration of refugee women. Having a support network - even a small one - reduces stress, anxiety and feelings of isolation, while the lack of stable ties can accentuate symptoms associated with trauma or insecurity (WHO, 2022; Echeburúa & Amor, 2012).

Social skills - such as communication, emotional expression or conflict resolution - may have been affected by experiences of violence or discrimination, and many women have to rebuild them in a new cultural and linguistic environment. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that relationships between participants will emerge spontaneously. Safe and non-invasive conditions need to be created to facilitate this process.

Real examples:

- **Greece - Melissa Network:** a weekly "social hour" allows the sharing of dances, stories or recipes in a voluntary and safe environment.
- **Spain - Red Cross Granada:** a "shared recipe book" among participants promoted cultural pride and spontaneous connections.
- **Germany - Kiezküchen (Berlin):** monthly round tables where each woman presents something from her culture strengthen respect and empathy.
- **Austria - Caritas Wien:** the "welcome partner" system reduces initial anxiety and creates bonds that last beyond the training.

Fostering social relations is not a secondary task, but a central strategy to reinforce self-esteem, mental health and a sense of belonging in the training and labour market insertion processes.

- Role of company culture in fostering sense of belongings

A sense of belonging is the perception of being part of a group where a person feels accepted, valued and safe. For refugee women, developing this feeling in the workplace is key to their emotional well-being, motivation and job retention. However, belonging does not come about on its own: it must be actively cultivated through the corporate culture.

Company culture directly influences self-esteem, emotional climate and level of inclusion. Companies that promote respect, recognition and diversity tend to create more humane and sustainable environments, especially for people in vulnerable situations.

Examples of good practice:

- **Spain - Mescladís (Barcelona):** Each new worker is welcomed with a collective meal. Monthly group listening sessions are held. The workers describe the environment as "a family rather than a company".
- **Greece - Melissa Network:** Small business partners of the Women in Work programme apply practices such as asking how workers feel every morning, respecting the mother tongue during breaks and allowing religious practices.
- **Germany - Arrivo Berlin Women:** Each participant receives a monthly acknowledgement card written by her colleagues and trainers. Intercultural breakfasts are held where each participant brings something typical of her country.
- **Austria - Caritas Wien:** They promote the co-creation of common spaces and organise collective activities such as walks or yoga sessions. These dynamics reinforce the sense of ownership and belonging beyond work.

A sense of belonging does not depend solely on individual efforts to integrate. It is a shared responsibility, requiring appropriate structural conditions, respectful relationships and a culture that values diversity. In such an environment, refugee women not only learn or work: they feel part of it, they are empowered and can plan for a dignified and sustainable future.

Section 2 – Guidelines for Training

2.1. Mental Health Awareness.

Mental health awareness in training processes is a necessary foundation for creating inclusive and sustainable learning environments. Many refugee women have had adverse experiences that directly affect their psychological well-being. In addition, cultural stigma, lack of awareness of available resources and pressure to adapt quickly to the host country make it difficult to recognise and express emotional distress. In this context, trainers can and should play a crucial role: normalising dialogue about mental health, providing basic tools for self-regulation and observation, and building group spaces of care, respect and empathy.

- How can trainers raise awareness of mental health issues?

Raising mental health awareness in training contexts with refugee women is not about "talking about illness", but about opening a space for participants to recognise, listen to and care for themselves and each other. The trainer has the power to transform the classroom into an environment where discomfort is legitimised, tools are shared and trust is sown.

- **Active listening and emotional validation.**
 - Practical example: During a cooking class, a Latin American participant bursts into tears after receiving a correction from the trainer. Instead of minimising the emotion ("it's no big deal"), the trainer can say: "I can see that this has affected you a lot. If you need a moment or to talk later, I am available". This kind of response does not pathologise or pressure.
 - Testimony (IOM, 2020): "My teacher never shouted at me. She spoke to me calmly, and that helped me to trust. In other courses I felt useless, not here".
- **Cultural understanding and adaptation:**
 - In many Muslim and Latin American communities, emotions manifest themselves in the body (headaches, stomach aches, fatigue), and are not directly verbalised. In addition, there are taboos about mental disorders, especially in women, for fear of being rejected or stigmatised. It is useful, in these cases, to avoid the direct use of terms such as "depression" or "mental disorder" and to use open questions such as: "How are you feeling physically lately", "How are you resting", "Do you feel strong enough to come to

the course? It is also important to respect religious and cultural codes in the organisation of the space (e.g. allowing prayer times or avoiding direct physical contact if it is not welcome).

- Kirmayer et al. (2011) stress that intercultural care must start from a posture of cultural humility: it is not about knowing everything about other cultures, but about listening sensitively and asking respectful questions.
- Sharing basic information with an intercultural approach. Short facts such as "One in three refugees suffers from symptoms of anxiety or sadness" help to legitimise emotions without pathologising them. Introducing examples of women from cultures similar to those of the group (Muslim, Latin American, African) can generate identification. Emphasise that mental health is not a weakness or something that can only be treated **with drugs, but part of holistic wellbeing.**
- **Establishment of an emotionally safe environment:**
 - It would be key to establish, from the beginning, consensual group rules on respect, intervention times and confidentiality. Offer stable routines and anticipate changes (avoid surprises). Allow breaks without penalty if a participant needs to leave for a moment.
 - In a hotel cleaning workshop, a Syrian woman relived a traumatic experience by entering a locked room alone. The team reformulated the activity so that it was always done in pairs, thus minimising the risk of trauma reactivation (UNHCR, 2021).
- **Referral to specialised resources:**
 - One way of working along these lines would be for the training centre to have a visible and up-to-date list of free intercultural counselling services, clearly indicating: available languages, location and transport, that confidentiality is guaranteed and that paperless counselling is possible.
 - In the case of Spain, Red Acoge and Red Cross usually offer free psychological care or referral in migrant-friendly environments.
- **Accessible language and approach:**
 - Avoid technicalities or medical diagnoses, and use expressions that connect with women's everyday experience: "Have you ever felt that you can't sleep because your head won't turn off?", "Has it ever happened to you that your body aches even though you are not ill?", "Sometimes, when you have lived through a lot of hard things, your heart gets tired too".
- **Use stories, narratives or dramatisations:**
 - Sharing real testimonies (anonymised) or reading short stories allows to put common emotions into words without exposing oneself. Small dramatisations can help to visualise situations without talking about the story itself: "a woman who has to clean 12 rooms in 4 hours and is shouted at... how does she feel, what would she do?"
- **Pedagogical coherence:**

- Be a caring role model: don't shout, listen, respect rhythms, offer pauses. If the learning environment is emotionally safe, students will learn that talking about discomfort is possible and legitimate.
- What activities can help participants recognize signs of stress?
 - **Symptom cards** (emotional, physical, behavioural). Each card has a symptom (stomach ache, frequent crying, difficulty sleeping, irritability). Participants choose the ones they have felt and then the group organises them into categories. It is explained that many physical symptoms are signals from the body in response to stress.
 - **Body map of stress.** A silhouette of the body is given to the participants and they are invited to mark with colours where they feel stress when they are nervous. Then, it is shared in a group (voluntary). Talk about how stress is not only "in the head".
 - **Visual stress scale.** Using pictures or colours (e.g. blue = calm; yellow = tension; red = overload), they are asked to identify how they feel at the start of the day. This practice can be repeated and compared over time.
 - **Stories to discuss collectively.** A short story is read: "Sara works cleaning rooms. She hasn't slept well for two days, she has a headache, and she feels like she is not doing anything right. What is wrong with her? What could she do? How could her boss or colleague help her?"
 - **Emotional traffic light.** Every morning, the participants place their name on a traffic light (green, yellow, red). It is not explained in detail, but gives the trainer an idea of the group state and serves as a starting point for optional conversations.

Some practical suggestions for trainers:

- **Observing without judging:** identifying subtle changes and accompanying with empathy.
- **Offer breaks without penalty:** allow time for rest when emotional saturation is detected.
- **Validate without pressure:** "You seem to be more serious today. If you need anything, I'm here."
- **Avoid stimuli that trigger trauma:** bright lights, loud noises, confinement dynamics.
- **Refer with care:** if there are persistent signs, facilitate contact with specialised professionals, ideally in safe spaces and with an intercultural approach.
- **Use a tool to detect the emotional state of the participants at the beginning of the sessions or during the course of the sessions:** For example, the "emotional traffic light" allows participants to express their emotional state without the need to speak: Green: I feel good. Yellow: I feel OK. Red: I feel bad.
- How can trainers highlight the influence of company culture on mental wellbeing?

Corporate culture has a profound influence on the mental health of women workers. Rigid hierarchical relationships, pressure for productivity, invisibilisation or authoritarian treatment can trigger traumatic memories or generate constant stress.

- **Compare scenarios and show real examples:** Describe two work environments: In one, the boss shouts, there are no breaks and everything is "correctness". In another, there are pauses, a warm

welcome, and effort is appreciated. Ask: where would you feel better? How does the body change in each case?

UNFAVOURABLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

Spain: A Syrian woman employed as a waitress in a hotel on the Costa del Sol was fired after refusing to remove her hijab. She received no formal explanation. In her training with the Red Cross she commented: "They didn't care if I worked well or badly, they just resented the sight of me" (Spanish Red Cross, 2020).

Greece: In a restaurant in Thessaloniki, an Afghan woman was publicly and humiliatingly corrected for not understanding an order. She left her job with symptoms of severe anxiety. Testimony collected by Solidarity Now in its programme "Hospitality Routes to Integration" (2021).

Germany: According to ENAR (2021), 51% of Muslim refugee women in Germany have experienced employment discrimination on the basis of their origin or religion, especially in the hospitality industry.

Austria: In a hotel in Vienna, an Eritrean woman was assigned to cleaning duties for three weeks without clear instructions or verbal contact with staff. In interviews conducted by Caritas Wien (2021), she said: "I was always alone. Nobody explained anything to me, I was just left there with a cleaning trolley. I thought it was a punishment.

FAVOURABLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

Spain: The Mescladís cooperative (Barcelona) employs migrant and refugee women in catering. Its model includes paid training, emotional support, self-management and care protocols such as flexible breaks and external supervision (Mescladís, Memoria 2022).

Germany: Kiezküchen (Berlin), in collaboration with Arrivo Berlin Women, incorporates German language classes and psychosocial support and diversity training. 85% of women reported feeling more valued and confident (Kiezküchen, 2020).

Austria: Caritas Wien promotes job placement with emotional support. A Syrian participant said: "For the first time I was asked how I felt before I started working". Testimony collected during follow-up interviews of the programme Integration und Arbeit für geflüchtete Frauen (2021).

Greece: Melissa Network, with its Women in Work programme, trains employers in intercultural mental health. 68% of women recruited said they felt listened to by their superiors (Melissa, 2022).

- **Personal stories** (if willing to share): Invite (without pressure) to share how they have felt in previous jobs. What made the difference between feeling part of a team or feeling alone?
- **Caring company/damaging company map:** Make a poster with two columns. The group contributes phrases or situations they have experienced or imagined. E.g.: Caring company: "they ask you how you are", "you can go to the doctor without fear". Company that harms: "they ignore you", "they change your timetable without warning".
- **Identify caring practices:** Ask: What small details would make you feel good about your work (e.g. being listened to, having breaks, being acknowledged for your effort)? From this you can build your own group's "good practice guide".

2.2. Stress Reduction Techniques:

Stress is an adaptive response to external demands that can erode physical, emotional and cognitive well-being if prolonged and intensified over time. Refugee women face multiple stressors, and when coupled with the demands of working in fast-paced hospitality environments with rigid hierarchies, the impact can be particularly detrimental. Consciously incorporating stress reduction techniques into training and work is therefore an act of care, sustainability and inclusion.

- How can mindfulness exercises be incorporated into training and into the daily life of refugee women?

APPLICATION AT TIMES DURING THE DAY:

- **At the beginning of the day.**
 - Conscious abdominal breathing (5 minutes). Inhale deeply through the nose for a count of 4, hold for 2 seconds and exhale slowly through the mouth for 6 seconds, repeat continuously for 5 minutes. Helps to decrease the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, reducing basal anxiety.
 - Anchoring in the body (brief body scan). Becoming aware of feet, legs, abdomen, shoulders, jaw. Notice any tension, without changing it, just acknowledging it. Ideal to do while standing before entering a class or starting a shift.
 - Positive visualisation (self-motivation with guiding image). Ask the participant to imagine a safe and positive scene (a beach, a childhood playground, a prayer, etc.) and breathe it in for one minute. This can be integrated into welcome sessions in class or in group spaces.
- **During the working day:**
 - Mindfulness micro-pause (1-2 minutes). Stop for a moment in the middle of a shift to breathe, stretch and ask yourself: Where am I now? How do I feel? What do I need? This can be linked to moments such as drinking water, washing hands or changing tasks.
 - Breathing "4-7-8" to reduce tension. Simple technique to calm the body: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds. Can be practised in bathrooms, corridors, breaks, without the need for equipment.

- Attention to the five senses (in moments of overload). Mentally name 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you feel (touch), 2 things you smell, 1 thing you taste. Technique used for grounding (returning to the present) in anxiety or dissociation crises.
- **At the end of the day.**
 - Progressive muscle relaxation (5-10 minutes). Tighten and relax muscle groups from the feet to the head. Releases accumulated tension and improves sleep quality. Can be practised at home before bedtime or as part of a bedtime routine.
 - Short emotional closure writing. Writing (or sharing orally in a group) a sentence about something that went well or something the person is grateful for that day. Helps to reconnect with positive aspects and reduce mental ruminating. It has been successfully adapted for refugee women with low literacy skills using drawings or symbols.

APPLICATION PER JOB ROLES:

- **Kitchen assistant.**
 - Practical exercise: during food preparation, briefly focus attention on the senses (colour of ingredients, texture, aroma). This helps to calm the mind and connect with the moment.
 - Brief technique: 4-7-8 breathing before the shift or during breaks to lower tension.
- **Front desk.**
 - Practical exercise: after dealing with a difficult client, close your eyes for a minute, inhale deeply and release the tension with the air.
 - Auditory mindfulness: during downtime, scan the environment (sounds, temperature, body posture) to return to the present.
- **Housekeeping.**
 - Practical exercise: at the end of a room, take 30 seconds to take a deep breath, release your shoulders and acknowledge the effort you have made.
 - Mindfulness in movement: when moving through corridors, walk slowly for a few steps, paying attention to the contact with the floor.
- **Stock management.**
 - Practical exercise: when placing products, observe the colour, order and shape without rushing. Mentally repeat "one thing at a time".
 - Conscious pause: between corridors, stop for a moment, relax your jaw, close your eyes and take three full breaths.
- *What time management strategies can be taught to trainees?*

Time management is especially useful for women who have to balance work with parenting, unstable housing, language learning or caring for dependents. It is not about "doing more in less time", but about regaining control and clarity in the midst of chaos.

- **General strategies:**

- Simplified Eisenhower Matrix: group the day's tasks into 4 categories (important/urgent, important/non-urgent, not important/urgent, not important/non-urgent) using pictures or colours.
- Visual weekly planner: build together a realistic plan that includes work, rest, self-care, medical appointments and family. Adapt with pictograms for women with low literacy.
- Micro-organisation of the day: divide large tasks into steps: "take inventory of cleaning products" → "check aisle 1 / aisle 2 / replenish labels".
- 25-minute block" technique: focus on a single task for 25 minutes, then a 5-minute break. Ideal to avoid mental exhaustion.

- **Application per job role:**

- Kitchen assistant. Learn to organise the task in phases (peeling, cutting, cooking, serving). Use a visual list of estimated times for each part of the recipe.
- Receptionist. Prioritise tasks between customer service, calls, and administrative tasks. Use a visible checklist to reduce multitasking overwhelm.
- Housekeeping. Divide cleaning work by time (e.g. "20 minutes per room") and set up mini-breaks every 2 rooms for stretching or hydration. Classify rooms according to difficulty (easy, medium, complex) and plan their order.
- Stock replenisher. Organise the shift by areas of the warehouse to avoid unnecessary round trips. Visualise time as blocks: 30 minutes for sorting, 30 minutes for replenishment, 10 minutes for break.

- *What role do health and safety protocols play in reducing stress and preventing burnout?*

Occupational health protocols must go beyond preventing physical injuries. To be effective, they must address psychosocial risks, especially for women with a history of trauma or working in precarious conditions. Reducing stress and preventing burnout in refugee women is not a luxury, but an ethical and formative necessity. Incorporating mindfulness routines, teaching realistic time management strategies and establishing emotionally focused work protocols builds an environment where training becomes care and opportunity. These women not only learn a profession, but also regain their ability to support themselves, choose and project themselves into a fairer and healthier future.

Key actions:

- Structured and respected breaks: include them in the protocol and train them as a right, not a concession. Women should not feel guilty about resting.
- Planned task rotation: for physically demanding tasks such as cleaning or restocking, alternate heavy tasks with lighter ones.

- Emotional repair spaces: set up a quiet room where they can sit, breathe or have a moment of privacy if they feel overburdened.
- Empathetic supervision and active listening: caregivers must be trained to detect signs of burnout, validate emotions and accompany without infantilising.
- Reasonable accommodations: in case of symptoms of anxiety or extreme tiredness, allow for adjustments such as shorter shifts or specific tasks without penalty.

Examples per job role:

- Kitchen assistant: Protocols limiting exposure to intense heat, noise or extreme rhythms without breaks. Monitoring for signs of dehydration or physical overload.
- Receptionist: Clear rules on visual breaks (look away from the screen from time to time). Attention to signs of emotional saturation after conflicts with customers.
- Waitressing: Instructions to avoid repetitive motion injuries and ergonomic tools. Action protocol for emotional crises (crying, anxiety, dissociation).
- Stock replenishment: Rules on maximum weights, use of safe ladders and recovery times. Possibility to rearrange the shift if there are symptoms of severe exhaustion.

2.3.Trauma-Informed Teaching Methods:

Applying a trauma-informed approach does not mean acting as therapists, but creating conditions of emotional safety, predictability, flexibility and dignity that are conducive to learning without creating discomfort and re-traumatisation.

- How can trainers apply trauma-informed principles in their sessions?

The framework proposed by SAMHSA (2014) identifies six key principles. How to put them into practice in training with refugee women is explained here:

- **Principle 1: Physical and emotional security.**
 - Start each session with an established routine (welcome, agenda review, quiet activity).
 - Avoid overcrowded or noisy spaces.
 - Do not force public speaking or sharing of personal experiences.
 - Ensure that no participant is ridiculed, corrected in public or exposed without consent.
- **Principle 2: Trust and transparency.**
 - Explain in advance what is to be done, how and why.
 - Comply with established timetables and agreements.
 - Report any changes in good time.
 - Respond clearly and honestly to the group's questions.
- **Principle 3: Support and empowerment.**
 - Recognise achievements, however small, and celebrate progress.
 - Offer staggered tasks according to the pace and level of each participant.
 - Allow for choices (e.g. "would you prefer to do the activity alone or in a pair").

- **Principle 4: Participation and collaboration.**
 - Invite the group to create rules of coexistence and structure of the sessions.
 - Encourage decision-making spaces: which topic to address first, how to organise time.
 - Validate diverse opinions without imposing judgements.
- **Principle 5: Cultural, historical and gender perspective.**
 - Recognise the different cultures present in the classroom and avoid generalisations.
 - Accept different forms of emotional expression (silence is not lack of interest).
 - Be aware of the impact of discrimination based on sex, religion or race on the life trajectory of individual women.
- **Principle 6: Preventing re-traumatisation.**
 - Do not use dynamics that simulate situations of violence, tension or control.
 - Avoid using harsh or authoritarian language.
 - Detect signs of emotional distress (lowered gaze, agitation, body stiffness) and allow for breaks or exits without drawing attention to yourself.

Real examples of practical application:

- **Greece - Melissa Network (Athens):** During a cooking workshop, the trainer noticed discomfort with large knives. An Afghan student explained that they reminded her of violent experiences. The group reorganised the activity, prioritising emotional safety.
 - **Spain - Red Cross Valencia:** In hospitality training, tension was observed at the beginning of room cleaning practices. A daily welcome routine was introduced, paired work was allowed and a flexible break was offered. This improved attendance and group engagement. One trainer noted: "A safe welcome changes everything".
 - **Germany - Arrivo Berlin Women:** Several participants were blocked when speaking in a group. The dynamics were adapted: instead of personal testimonies, cooperative games without verbal exposition were proposed. The right to observe without actively participating was respected. A Syrian woman said: "No one forced me to speak. That gave me the strength to gradually want to do it."
 - **Austria - Caritas Wien:** The training centre avoids fluorescent lights and has a "quiet zone" with soft blankets for resting. The collectively developed classroom rules are written in several languages. An Afghan participant commented: "I can breathe here. I know no one will shout at me and I can sit down without having to explain anything."
- *What strategies can be used to create a supportive environment?*

In addition to applying these principles, there are concrete pedagogical tools to promote a safe, motivating and nurturing environment:

- **Relational strategies:**
 - Show emotional availability: greet by name, look friendly, use a calm voice.

- Validate emotions: if a woman expresses fear, sadness or frustration, do not minimise. Say: "It's normal to feel this way" or "Thank you for sharing".
- Tolerate withdrawal without penalising: if a learner withdraws temporarily or participates little, do not force or judge. Respect their process.
- **Teaching strategies:**
 - Offer multiple forms of participation: writing, drawing, speaking, acting, observing. Not everyone learns or expresses themselves in the same way.
 - Repeat and reinforce without ridicule: use different media (oral, visual, practical) so that everyone understands.
 - Allow for emotional breaks: include 5 minutes of quiet time in the middle of the session with music, breathing or stretching.
- **Structural strategies:**
 - Always display the day's agenda: even with pictograms or simple phrases.
 - Start and end with clear routines: greeting, summary, farewell.
 - Create a welcoming physical space: soft lighting, cleanliness, posters with positive phrases or group work.
- **Activities that reinforce a sense of security and belonging:**
 - "The mural of strengths": each woman writes or draws something that she does well.
 - "Welcome ritual": each new member receives a welcome card or is accompanied by a veteran companion.
 - "Emotional toolbox": the group collects phrases, breaths, songs or actions that help them when they feel bad.

Training from a trauma-informed approach means teaching from care, predictability and awareness of lived pain. But it also means generating new experiences that contradict violence: respectful relationships, shared decisions, valued achievements. In such an environment, learning is not just a technical acquisition: it becomes a way of rebuilding, trusting and moving forward.

2.4.Boosting Self-Confidence and Social Integration:

From the training and work environment, it is possible to design activities, dynamics and spaces that strengthen self-esteem, promote positive links and favour a sense of belonging to a community or work team.

- How can trainers facilitate confidence-building activities?

Practical proposals:

- **Weekly achievement diary:** At the end of the week, invite each participant to record something they have learned, overcome or enjoyed. They can use words, pictures or colours. This simple practice reinforces awareness of progress and positive thinking.

- **Cross-recognition cards:** Once a month, each woman writes a positive note to another colleague, highlighting an action or attitude she values. This strengthens the bond and self-esteem from the point of view of peers.
- **Rotating micro-roles:** Assigning small responsibilities in class (reading an assignment, leading an activity, organising materials) allows everyone to experience an active role without pressure.
- **Strengths wall:** Each participant writes down a personal quality ("I am patient", "I am a good listener") on a piece of cardboard and places it on a wall. Over time, the wall becomes a visual space of collective self-affirmation.
- **Knowledge-sharing activities:** Allowing women to teach something to the group (a recipe, a word in their language, a manual technique) allows them to step out of the role of apprentice and take on the role of expert.

▪ What activities can promote social integration?

From psychology, social skills are defined as the set of learned behaviours that allow a person to relate effectively and satisfactorily with others (Caballo, 2007). These skills include verbal and non-verbal communication, the ability to ask for help, set boundaries, express emotions and resolve conflicts. In refugee women, these competencies may have been disrupted or weakened by situations of violence, discrimination or forced isolation. Many also have to relearn how to socialise in a completely new cultural and linguistic environment, which adds an additional level of difficulty and anxiety. Fostering social relations in training, therefore, is not a secondary task: it is a central element in strengthening mental health, self-esteem, cooperation, a sense of belonging and permanence in the training and employment processes.

Practical strategies:

- **Cooperative, non-competitive activities:** tasks such as preparing a recipe or decorating the classroom can only be achieved collaboratively.
- **Symbolic dynamics:** using pictures or objects instead of words to share moods reduces verbal pressure.
- **Shared coffee or tea corner:** short informal moments of conversation foster authentic links outside the formal classroom.
- **Rotating affinity groups:** organising small teams with changing affinities avoids fixed clans and stimulates new relationships.
- **Intergroup activities:** meetings with other classes broaden networks and naturalise diversity.

▪ How can the corporate culture foster a sense of belonging?

Belonging does not come automatically: it must be actively cultivated by the culture of the company:

Actions that promote ownership:

- Continuous recognition: Thanking and celebrating individual and collective achievements strengthens self-esteem and the bond with the organisation.

- Participation in day-to-day decisions: Allowing a say in tasks, shifts or schedules conveys respect and empowerment.
- Visibility of diversity: Reflecting the plurality of the team in posters, networks or internal materials promotes positive identification.
- Inclusive celebrations: Incorporating cultural or religious dates important to women workers reinforces respect and cohesion.
- Inclusion and trauma training: Sensitising the team on mental health, migration and discrimination generates greater empathy.
- Spaces for emotional communication: Setting aside time for shared listening improves trust and prevents tensions.

Building self-confidence and fostering social integration is not only a matter of individual motivation, but a shared responsibility between trainers, peers and companies. Refugee women need environments where they can feel safe to rebuild their self-esteem, experience meaningful achievements and establish genuine bonds of support.

Through activities that recognise their strengths, spaces that facilitate positive relationships and corporate cultures that promote respect, equality and participation, not only their emotional well-being is enhanced, but also their autonomy, their ability to learn and their sustainable employability. In short, trust and a sense of belonging are not taught: they are cultivated on a daily basis, with consistency, humanity and care.

Section 3 – Case study

These four case studies reflect how the principles addressed in the module can be applied in different European hospitality vocational training contexts with refugee women. Through concrete experiences, the challenges, strategies and outcomes related to mental health, self-esteem, social integration and trauma-informed pedagogical approach are illustrated.

CASE 1: AMINA, BUILDING TRUST THROUGH RESPECT FOR SILENCE.

Location: Berlin, Germany

Type of setting: Real interaction in a multicultural training environment.

- **Description of the scenario:**

Amina, a 34-year-old Syrian woman, was attending a training course for receptionists in Berlin. Punctual and competent in practical tasks, she avoided eye contact and did not speak in public, which led to comments and alienation among her colleagues. The team, consisting of a technical trainer, a community psychologist and an intercultural mediator, applied a trauma-informed approach: they avoided forcing verbal participation and offered adapted tasks, allowing Amina to express her ability progressively. After a few weeks, she led a client care simulation and shared that her withdrawal was a response to trauma suffered in her country of origin.

- **Analysis and lessons learned:**

The team avoided a behavioural reading of behaviour (apathy, disinterest) and applied active listening, didactic flexibility and cultural sensitivity. The coordination between educational and psychosocial profiles allowed for a positive evolution of Amina without the need for confrontation.

- **Key findings:**

- Withdrawal may be an expression of trauma, not disinterest.
- Providing multiple avenues for participation is key.
- Respectful and flexible pedagogy opens space for progressive empowerment.

CASE 2: SAFE SPACES FOR INTERCULTURAL COEXISTENCE.

Location: Athens, Greece

Type of scenario: Real interaction in a multicultural group context.

- **Description of the scenario:**

In a cooking course organised by Melissa Network, tensions between Afghan, Syrian and African women were detected. Cultural differences and emotional baggage created an atmosphere of silent conflict. The team - technical trainer, social worker, trauma therapist and cultural facilitator - introduced short mindfulness practices at the beginning of the day and an informal 'tea-sharing' dynamic at the end. The women began to relax, show care for each other and participate more actively.

- **Analysis and lessons learned:**

Defensive reactions were actually responses to chronic stress and trauma. The practitioners used their skills in emotional regulation, intercultural mediation and non-invasive dynamic design to create emotional safety without forcing verbalisation.

- **Key findings:**

- Simple somatic techniques (breathing, movement) help to reduce tensions.
- Predictable emotional structure strengthens group cohesion.
- Sharing everyday cultural practices generates mutual respect and belonging.

CASE 3: MAKING STRENGTHS VISIBLE THROUGH CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Location: Vienna, Austria

Type of scenario: Empowerment and integration success story

- **Description of the scenario:**

During a course at Caritas Wien, some refugee women showed low self-esteem and little interaction. The team - trainer, mediator, community psychologist and inclusion technician - proposed the activity "Your teachable moment": each woman could share a recipe, song or custom. Grace, from Nigeria, prepared a typical dessert and received spontaneous recognition from the group. From that moment on, mutual respect and participation were activated.

- **Analysis and lessons learned:**

Making cultural skills visible transformed the role of the participants from passive receivers to bearers of knowledge. Practitioners employed approaches of meaningful learning, symbolic recognition and culturally situated pedagogy.

- **Key findings:**

- Cultural recognition strengthens self-esteem.
- Pedagogical horizontality allows women to feel valuable.
- Collective dynamics must integrate diverse cultural expressions.

CASE 4: INTEGRATING EMOTIONALLY FROM EVERYDAY LIFE.

Location: Seville, Spain

Type of setting: Group intervention focusing on emotional care.

- **Description of the scenario:**

In a course given by the Red Cross in Seville, demotivation and signs of emotional exhaustion were observed. The team (trainer, psychologist, social worker and cultural volunteer) introduced a routine called "How do I arrive today", with symbolic emotional cards (sun, rain, cloud). This practice facilitated the expression of moods without the need to speak. Over time, spontaneous bonds, caring gestures and improved cohesion emerged.

- **Analysis and lessons learned:**

Everyday emotional care is as important as technical content. The psychologist helped to frame emotions as part of learning; the trainer adapted times and activities; the social worker detected cases of unspoken vulnerability.

- **Key findings:**

- Emotional expression routines improve the classroom climate.
- Interdisciplinary coordination makes it possible to address distress in a preventive way.
- Women need spaces where they don't have to hide their tiredness in order to learn.

Section 4 – Example Exercises

This section provides specific tools to apply the principles of the module in the real work context of the participants. The exercises are designed to be short, accessible, adaptable and directly useful in the work environment. Each approach promotes emotional well-being, confidence building and group cohesion.

Housekeeping:

- **Stress reduction activity: Mindfulness for repetitive tasks.**

- Objective: To integrate mindfulness into the daily routine to reduce physical and mental tensions.
- Implementation: At the beginning of the day, 5 minutes of guided breathing and stretching. After each room cleaned, a short break: close eyes, take three deep breaths, release shoulders. At the end of the shift, identification of body tension zones on a silhouette.
- Reflection: Where did I feel the most tension today, when did I feel the most calm, can I incorporate these moments into my regular day?

- **Confidence building activity: Role play - Unexpected interaction with the host.**

- Scenario: You go in to clean an apparently empty room, but the guest is inside and reacts with annoyance.
- Objective: To reinforce the ability to react calmly and professionally.
- Roles: Waitress, guest, observer.
- Reflection: How did I handle nervousness, was I clear, respectful and confident when I spoke, how could I improve my response?

- **Group activity: Impossible rooms.**

- Dynamics: In a group, solve a fictitious scenario with multiple incidents (forgotten object, sleeping client, supervisor's haste).
- Objective: To encourage joint decision-making and creativity under pressure

Kitchen Assistance:

- **Stress reduction activity: Relaxation techniques adapted to the kitchen environment.**
 - Objective: To apply quick strategies to reduce stress in a highly demanding environment.
 - Implementation: At the beginning of the day: 4-7-8 breathing (inhale 4s, hold 7s, exhale 8s). During downtime: sensory awareness (observe colour of ingredients, smells, body temperature). Post-day: stretching of neck, wrists, arms with soft music.
 - Reflection: When did I feel the most tension in the kitchen, how did it help me to stop and breathe?
- **Confidence building activity: Team cooking challenge.**
 - Objective: To strengthen technical skills, communication and self-esteem.
 - Activity: Groups of 3 participants prepare a simple dish from a limited list of ingredients. Taste, presentation and collaborative work are valued.
 - Reflection: What did I bring to the team, how did I feel about showing my work?
- **Group activity: "Crisis in the kitchen".**
 - Scenario: The oven stops working, there is a last minute menu change and a colleague does not arrive. The group has to reorganise tasks in 10 minutes.
 - Objective: To practice effective communication under pressure.

Front Desk Operation:

- **Stress reduction activity: Pressure management at times of high demand.**
 - Objective: To strengthen the capacity for self-monitoring and prioritisation.
 - Execution: Simulation of 10 minutes of "check-in" with growing queue, ringing phone and annoyed customer. Pause: assess emotional response, stress level, and what strategy was used (breathing, asking for help, prioritising).

- Reflection: What did I do first and why did I communicate clearly, what helped me stay calm?
- **Confidence-building activity: Professional greeting.**
 - Role-play: Welcoming a guest who speaks another language or shows impatience.
 - Objective: To convey professionalism, warmth and confidence.
 - Reflection: How was my body language, was I able to sustain eye contact and maintain a confident tone?
- **Group activity: Incident resolution at reception.**
 - Scenario: Double booking, customer with special needs and system connection failure. The group must create a response plan within 15 minutes.
 - Objective: To practice collaborative decision-making and task sharing.

Stock Management Assistance:

- **Stress reduction activity: Time management and active breathing in the warehouse.**
 - Objective: To avoid physical and mental overload with structured breaks.
 - Execution: Short pause schedule every 90 minutes. Diaphragmatic breathing: inhale through nose 3s, exhale through mouth 6s. Body scan: identify areas of tension after weight bearing.
 - Reflection: How long did I go without a break, how did my body respond to the fatigue?
- **Confidence-building activity: Team Inventory Challenge.**
 - Activity: In groups, review a list of products and organise the space in 20 minutes. Order, logic and cooperation are assessed.
 - Reflection: Was I able to express my ideas to the group, did I feel listened to?
- **Group activity: Reorganising the warehouse with obstacles.**
 - Scenario: An incomplete order has been received and the available space is insufficient. The team must propose a functional and safe solution.
 - Objective: To promote practical problem solving, active listening and job security.

To reflect for all job roles:

Reflect on...

- How can I apply some of these techniques in my day-to-day work?
- What strategies helped me feel more confident or less stressed?

- Taking into account the cultural and emotional plurality of the working environment, how can I take care of myself and my colleagues?

Section 5 - Impact Assessment and Self-Assessment Tools

This section provides trainers with simple and adaptable tools to assess the impact of the module on the emotional well-being, stress management, self-confidence and cultural integration of refugee women. Self-assessment tools are also provided to encourage personal reflection and recognition of individual achievements.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES.

- When to apply: at the beginning (diagnosis) and at the end (evaluation) of the module.
- How to apply: individually, in a quiet space. Can be done in writing, verbally or with pictograms.
- Who applies: the trainer, in collaboration with a mediator or facilitator if the group is multilingual.
- How to use the results: to detect progress, to adjust formative accompaniment and to reinforce emotional learning. They should not be used for punitive evaluation purposes.
- Accessibility: in low literacy groups, use visual cards, practical examples or peer reading aloud.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE.

- Format: Likert scale (1 = never / 5 = always) or emotional pictograms (sad - neutral - happy face).
- Instructions to the group: "This questionnaire is to see how you felt before and after the training. There are no good or bad answers. You can answer with a number from 1 to 5, or choose the face that most closely resembles how you feel".
- Questions:
 1. I feel able to express my ideas in front of other people.
 2. I can identify when I am stressed and know what helps me to calm down.
 3. I feel welcome and safe in this group.
 4. I recognise at least one personal skill that I did not value before.
 5. I have learned ways to take care of my emotional health.

6. I feel that I can work in a team with people from different cultures.
7. I dare to ask for help when I need it.
8. I have remained calm in times of stress or pressure.
9. I have shared some of my culture with the group.
10. I feel more prepared to work in a professional environment.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONNAIRE - SELF-ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIES AND ATTITUDES.

- Format: Multiple choice questions, one or more of which may be correct.
- Objective: To facilitate reflection on specific behaviours and their link to emotional learning.
- Instructions to the group: "Mark the option or options that look like you. You can tick more than one if you wish".

- Questions:

1. When I feel nervous at work, I tend to...

- A. Take a deep breath or take a short break.
- B. Keep it to myself and carry on working without saying anything.
- C. Talk to someone you trust.
- D. Yell or get angry easily.

2. When I am in a group with people from other cultures...

- A. I find it difficult to integrate.
- B. I like to learn about their customs.
- C. Sometimes I am afraid of being wrong.
- D. I try to listen and share what I know.

3. In this training I have learned to...

- A. Recognise how I feel.
- B. Manage stressful moments better.
- C. Value what I bring to the group.
- D. None of the above.

- Final reflection: What have I learned about myself during this training?

COMPLEMENTARY TOOLS.

- Visual Stress Scale (weekly)
 - Material: Emotional traffic light card (green = calm, yellow = medium tension, red = high stress).
 - Use: Every Monday or Friday, participants place their name in the colour that best represents how they feel.
- Self-care and relaxation register
 - Format: Weekly table where practices carried out are marked:
 - I breathed calmly.
 - I took a pause.
 - I stretched my body.
 - I shared how I felt with someone.
- Personal Achievement Diary (individual)
 - Example of a weekly entry:
 - Something I learned this week...
 - Something that made me feel good...
 - Something I still struggle with and want to improve...
- Linking Wheel
 - Activity: Draw a circle with your name in the centre. Add the names of people in the group with whom you felt comfortable, accompanied or trusted.
 - Purpose: To visualise social growth and sense of belonging.

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MODULE 3

STEPPING STONES TO SUCCESS: PRE-VOCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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MODULE 3

STEPPING STONES TO SUCCESS: PRE-VOCATIONAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Stepping Stones to Success: Pre-vocational and Vocational Skills Development

This module provides trainers with a structured framework for preparing individuals for roles within the hospitality sector. It focuses on building foundational pre-vocational skills, such as job readiness, professional conduct, and workplace health and safety. It also develops specific vocational competencies essential for positions like housekeeping, kitchen assistance, front desk operations, and stock management. Crucially, the module integrates the enhancement of cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving. This targeted training, delivered within the EmpowerHer project handbook, aims to equip trainees with the necessary skills for employment and professional growth.

Section 1 – Theoretical background with key topics

This module provides a foundational understanding of the essential skills needed for a successful career in the hospitality sector. It covers not only the specific tasks of various job roles but also the crucial thinking and workplace readiness skills that empower individuals to thrive in dynamic environments. By grasping these core concepts, both trainers and trainees will be equipped to navigate the practical aspects of hospitality work with confidence and competence.

Introduction to hospitality roles:

Hospitality is a dynamic, people-focused industry, offering a wide range of career opportunities. For refugee women, understanding the structure and typical roles within this sector is a crucial first step toward successful integration. Understanding these roles and their interconnectedness is the first step toward building a successful career.

The guide will focus on four key entry-level roles that offer significant opportunities for growth and integration:

- **Housekeeping:** This role is vital for guest comfort and safety. It involves maintaining cleanliness and order in guest rooms and public areas. Key tasks include cleaning, bed making, laundry management, and reporting maintenance issues.
- **Kitchen Assistance:** Supporting the culinary team, kitchen assistants are involved in food preparation, maintaining hygiene standards, and managing kitchen supplies. This role emphasizes efficiency and adherence to strict health and safety protocols in a fast-paced environment.

- **Front Desk Operation:** As the first and last point of contact, front desk staff manage guest check-ins and check-outs, handle reservations, provide information, and address guest inquiries. This role requires strong communication and problem-solving skills.
- **Stock Management:** This involves organizing, receiving, and dispatching supplies within a hospitality establishment, ensuring that all necessary items are available when needed. Accuracy and attention to detail are paramount to avoid discrepancies and waste.

These roles are often entry points for individuals new to the industry and can provide foundational experience and a pathway to career progression.

Cognitive skill development:

Cognitive skills are the mental abilities that allow us to process information, reason, and apply knowledge. In the hospitality sector, these skills are just as vital as practical abilities, enabling employees to handle unexpected situations, interact effectively with guests and colleagues, and continuously improve their performance.

1. Critical Thinking:

Definition: Critical thinking involves analyzing information objectively and forming a reasoned judgment.

Importance in Hospitality: In hospitality, unexpected situations arise frequently (e.g., guest complaints, equipment malfunctions). Critical thinking allows employees to assess the situation quickly and calmly.

Application in 4 Hospitality Roles:

- **Housekeeping:** Identifying the most efficient cleaning method for a particularly dirty room, or recognizing a potential safety hazard.
- **Kitchen Assistance:** Evaluating the quality of ingredients or assessing the readiness of a dish.
- **Front Desk Operation:** Analyzing a guest's non-verbal cues to anticipate their needs, or discerning the true nature of a complex request.
- **Stock Management:** Critically reviewing inventory reports for inconsistencies or potential ordering errors.

2. Problem-solving:

Definition: Problem-solving is the process of identifying a problem, finding potential solutions, and implementing the most effective one.

Importance in Hospitality: Hospitality professionals frequently encounter unforeseen challenges, from guest complaints to operational disruptions. Effective problem-solving ensures smooth service delivery and guest satisfaction.

Application in 4 Hospitality Roles:

- **Housekeeping:** Resolving an issue with a malfunctioning appliance in a guest room, or finding a solution for a guest who requests immediate service when staff are busy.
- **Kitchen Assistance:** Finding an alternative ingredient when one is unexpectedly unavailable, or addressing a sudden equipment breakdown during peak service.
- **Front Desk Operation:** Handling a difficult guest complaint by de-escalating the situation and finding a satisfactory resolution, or managing overbooked rooms efficiently.
- **Stock Management:** Investigating a discrepancy in inventory records and identifying the cause, or addressing an urgent supply need when a regular delivery is delayed.

3. Adaptability and Flexibility:

Definition: Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust to new conditions, while flexibility is the capacity to change or be changed according to circumstances.

Importance in Hospitality: The hospitality environment is dynamic, with varying guest demands, fluctuating staffing levels, and evolving operational procedures. Being adaptable and flexible ensures smooth operations and high-quality service, even in unforeseen circumstances.

Relevance to Refugee Women: Refugee women have often demonstrated immense resilience and adaptability in navigating challenging life circumstances. This inherent strength can be further developed as a professional asset in the fast-paced hospitality sector.

Application in 4 Hospitality Roles:

- **Housekeeping:** Adjusting cleaning routines based on unexpected guest requests or last-minute room changes.
- **Kitchen Assistance:** Quickly shifting tasks or assisting in different kitchen sections during peak hours.
- **Front Desk Operation:** Handling sudden surges in check-ins or managing a system outage calmly and efficiently.

- **Stock Management:** Adjusting delivery schedules or finding alternative suppliers due to unforeseen disruptions.

Pre-vocational skills

Pre-vocational skills are foundational behaviors and knowledge necessary for entering and navigating any professional environment. For refugee women, developing these skills builds confidence and bridges potential cultural gaps regarding workplace norms.

- **Basic Job Readiness Skills for the 4 Hospitality Roles:**

- **Punctuality:** Arriving on time is fundamental to workplace efficiency and shows respect for colleagues and guests.
- **Attendance:** Consistent presence is crucial for team operations and job reliability.
- **Active Listening:** The ability to fully concentrate on what is being said, understand the message, and respond appropriately. This is vital for taking instructions and interacting with guests.
- **Following Instructions:** Understanding and executing tasks as directed is key to operational consistency and safety.
- **Initiative and Enterprise:** Taking proactive steps and showing a willingness to contribute beyond explicit instructions. This demonstrates motivation and a commitment to learning.
- **Teamwork:** Collaborating effectively with colleagues to achieve common goals. Hospitality is a highly collaborative industry, and effective teamwork is essential for smooth service delivery.

- **Professional Behavior and Etiquette:**

- **Appearance and Grooming:** Adhering to industry standards for cleanliness and presentation.
- **Respectful Communication:** Using appropriate language, tone, and body language when interacting with colleagues, supervisors, and guests, recognizing the diverse cultural backgrounds often present in hospitality.
- **Confidentiality:** Understanding the importance of protecting guest information and company data.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Learning constructive ways to address disagreements or challenges with colleagues or guests.

- **Understanding Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) as part of Job Readiness Skills:**

- **Importance:** WHS is not just a regulatory requirement but a fundamental aspect of job readiness that protects employees, colleagues, and guests. It is an application of health and safety practices to specific vocational tasks.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - **Hazard Identification:** Recognizing potential dangers (e.g., wet floors, sharp objects, hot surfaces).
 - **Risk Assessment:** Evaluating the likelihood and severity of harm from a hazard.
 - **Control Measures:** Implementing steps to eliminate or minimize risks (e.g., using proper lifting techniques, wearing protective equipment).
 - **Reporting Incidents:** Knowing how to report accidents, injuries, or near misses to ensure a safe working environment.
- **Relevance to Hospitality:** Every hospitality role has specific WHS considerations, from handling cleaning chemicals in housekeeping to operating kitchen equipment or managing guest flow at the front desk.

Vocational skills

Vocational skills are the specific, practical competencies required to perform tasks within a particular job role in the hospitality industry.

- **Specific Skills for Each Hospitality Role:**
 - **Housekeeping:**
 - Proper use of cleaning agents and equipment.
 - Efficient room cleaning procedures (e.g., bed making, bathroom sanitation, dusting).
 - Time management for completing assigned rooms within a set timeframe.
 - Reporting lost and found items.
 - **Kitchen Assistance:**
 - Basic food preparation techniques (e.g., chopping, peeling, washing).
 - Understanding food safety and cross-contamination prevention.
 - Operating and cleaning kitchen equipment (e.g., blenders, mixers).
 - Dishwashing and maintaining kitchen cleanliness.
 - **Front Desk Operation:**
 - Using reservation software and property management systems.
 - Handling cash and credit card transactions.
 - Answering multi-line phone systems and directing calls.
 - Providing accurate information about hotel services and local attractions.
 - **Stock Management:**
 - Inventory tracking and control using manual or digital systems.
 - Proper storage techniques for different types of goods (e.g., perishable foods, cleaning supplies).
 - Receiving and verifying deliveries against invoices.
 - Stock rotation (FIFO - First-In, First-Out) to minimize waste.
- **Application of Health and Safety Practices to Specific Vocational Tasks:**

- **Housekeeping:** Safe handling of chemicals, correct use of ladders/stools, proper waste disposal.
- **Kitchen Assistance:** Safe knife handling, understanding cooking temperatures, proper use of ovens and grills, fire safety protocols.
- **Front Desk Operation:** Emergency procedures (e.g., fire alarms, medical emergencies), handling difficult guests safely, maintaining a secure cash drawer.
- **Stock Management:** Safe lifting techniques, operating pallet jacks or dollies, proper ventilation in storage areas.
- **Introduction to Company Policies and Processes Relevant to Professional Behavior and Workplace Expectations:**
 - **Importance:** Understanding company-specific rules ensures compliance, promotes a consistent work culture, and aligns trainee expectations with workplace realities.
 - **Key Topics:**
 - Organizational hierarchy and reporting structures.
 - Attendance and punctuality policies (e.g., sick leave, vacation requests).
 - Dress code and personal presentation standards.
 - Communication protocols (e.g., email etiquette, internal communication channels).
 - Performance evaluation processes and feedback mechanisms.
 - Guest service standards specific to the company's brand.

Summary Table: Vocational Skills, Health & Safety, and Company Policies

Hospitality Role	Specific Vocational Skills (Overview)	Application of Health and Safety Practices to Specific Vocational Tasks	Introduction to Company Policies and Processes
Housekeeping	Cleaning techniques, safe chemical handling, waste disposal, laundry procedures, reporting maintenance.	Using PPE, proper chemical dilution, safe lifting techniques, "wet floor" signs.	Reporting procedures, guest privacy, lost and found, work schedule flexibility.
Kitchen Assistance	Food preparation, hygiene/sanitation, safe equipment operation, dishwashing.	Limits on heat/noise exposure, hydration, cut-resistant gloves, dry floors, fire safety.	Food waste, inventory, cleaning schedules, equipment malfunction reporting.
Front Desk Operation	Phone handling, booking software, payments, check-in/out, inquiry/complaint resolution, privacy.	Visual breaks, emotional saturation awareness, emotional crisis protocols, ergonomics.	Customer service standards, complaint handling, data privacy, check-in/out procedures, escalation protocols.
Stock Management Assistance	Receiving deliveries, inventory organization (FIFO), label reading, inventory systems, safe lifting.	Weight limits, team lifts, safe ladder use, recovery times, clear pathways.	Inventory control, stock rotation, waste reduction, receiving/issuing procedures, security.

Section 2 – Guidelines for Training

This section provides practical, actionable guidance for VET trainers to design and deliver impactful training sessions on pre-vocational and vocational skills, equipping refugee women for success in the hospitality sector. This guide emphasizes connecting theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, fostering adaptable and culturally sensitive training methods that cater to diverse learning needs.

Introduction to Hospitality Roles:

How can trainers introduce the different roles in hospitality?

- Begin with a general overview of the hospitality industry, emphasizing its diverse nature and the opportunities it offers for growth and career advancement, especially for individuals seeking new beginnings.
- Utilize visual aids such as short videos showcasing daily tasks in each role or virtual tours of different hotel departments.
- Invite guest speakers who are currently working in these roles, particularly women who have successfully integrated into the industry, to share their experiences and insights.
- Organize field trips to local hotels or restaurants where trainees can observe the roles in action.
- Employ interactive methods like "speed dating" with role descriptions, allowing trainees to quickly learn about different positions and identify their interests.

What key responsibilities should be highlighted for each role?

- For each role (housekeeping, kitchen assistance, front desk, stock management), create a clear, concise list of 5-7 core responsibilities. Use simple language and visual icons.
- Emphasize the impact of each responsibility: e.g., for housekeeping, "ensuring guest comfort and safety through cleanliness"; for kitchen assistance, "contributing to delicious and safe food for guests."
- Highlight the interconnectedness of roles: explain how good performance in one area directly affects others (e.g., efficient housekeeping supports front desk operations by ensuring rooms are ready).

What health and safety protocols could be incorporated into role-specific training for hospitality positions?

- Integrate WHS from the very beginning of role introductions, emphasizing that safety is a shared responsibility.
- For housekeeping: Demonstrate proper lifting techniques for linen and waste, safe handling of cleaning chemicals (use of PPE), and hazard identification (e.g., spills, broken items).
- For kitchen assistance: Focus on safe knife handling, fire extinguisher use, understanding temperature danger zones for food, and preventing cross-contamination.
- For front desk: Cover emergency evacuation procedures, handling aggressive guests, and securing sensitive information.
- For stock management: Teach safe lifting and carrying of heavy items, proper use of trolleys or pallet jacks, and safe storage of hazardous materials.
- Use clear, multilingual visual aids (posters, diagrams) and conduct regular drills or simulations for common WHS scenarios.
-

Cognitive Skill Development

How can critical thinking be incorporated into training exercises (cross disciplinary)?

- **Scenario-Based Learning:** Present complex, realistic hospitality scenarios (e.g., a guest complains about a non-existent issue, a crucial delivery is delayed). Ask trainees to:
 - Identify the core problem.
 - Brainstorm multiple possible solutions.
 - Evaluate the pros and cons of each solution, considering impact on guest, team, and company.
 - Justify their chosen solution.
- **"What If?" Discussions:** After teaching a procedure (e.g., room cleaning), ask "What if..." questions (e.g., "...you find a valuable item in a guest room?", "...the guest refuses service?").
- **Root Cause Analysis (Simple):** For recurring problems, guide trainees to ask "why" multiple times to get to the underlying cause.

What activities can enhance adaptability and flexibility?

- **Role Rotation/Cross-Training:** If feasible, allow trainees to experience short stints in different hospitality roles to understand varied demands and practice adapting their skills.
- **"Unexpected Change" Drills:** During a practical exercise, introduce a sudden change (e.g., "A large group of guests just arrived unexpectedly, and three rooms need to be ready in 10 minutes!"). Observe and provide feedback on how trainees adjust their plans and priorities.
- **"Prioritize This!" Exercises:** Provide a list of tasks with varying urgency and importance. Ask trainees to prioritize them and explain their reasoning, then discuss alternative approaches.

Pre-vocational Skills

How can trainers teach basic job readiness skills?

- **Structured Routines:** Model punctuality and attendance by starting and ending sessions on time, emphasizing their importance with positive reinforcement.
- **Interactive Demonstrations:** Demonstrate active listening, appropriate questioning, and note-taking techniques.
- **"Job Shadowing" (Simulated):** Assign trainees to "shadow" a trainer or experienced peer during simulated tasks, focusing on observation of professional behaviors.
- **Feedback Loops:** Provide consistent, constructive feedback on job readiness behaviors during all activities.

What role-playing scenarios can help with professional behavior?

- **First Day on the Job:** Simulating greetings, introductions, and understanding the team hierarchy.
- **Receiving Instructions:** A supervisor giving complex instructions, and the trainee needing to demonstrate active listening and ask clarifying questions.
- **Handling a Challenging Colleague:** Practicing respectful and constructive communication in a team conflict scenario.
- **Appropriate Dress and Grooming:** A simple scenario where a "supervisor" provides feedback on professional appearance for the specific role.

How can company policies and processes be modeled through role-playing scenarios to align trainee expectations with workplace realities?

- **Reporting Protocol:** Role-play reporting a maintenance issue, a lost item, or a WHS concern to a "supervisor," following a defined company process.
- **Leave Request:** Simulating the process of requesting time off, understanding the importance of proper channels and advance notice.
- **Performance Feedback:** Role-play a brief performance review, where the "supervisor" provides feedback and the "trainee" practices active listening and asks questions about improvement.
- **Guest Confidentiality:** A scenario where a "colleague" tries to extract confidential guest information, and the trainee must politely but firmly uphold policy.

Vocational Skills:

What hands-on activities are essential for each hospitality role?

- **Housekeeping:**
 - **Room Setup Challenge:** Timed exercise for making a bed to hotel standards.
 - **Cleaning Station Drill:** Practice proper use and safety of cleaning chemicals and equipment.
- **Kitchen Assistance:**
 - **Mise en Place Challenge:** Practice chopping, dicing, and portioning ingredients efficiently and safely.
 - **Dish Pit Relay:** Team activity for efficient and hygienic dishwashing and drying.
- **Front Desk Operation:**
 - **Mock Check-in/Check-out:** Using dummy forms or simple software, simulate the full guest interaction from arrival to departure.
 - **Phone Etiquette Practice:** Handling various guest inquiries over the phone, practicing clear communication and active listening.
- **Stock Management Assistance:**
 - **Inventory Count Challenge:** Practice counting and recording stock items accurately.
 - **Receiving Delivery Simulation:** Trainees receive a mock delivery, check it against a "purchase order," and store it correctly.

How can trainers facilitate practical learning experiences?

- **Simulated Workspaces:** Create a dedicated training area that mimics actual hospitality environments (e.g., a mock hotel room, a small kitchen setup, a front desk counter).
- **Repetitive Practice with Feedback:** Allow trainees ample opportunities to repeat tasks, providing immediate and constructive feedback.
- **Step-by-Step Demonstrations:** Break down complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- **"Train-the-Trainer" Approach:** Encourage trainees to demonstrate tasks to each other, reinforcing their understanding and building confidence.
- **Real-world Tools:** Use actual equipment and materials whenever possible to familiarize trainees with industry standards.

How can trainers demonstrate the application of health and safety practices and legal aspects in vocational tasks?

- **Integrated Demonstrations:** When demonstrating a vocational task (e.g., cleaning a bathroom), simultaneously demonstrate the associated health and safety practices (e.g., wearing gloves, using "wet floor" signs).
- **Scenario-Based Legal Dilemmas:** Present simple scenarios involving common legal issues in hospitality (e.g., food allergies, guest privacy, discrimination) and discuss the correct protocols and legal implications.
- **Guest Speaker from Regulatory Bodies:** Invite local health inspectors or workplace safety representatives to give a short talk on key regulations.
- **Visual Checklists:** Use visual WHS checklists for each task to reinforce safe practices.

Section 3 – Case study

This case study illustrates how comprehensive prevocational and vocational training, coupled with dedicated support, enabled Maria, a refugee woman, to overcome significant barriers and successfully integrate into a demanding front desk role in a multicultural hotel. It highlights the power of tailored support and the transformative impact of VET.

Scenario Description:

Maria, a 28-year-old refugee woman from Syria, arrived in the host country with a pending asylum application. In her home country, she had completed secondary education and worked in a small family business, but she had no formal qualifications recognized in Europe and limited proficiency in the host country's language (A2 level). Her asylum status meant initial exclusion from regular VET programs. Maria was eager to find work to support her family but felt overwhelmed by the unfamiliar education system and the need for immediate income. She struggled with confidence in speaking the host country's language, especially in formal settings.

She was referred to a prevocational training program designed specifically for refugees, which offered integrated language support and practical job readiness skills. This program was part of a larger iMaria's journey highlights several key challenges and effective strategies:

Analysis and Lessons Learned:

- **Initial Barriers:** Maria faced the common "triple disadvantage" of being a refugee, a woman, and having limited language skills and non-recognized qualifications. Her legal status as an asylum seeker further restricted her access to regular apprenticeships. This underscores the critical need for flexible, early-intervention prevocational programs. Refugee women often have lower participation rates in VET and employment, and face additional hurdles due to family responsibilities and health issues.
- **Integrated Language Training for Hospitality Contexts:** The prevocational program's core strength was its integration of language learning with practical hospitality skills. Instead of general language lessons, Maria learned vocational vocabulary relevant to hotel operations (e.g., "check-in," "room service," "concierge," "billing," "room status") while practicing customer service scenarios. This boosted her confidence in using the language in a work context. This aligns with research showing positive results for integrated language and vocational training.

- **Building Pre-vocational Skills through Simulated Hospitality Tasks:** The program focused heavily on job readiness skills, such as punctuality, active listening, and following instructions, using hospitality-specific examples. Mock check-in and check-out role-plays, handling simulated guest complaints, and practicing professional communication in hotel lobby simulations helped Maria understand specific workplace etiquette. This practical application was crucial for bridging cultural gaps regarding professional behavior.
- **Addressing Confidence and Trauma (Nuanced Cultural Sensitivity):** Trainers were trained in cultural sensitivity, understanding the potential impact of past trauma on confidence and communication style. Instead of pushing Maria into immediate guest-facing roles, they gradually built her confidence through internal team interactions and simulated scenarios before transitioning to direct guest engagement. For example, she started with back-office role-plays, then moved to phone interactions, and finally face-to-face guest scenarios. They recognized her initial hesitancy was not a lack of ability but a natural response to a new, high-pressure environment. Providing specific feedback on her "soft skills" helped her understand workplace expectations without judgment.
- **Employer Engagement and "Bridging" to Hotel Internships:** The program actively partnered with local hotels. Maria's prevocational training included a short, unpaid internship in a hotel's linen room, which allowed her to become familiar with the hotel environment, its layout, and the flow of operations without direct guest pressure. This "bridging" experience was crucial for overcoming employer reservations and providing a pathway to formal employment. It allowed the hotel to observe her work ethic, reliability, and adaptability in a low-stakes environment.
- **From Pre-Vocational to Vocational:** Internal Mobility in Hospitality: After successfully completing the prevocational program and demonstrating strong potential during her linen room internship, Maria was offered a full-time Housekeeping Assistant position at the hotel. While not her initial aspiration, it provided immediate employment, allowing her to gain further experience and continue improving her language skills in a real work environment. This reflected the "work first" policy emphasis in some countries, but crucially, it was a supported entry. After six months, demonstrating strong self-management and adaptability, she was supported in transitioning to a Front Desk trainee role, aligning with her long-term career aspiration of direct guest interaction, which involved more guest-facing responsibilities and further VET specific to front office operations.

Key Takeaways

- **Early Intervention and Flexible Pathways:** Prevocational programs that cater to the unique legal and educational circumstances of asylum seekers are critical "stepping stones" for integration.
- **Integrated Hospitality-Specific Language and Skills Training:** Combining language acquisition with vocational skills tailored to the specific demands of the hospitality sector is far more effective than separate approaches for successful labor market integration.
- **Holistic Support:** Addressing mental well-being, cultural sensitivity, and providing consistent feedback on "soft skills" is as important as teaching technical skills.
- **Strong Employer Partnerships:** Active collaboration with employers, including mutual education on available support and migrant potential, is crucial for securing job placements and facilitating transitions. Engaging employers through internships provides valuable practical exposure for trainees and allows employers to assess potential.
- **Progression and Internal Mobility is Key:** Even if the initial job isn't the ultimate goal, successful placement in an entry-level hospitality role can provide valuable experience and a clear pathway to more aligned career aspirations within the same sector. Initiative that connected with local hospitality employers who were open to hiring refugees.

Section 4 – Example Exercises

This section provides practical, job-specific exercises tailored to the four hospitality professions. Each activity is designed to simulate real-life situations, fostering key vocational skills, promoting collaboration and problem-solving, and enhancing cultural sensitivity. The exercises are practical, realistic, and directly applicable to daily tasks, incorporating elements of reflection and feedback to encourage continuous improvement. Trainers can adapt these simple and easily implementable exercises to various training settings.

HOUSEKEEPING:

- **Stress Reduction Activity: Mindfulness Practices for Housekeeping Tasks**
 - **Objective:** To introduce simple mindfulness techniques to manage stress and improve focus during repetitive or demanding tasks.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Introduction (5 min):** Explain how repetitive tasks can lead to mind-wandering or stress, and how mindfulness can help. Introduce the concept of focusing on the senses.
 2. **Guided Practice (10 min):** Lead trainees through a short mindfulness exercise while performing a simple housekeeping task (e.g., wiping a surface, folding a towel). Instruct them to pay close attention to:
 - The sensation of the cleaning cloth against the surface.
 - The smell of the cleaning product.
 - The sounds in the room (without judgment).
 - The rhythm of their movements.
 - When their mind wanders, gently guide them back to the task.
 3. **Group Reflection (5 min):** Ask trainees: "How did it feel to focus completely on the task? Did you notice anything new? Did it help you feel calmer or more focused?"
 - **Adaptation:** Can be adapted for any repetitive task. Emphasize that this is a personal coping strategy.
- **Confidence-Building Activity: Role-Play Managing Guest Interactions**
 - **Objective:** To build confidence and practice effective communication when interacting with guests, particularly in challenging situations.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Scenario Setup (5 min):** Provide a simple scenario: "A guest asks you a question you don't understand or can't answer (e.g., 'Where is the nearest pharmacy that sells organic, gluten-free supplements and is open 24/7?')."
 2. **Role-Play (5-7 min per pair):** Pair trainees. One plays the "Housekeeping Assistant," the other the "Guest." Focus on:
 - Active listening (even if not fully understanding every word).
 - Polite acknowledgment ("I understand you need help with a pharmacy...").
 - Strategies for seeking help ("Please wait a moment, I will find someone who can assist you better," or "I will check with my supervisor.").
 - Maintaining professional demeanor.
 3. **Feedback (5 min per pair):** Trainer and peer provide constructive feedback focusing on body language, tone, and problem-solving attempts. Emphasize effort and positive intent.
 - **Reflection:** "What felt challenging about this interaction? What strategies did you use? What would you do differently next time?"
- **Hands-on Training: Cleaning Techniques and Efficiency**

- **Objective:** To teach and practice standard cleaning techniques and efficient workflow in a simulated guest room or public area.
- **Activity:**
 1. **Demonstration (10 min):** Trainer demonstrates a specific cleaning task (e.g., cleaning a bathroom vanity, making a bed to hotel standard) with emphasis on sequence, technique, and speed.
 2. **Supervised Practice (20 min):** Trainees perform the demonstrated task under supervision, receiving real-time feedback on technique, efficiency, and adherence to hygiene standards.
 3. **Efficiency Challenge (10 min):** Introduce a small challenge, like "You have 5 minutes to dust and wipe all surfaces in this mock room." This encourages efficient movement and prioritization.
- **Reflection:** "What specific techniques did you find most efficient? How can you apply this efficiency to other tasks?"
- **Cognitive Skill Exercise: Problem-Solving Scenarios in Housekeeping**
 - **Objective:** To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills when faced with unexpected situations common in housekeeping.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Scenario Card (5 min):** Provide each small group (2-3 trainees) with a card describing a problem:
 - "You enter a guest room to clean, and the 'Do Not Disturb' sign is on the door, but check-out time was an hour ago, and you see the door slightly ajar."
 - "You've run out of a crucial cleaning chemical halfway through your floor, and the supply closet is locked."
 - "A guest stops you in the hallway and insists their room hasn't been cleaned yet, but your records show it was done."
 2. **Group Discussion & Solution Planning (15 min):** Groups discuss the problem, identify potential risks, brainstorm solutions, and decide on the best course of action.
 3. **Presentation & Peer Feedback (10 min):** Each group presents their problem and solution. The trainer facilitates a discussion on the pros and cons of each approach, emphasizing safety, guest satisfaction, and company policy.
 - **Reflection:** "How did you identify the most important parts of this problem? What was challenging about finding a solution? How can you use your knowledge of hotel procedures to help solve problems?"

KITCHEN ASSISTANCE:

- **Hands-on Training: Food Preparation and Safety**
 - **Objective:** To practice basic food preparation techniques while strictly adhering to hygiene and safety standards.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Demonstration (10 min):** Trainer demonstrates correct knife handling, vegetable chopping techniques (e.g., dicing an onion), and immediate cleaning of the workspace. Emphasize proper handwashing and cross-contamination prevention (e.g., using different cutting boards for raw meat vs. vegetables).
 2. **Supervised Practice (20 min):** Trainees practice chopping a designated vegetable. Trainer circulates, providing immediate feedback on technique and safety.

3. **Safety Check (5 min):** After practice, trainees individually identify potential hazards (e.g., loose knife, uncleaned surface) and demonstrate corrective actions.
- **Reflection:** "What was the most important safety rule you learned today? How does careful preparation impact food quality?"
- **Cognitive Skill Exercise: Adapting to Busy Kitchen Environments**
 - **Objective:** To develop adaptability and quick decision-making in a simulated high-pressure kitchen environment.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Scenario Briefing (5 min):** Explain a "rush hour" scenario: "The restaurant is suddenly full, and many orders are coming in at once. You have multiple tasks – washing dishes, preparing vegetables, and fetching ingredients – all at the same time."
 2. **Visual Task Prioritization (15 min):** Provide trainees with a list of 5-7 tasks with varying urgencies. In small groups, they must verbally prioritize the tasks and explain their reasoning to the trainer. Discuss why certain tasks might take precedence (e.g., immediate needs vs. prep for later).
 3. **Group Discussion (10 min):** Discuss strategies for staying calm, communicating effectively with the team, and asking for help in a busy kitchen.
 - **Reflection:** "How did you decide what to do first? What would make this situation easier to manage?"

FRONT DESK OPERATION:

- **Hands-on Training: Guest Check-in and Customer Service**
 - **Objective:** To practice the full check-in process, incorporating professional demeanor and basic customer service.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Demonstration (10 min):** Trainer demonstrates a flawless guest check-in: greeting, confirming reservation, collecting ID, explaining hotel amenities, providing key cards, and a polite farewell. Emphasize eye contact, a welcoming smile, and clear, polite language.
 2. **Role-Play (10 min per pair):** Pair trainees. One is "Guest," one is "Front Desk Agent." Use simple props (dummy key cards, forms). Focus on the full interaction, not just technical steps.
 3. **Constructive Feedback (5 min per pair):** Trainer and peer provide feedback on warmth, clarity of speech, posture, and adherence to steps.
 - **Reflection:** "What makes a guest feel welcome during check-in? What was one thing you would like to improve in your next check-in role-play?"
- **Cognitive Skill Exercise: Handling Unexpected Guest Requests**
 - **Objective:** To develop problem-solving and adaptability when confronted with unusual or challenging guest requests.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Scenario Card (5 min):** Provide each pair with a card describing an unexpected request: e.g., "Guest wants a room with a view of the mountains, but all mountain-view rooms are booked." or "Guest lost their wallet and needs money urgently."
 2. **Solution Brainstorm (10 min):** Pairs brainstorm as many solutions as possible, considering hotel policy, guest satisfaction, and resources.
 3. **Presentation and Discussion (10 min):** Each pair presents their solutions. The group discusses the feasibility and pros/cons of each, guided by the trainer.

- **Reflection:** "What was the biggest challenge in this scenario? How did you think outside the box to find solutions?"

STOCK MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE:

- **Hands-on Training: Inventory Management and (Self-)Organization**
 - **Objective:** To practice accurate inventory counting and proper storage, emphasizing organization skills.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Setup (5 min):** Prepare a small area with a variety of labeled items (e.g., mock cleaning supplies, food items). Provide an inventory sheet.
 2. **Counting and Recording (15 min):** Trainees, individually or in pairs, count the items and accurately record them on the inventory sheet. Trainer observes organization methods.
 3. **Proper Storage Practice (10 min):** Trainees demonstrate proper storage techniques, including labeling, rotation (e.g., "First In, First Out" - FIFO), and segregation (e.g., chemicals away from food).
 - **Reflection:** "Why is accurate counting important for stock management? How did you organize your work to ensure accuracy?"
- **Cognitive Skill Exercise: Solving Stock Discrepancies**
 - **Objective:** To develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills when identifying and resolving discrepancies in stock.
 - **Activity:**
 1. **Scenario Briefing (5 min):** Present a scenario: "The inventory sheet says you have 10 bottles of olive oil, but you only found 7 on the shelf. Where could the others be?"
 2. **Investigation Steps (10 min):** In small groups, trainees brainstorm logical steps to investigate the discrepancy (e.g., check delivery notes, look in other storage areas, ask colleagues, check for spoilage/breakage).
 3. **Role-Play (10 min):** One trainee "investigates," interacting with a "supervisor" (trainer) or "colleague" (peer) to gather information.
 - **Reflection:** "What was your first step to solving this problem? What information did you need to collect? What did you learn about the importance of accurate record-keeping?"

Section 5 - Impact Assessment and Self-Assessment Tools

This section provides practical tools for VET trainers to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and the progress of trainees, and for trainees to reflect on their own development. These tools are designed to be simple, accessible, and adaptable for diverse training contexts and multicultural groups. A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is included to offer a comprehensive assessment.

Pre-vocational and Vocational Skills:

- **Skill Assessments and Practical Exams:**
 - **Purpose:** To quantitatively measure the acquisition of specific technical and pre-vocational skills.

- **Trainer Tool:** Design short, task-based assessments for each vocational skill (e.g., "Make a bed to hotel standard in 5 minutes," "Accurately chop 1kg of vegetables," "Process a mock check-in"). Use a simple rubric (e.g., 1-5 scale) for performance.
- **Example Tasks:**
 - **Housekeeping:** Demonstrate proper sanitation of a bathroom surface (e.g., spraying, wiping technique, disposing of waste safely).
 - **Kitchen Assistance:** Perform a basic knife cut (e.g., julienne) safely and efficiently.
 - **Front Desk:** Complete a simulated guest check-in using a provided template, including professional greeting and information delivery.
 - **Stock Management:** Identify and correctly label 5 common WHS hazards in a storage area.
- **Practical Exams:** Conduct simulated work shifts where trainees perform a sequence of tasks under timed conditions.
- **Mentor Evaluations and Feedback Sessions:**
 - **Purpose:** To gather qualitative feedback from mentors (if applicable) and facilitate structured feedback from trainers to trainees on their overall performance, behavior, and progress. Mentoring has shown very good results in increasing employment chances in the long run.
 - **Trainer Tool (Mentor Evaluation Form):**
 - A simple checklist/rating scale for mentors on: punctuality, attendance, willingness to learn, teamwork, communication attempts, and adherence to instructions.
 - Open-ended questions: "What is one area of significant improvement for the trainee?", "What support does the trainee need to excel?", "How well does the trainee adapt to new tasks?"
 - **Trainer Tool (Feedback Session Guide):**
 - Structure for one-on-one sessions: Start with positive observations, then discuss 1-2 areas for improvement, collaboratively set a small, actionable goal for the next week.
 - Encourage trainees to self-reflect before the session.

Cognitive Skills:

- **Problem-Solving Quizzes:**
 - **Purpose:** To assess trainees' ability to apply critical thinking and problem-solving to unexpected scenarios.
 - **Trainer Tool:** Short written quizzes presenting 2-3 hypothetical, open-ended scenarios related to hospitality roles. Ask trainees to: "Identify the problem, list 2-3 possible solutions, and choose the best one with justification."
 - **Example Scenarios:**
 - "A guest reports a broken item in their room, but you don't have the key to that room." (Housekeeping)
 - "A customer complains their food order is wrong, but you remember preparing it correctly." (Kitchen Assistance)
- **Adaptability and Flexibility Self-Assessments:**
 - **Purpose:** To empower trainees to reflect on their ability to adjust to change and identify areas for personal growth.
 - **Trainee Tool (Rating Scale):**
 - "When my tasks change unexpectedly, I feel..." (1=Very stressed, 5=Calm and ready to adjust).
 - "I feel comfortable trying new ways to do my work." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).

- "I can quickly switch between different types of tasks." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).
- **Reflection Prompt:** "Describe a time during training when you had to be flexible. What did you learn from that experience?"

Professional Behaviour:

- **Role-Play Evaluations:**
 - **Purpose:** To assess the practical application of professional behavior and etiquette in simulated interactions.
 - **Trainer Tool (Rubric):**
 - Observe and rate specific behaviors during role-plays (e.g., "Maintains eye contact," "Uses polite language," "Appropriate body language," "Manages emotions").
 - Scale: "Needs Improvement," "Developing," "Meets Expectation," "Exceeds Expectation."
 - **Example Scenario:** A trainee interacts with a "guest" who is being overly demanding or impolite.
- **Professional Behaviour Checklists:**
 - **Purpose:** To provide a simple, ongoing tool for both trainers and trainees to monitor consistency in professional conduct.
 - **Trainer Tool (Weekly Observation Checklist):** Quick checks on key behaviors: "Arrived on time," "Appropriate uniform/attire," "Engaged actively," "Followed instructions."
 - **Trainee Tool (Daily Self-Reflection Checklist):** Simple "Yes/No" or "Did well/Can improve" questions for trainees to reflect on their own day: "Was I on time today?", "Did I actively listen to instructions?", "Did I communicate respectfully?"
 - **Reflection Prompt:** "Choose one item from the checklist you want to focus on improving next week. How will you do it?"

Skill Category	Purpose	Trainer Tools	Trainee Self-Assessment Tools
Pre-vocational & Vocational Skills	To quantitatively measure the acquisition of specific technical and pre-vocational skills. To provide qualitative feedback on overall performance and behavior.	Skill Assessments and Practical Exams: Design short, task-based assessments for each vocational skill (e.g., "Make a bed to hotel standard in 5 minutes," "Accurately chop 1kg of vegetables," "Process a mock check-in"). Use a simple rubric (e.g., 1-5 scale) for performance. Conduct simulated work shifts where trainees perform a sequence of tasks under timed conditions.	Practical Skill Self-Assessment: Trainees assess their own proficiency in specific tasks using a simple rating scale (e.g., "How confident are you in making a bed to hotel standard?" 1=Not confident, 5=Very confident).
		Mentor Evaluation Form: A simple checklist/rating scale for mentors on: punctuality, attendance, willingness to	Reflective Journaling: Trainees write short entries reflecting on challenges faced during practical tasks, how

		learn, teamwork, communication attempts, and adherence to instructions. Open-ended questions: "What is one area of significant improvement for the trainee?", "What support does the trainee need to excel?", "How well does the trainee adapt to new tasks?"	they overcame them, and what they learned about their own skills.
		Feedback Session Guide: Structure for one-on-one sessions: Start with positive observations, then discuss 1-2 areas for improvement, collaboratively set a small, actionable goal for the next week. Encourage trainees to self-reflect before the session.	Goals for Improvement: Trainees set concrete, actionable goals for their own skill development based on practical experiences.
Cognitive Skills	To assess trainees' ability to apply critical thinking and problem-solving to unexpected scenarios, and to empower them to reflect on their ability to adjust to change and identify areas for personal growth.	Problem-Solving Quizzes: Short written quizzes presenting 2-3 hypothetical, open-ended scenarios related to hospitality roles. Ask trainees to: "Identify the problem, list 2-3 possible solutions, and choose the best one with justification."	Adaptability and Flexibility Self-Assessments: Use a rating scale for trainees to assess their comfort and effectiveness in adjusting to new conditions or tasks. Examples: "When my tasks change unexpectedly, I feel..." (1=Very stressed, 5=Calm and ready to adjust); "I feel comfortable trying new ways to do my work." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree); "I can quickly switch between different types of tasks." (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree).
		Observation during Group Activities: Observe how trainees approach and resolve unexpected challenges during collaborative exercises.	Reflection Prompt: "Describe a time during training when you had to be flexible. What did you learn from that experience?"
Professional Behaviour	To assess the practical application of professional behavior and etiquette in simulated interactions and to provide an ongoing tool for monitoring	Role-Play Evaluations: Observe and rate specific behaviors during role-plays (e.g., "Maintains eye contact," "Uses polite language," "Appropriate body language," "Manages emotions") using a rubric (e.g., "Needs Improvement," "Developing,"	Daily Self-Reflection Checklist: Simple "Yes/No" or "Did well/Can improve" questions for trainees to reflect on their own day: "Was I on time today?", "Did I actively listen to instructions?", "Did I communicate respectfully?"

	consistency in professional conduct.	"Meets Expectation," "Exceeds Expectation").	
		Trainer Observation Checklists: Quick weekly checks on key behaviors: "Arrived on time," "Appropriate uniform/attire," "Engaged actively," "Followed instructions."	Behavioral Goal Setting: Trainees identify one professional behavior they want to improve and outline steps to achieve it.
			Reflection Prompt: "Choose one item from the checklist you want to focus on improving next week. How will you do it?"

A photograph of two women sitting at a wooden table, looking at a laptop screen. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a black shirt with a light green apron. The woman on the right has short dark hair and is wearing a white shirt. They are both smiling and looking at the laptop. In the background, there are wooden chairs and a staircase.

MODULE 4

TAILORED DIGITAL LITERACY: BUILDING SKILLS FOR HOSPITALITY

Tailored Digital Literacy: Building Skills for Hospitality

In today's hotels and kitchens, digital tools are everywhere—from booking systems to cleaning checklists. This module helps refugee women take their first confident steps into the digital world.

Module 4 introduces basic digital skills through simple, hands-on practice using real tools and job-specific apps. It is designed for learners with limited language and literacy, making technology feel accessible, relevant, and empowering.

As part of the EmpowerHer training journey, this module connects practical hospitality tasks with the digital confidence needed to succeed—opening the door to jobs, communication, and independence.

Section 1 – Theoretical background with key topics

This section introduces VET trainers to the rationale, tools, and strategies behind building digital literacy for refugee women preparing for hospitality roles. It explains key concepts in accessible language, links them to real workplace tasks, and provides examples that trainers can directly apply.

Importance of digital literacy

Digital literacy is a life skill, not just a technical ability. In today's workplaces, being able to use a phone, tablet, or digital platform is as essential as knowing how to follow instructions or interact politely with a guest. This is especially true in the hospitality sector, where even entry-level jobs now require digital interactions.

Why digital literacy matters in hospitality:

- It enables refugee women to participate fully in job training and internships.
- It gives access to job search tools, staff communication apps, and scheduling systems.
- It fosters independence and reduces reliance on others for interpretation or explanation.
- It increases employability in a sector facing labour shortages and digitisation.

What many refugee women face:

- No prior experience using computers or apps for work
- Hesitation to engage with unfamiliar technology
- Limited reading and writing ability, especially in the host-country language
- Lack of confidence to ask for help or admit they do not understand

This means digital training must be job-specific, highly practical, and free of judgment. Trainers need to introduce tools in a way that is clear, culturally sensitive, and rooted in the learners' real needs.

- Overview of digital tools and systems in hospitality

Hospitality employers increasingly expect workers to use digital systems as part of daily tasks. The following examples illustrate how these tools are used in real settings.

1. Housekeeping Staff

Typical digital tools

- Flexkeeping and Hotelkit for daily task lists and room status updates
- WhatsApp for team communication (especially in smaller hotels)

Real-world example

Fatima begins her shift by logging into the Flexkeeping app on a shared hotel tablet. She sees that she is responsible for Rooms 101–107. As she finishes each room, she taps "Completed" in the app. In Room 105, she notices a broken light fixture and takes a photo using the app to report it to maintenance.

What needs to be trained

- Navigating the home screen of the app
- Recognising icons for room status (e.g., "to clean," "cleaned," "maintenance issue")
- Using voice messages or emojis to communicate with the supervisor when writing is difficult

Low-threshold entry activity

Have trainees use paper mock-ups of the app with printed icons. Ask them to match icons to room statuses and role-play checking tasks off on a printed list.

2. Kitchen Assistants

Typical digital tools

- Jolt or Traqq for hygiene protocols
- Google Sheets for inventory logs
- YouTube for visual recipe instructions

Real-world example

Abir logs the temperature of the walk-in fridge using a tablet mounted on the kitchen wall. If the temperature is too high, she clicks a red icon and records a comment. Later, she uses YouTube to watch how to clean a coffee machine and must follow the steps in real time.

What needs to be trained

- Logging into a shared tablet using a PIN or fingerprint
- Entering numbers and symbols in digital forms
- Following video tutorials and pausing when needed

Low-threshold entry activity

Set up a training station with a thermometer and printed QR codes linked to hygiene videos. Ask trainees to scan the code, watch the video, and then complete a simplified checklist on a laminated form.

3. Front Desk Staff

Typical digital tools

- MEWS or Cloudbeds property management systems (PMS)
- Google Calendar for room booking coordination
- Email and Messenger apps for guest communication

Real-world example

Sahar receives a guest who booked a room online. She opens the reservation system, types in the guest's last name, confirms the booking, and prints a room key card. The guest asks for a late check-out. Sahar sends an internal message to the manager via Slack.

What needs to be trained

- Typing names into a search bar
- Interpreting booking information (check-in/check-out dates, number of guests)
- Sending a message or email using sentence starters or templates

Low-threshold entry activity

Provide trainees with sample booking printouts and ask them to identify key details (guest name, arrival date, room number). Then, use a simplified PMS simulator (or Google Form) to practice entering booking data.

4. Stockroom Assistants

Typical digital tools

- Sortly or MarketMan for inventory management
- Barcode scanner apps on smartphones or tablets

Real-world example

Noura receives a delivery of kitchen supplies. She uses her phone to scan each item's barcode and updates the digital inventory list. If an item is missing, she clicks "shortage" and writes a short note.

What needs to be trained

- Scanning barcodes using a mobile app
- Reading and updating inventory lists
- Using colour-coded alerts (e.g., green = OK, red = restock)

Low-threshold entry activity

Give trainees laminated labels with barcodes and a tablet with a free scanner app. Ask them to “receive” a fake order and log quantities on a visual inventory sheet.

Developing digital skills step-by-step:

- Step 1: Start with what learners already know

Ask participants if they use smartphones. Many will say yes. Ask how they use them—often for photos, messages, or voice calls. Use this as the entry point. Practice simple actions like unlocking a screen, swiping, or opening WhatsApp.

- Step 2: Build digital confidence

Use very small tasks with immediate success. For example:

- Find the calendar app
- Take a photo of your name tag
- Send an emoji to your trainer using WhatsApp

Praise every achievement. If a participant hesitates, have her practice with a peer or trainer, step-by-step. Avoid asking participants to type long text if they struggle with spelling. Use voice messages or pre-written phrases.

- Step 3: Link all digital tasks to a job action

Never teach digital tools in isolation. Always connect them to a hospitality routine. For example:

- "You check the fridge temperature and write the number in the app."
- "You clean Room 204 and tap 'done' in the app."
- "You scan the box and it says 'enough stock.'"

Use laminated training aids with 3-step instructions:

1. Open the app
2. Tap the green icon
3. Scan the item

Provide these instructions in the learner’s native language or with photos and symbols.

Using VR in training:

VR in EmpowerHer is used not as a gadget, but as a learning bridge between classroom and workplace. It lets participants observe, experience, and reflect on job situations without pressure.

How VR supports learning for low-literacy women:

- It eliminates the need to read complex instructions
- It shows job settings that might otherwise feel intimidating
- It helps women mentally rehearse tasks before doing them
- It reduces the fear of "doing something wrong" in public

Use VR in short sessions. Introduce with group discussion. After watching, practice the same task using real objects. Use guiding questions like:

- What did you see?
- What did the person do first?
- What do you need to press?

Encourage learners to share their own impressions and questions. Repeat as needed.

Improving digital literacy for refugee women

All EmpowerHer training follows these guiding principles:

- Training must be non-judgmental and supportive
- Instructions must be simple, slow, and visual
- Tasks must be relevant to the trainee's daily life
- Trainers must build trust before expecting independence

Key adaptations for digital training:

- Use icons and colour-coded systems instead of text
- Print step-by-step visuals for every task
- Allow trainees to record voice notes if writing is difficult
- Use peer learning: pair stronger and weaker learners
- Include success celebrations, such as sticker charts or "first time I did it!" boards

As an example, instead of asking a trainee to "log a hygiene task in Jolt," say:
"Press the red circle. Check the fridge. If the number is OK, press green. Done!"

Trainers must remember that small steps add up. One successful tablet login can be the beginning of a woman's journey toward long-term employment, self-esteem, and autonomy.

Section 2 – Guidelines for Training

This section provides concrete strategies for delivering digital literacy training in vocational settings with refugee women. It focuses on linking theoretical concepts to real-life hospitality tasks and offers flexible methods for diverse learning environments. Each subsection responds to the practical realities of the target group and aims to make digital tools approachable, useful, and empowering.

Digital Literacy: How can trainers assess and address digital literacy gaps?

To begin, trainers should never assume prior digital experience. Some refugee women may be familiar with smartphones for basic communication, while others may have never used a touchscreen or typed their name.

How to assess:

- Use simple, visual self-assessment tools, such as a picture-based checklist: “Can you open an app?”, “Can you take a photo?”, “Can you use a keyboard?”
- Set up an informal digital scavenger hunt: Ask participants to perform easy tasks like opening the camera, finding the calculator, or recording a voice message.
- Observe learners as they handle devices. Note signs of hesitation, confusion, or reliance on others.

How to address gaps:

- Group learners by digital confidence level for targeted support.
- Use icon-based guidance, not text-heavy instructions.
- Offer pre-training digital warm-up activities, such as unlocking a device or watching a video.
- Reinforce that every learner starts somewhere and that learning digital skills is a process, not a test.

Using VR in Training:

- How can trainers incorporate VR scenarios into their sessions?

Start by making the VR experience safe and accessible. Introduce the VR headset slowly, explain what it is, and allow learners to observe before using it. If learners are hesitant, let them try in pairs or small groups.

1. Introduce the context of the VR scene (e.g. “You are a kitchen assistant. You need to wash the vegetables.”)
2. Watch the video together or in pairs.
3. Debrief using guiding questions: “What happened first?”, “What tool was used?”, “What did the person do when something was wrong?”
4. Transition into real-world application using props or simulations.

- What types of VR activities are most effective for hospitality training?

The most effective VR activities for this target group are:

- Job shadowing videos, where the learner follows a professional completing tasks
- Step-by-step simulations, where each action (e.g., logging a guest, cleaning a room, scanning stock) is clearly demonstrated
- Environmental walkthroughs, where learners explore workspaces and get comfortable with layout and tools

Avoid fast-paced or dialogue-heavy videos. Focus on visual clarity, slow pacing, and task visibility.

- What are the advantages of using VR in hospitality training?

- Reduces anxiety before entering real job environments
- Reinforces memory through visual and experiential learning
- Bridges language gaps, allowing learners to follow along without reading
- Increases engagement among learners who struggle with classroom formats

VR also equalizes learning. A woman with no formal schooling can master a task after watching it in VR, even if she cannot read instructions.

- How can VR be used to simulate real-world hospitality tasks?

Use VR to introduce:

- Checking cleaning tasks in a hotel room
- Entering food temperature logs on a digital device
- Assisting a guest at the front desk
- Receiving and scanning a delivery

Always pair VR sessions with task replication in the training room using tablets, printed props, and role play, e.g. after watching a VR video of a front desk check-in, trainees role-play the same interaction using a paper version of the booking screen.

Developing Digital Skills

- How can trainers tailor digital literacy programs for refugee women?

Training should be low-threshold, relevant, and confidence-building. It should be practical before theoretical.

Strategies include

- Focus on one tool per session (e.g. using a camera, checking a schedule, entering a number).
- Repeat tasks across multiple days, reinforcing learning through routine.
- Incorporate mother-tongue support via visuals, translated instructions, or bilingual peers.
- Always tie digital actions to hospitality roles: “This is how we check your cleaning list,” or “This is the form for food safety.”

Use real job settings as the reference, not abstract tech lessons.

- How can hands-on practice with digital tools be facilitated?

Hands-on learning is non-negotiable. Trainees should see, touch, and repeat real tools.

- Use dummy tablets and phones with pre-installed training apps or Google Forms designed to mimic hospitality software.
- Create stations in the room (e.g., a “front desk” with booking forms, a “kitchen” with hygiene checklists).
- Let learners work in pairs, encouraging peer coaching.
- Print icon guides that show which button to press and when (e.g., “Tap here to finish” with an arrow pointing to a green button).

Give each learner daily mini-tasks they can complete independently.

Improving Digital Literacy for Refugee Women

- What resources can support their learning?

Practical resources include

- Translated guides (Arabic, Farsi, Dari, Ukrainian) with screenshots of the tools

- Step-by-step visual cards with photos or icons for each action
- Demo videos showing how to perform digital tasks
- Apps with voice-over and visual navigation (like the accessibility features in Android and iOS)
- Peer mentors or digital buddies from the same language group

Recommended free tools and platforms:

- Google Forms to create training forms for checklists, bookings, and reports
- Canva for designing icon-based guides or training visuals
- YouTube for job-task videos and slow-paced tutorials in different languages
- Trello or Padlet to visually organize task sequences for group projects

Training should always be integrated into the learner's journey. Every tool taught should be one that they will encounter in real job settings or in daily life.

Section 3 – Case study

Let's consider that you, as a VET trainer implementing the EmpowerHer programme, are working with a group of refugee women at Guesthouse Bogata, located within the premises of Gewerkstatt Bochum in Germany. You are about to start the digital literacy component of the housekeeping training module, where the aim is to introduce participants to tools commonly used in real hospitality settings—such as the Hotelkit app for assigning and tracking cleaning tasks.

Let's also consider that one of your participants is Zainab—a hypothetical but very typical learner in this context. She is 39 years old, originally from Syria, and has been living in Germany for about two years. She has worked informally in home cleaning but has never interacted with digital systems in a work environment. Her literacy in Arabic is limited, and she is currently at A1 level in German. She has no experience using tablets, apps, or online forms.

At the start of the session, when you introduce Hotelkit, Zainab may appear disengaged or hesitant. She may not touch the tablet. She may look confused when other learners start using the device. She may even say that she prefers to write room numbers on paper. These reactions will not be unusual. They will likely signal low confidence, fear of failure, and unfamiliarity with technology—all of which are common among women from similar backgrounds with interrupted or no formal schooling.

In this situation, and following the EmpowerHer approach, you as the trainer should respond in a way that creates emotional safety, builds trust, and reduces cognitive load. You should:

- Prepare simplified tablets that open directly to the training screen without needing a password, so that no technical barriers prevent learners from getting started.
- Offer Zainab a printed sheet showing the app interface with key icons labeled in Arabic and German. This visual aid should be laminated for repeated use and supported with pictures rather than text-heavy descriptions.

- Pair Zainab with another Arabic-speaking participant who has slightly more digital experience. Peer pairing like this is part of EmpowerHer's inclusive strategy to reduce isolation and encourage peer mentoring.
- Introduce the cleaning app not through abstract explanation but by showing a short EmpowerHer VR video in which a cleaner at Guesthouse Bogata uses the app to view her daily room list, mark rooms as cleaned, and report issues to maintenance.
- Follow the video immediately with simulated practice, using a paper-based version of the room list and task cards. Zainab can go through the steps with her peer first, and then gradually move to practicing on the actual tablet.

As the days progress, Zainab will begin to recognize the app layout. She will be able to check her digital task list, mark completed rooms using the green tick icon, and even take photos when something in a room needs reporting. When she starts her internship phase at Guesthouse Bogata, she will use Hotelkit with growing independence. She may even be the one helping the next new participant to log in or navigate the icons.

Section 4 – Example Exercises

Housekeeping

1. Digital Literacy Activity – "My Cleaning App"

Participants will learn to use a simplified version of a housekeeping management tool such as *Hotelkit*. Trainers may use printed worksheets simulating the app or tablets with demo screens.

Steps

- Participants are shown a daily room list with icons: green (cleaned), red (needs attention), yellow (maintenance issue).
- They practice "marking" rooms as cleaned by tapping a button or placing a sticker.
- They use icon cards to report problems (e.g. missing towels, broken light).

Support for low literacy: Use visuals, colour coding, and minimal text. Practice in pairs using step-by-step printed guides.

2. VR Experience – "Cleaning in Action"

Trainees will watch 4 EmpowerHer VR videos for housekeeping:

1. Showroom video
2. Two action videos
3. One interaction

After viewing:

- Group identifies tools used and steps taken

- Use printed room maps and objects (e.g. towels, spray bottle) for reenactment

3. Group Activity – "Room Status Game"

Scenario: Each group is given a floor plan and room task cards.

Task:

- Decide room status (cleaned, needs cleaning, issue)
- Update a shared form (whiteboard, printed sheet, or app)
- Use icons to mark actions

Reflection prompt: "Which steps felt easy? Where did we need help?"

Learning focus: Collaboration, decision-making, reading non-verbal info

Kitchen Assistance

1. Digital Literacy Activity – "Fridge Temperature Log"

Using *Google Forms* or a printed template, trainees will simulate food safety tracking.

Steps:

- Read a mock thermometer (real or photo card)
- Enter the number into the form
- Choose between "OK" or "Too warm" using icons

Support: Use voice entry or symbols for learners who don't read numbers confidently.

2. VR Experience – "Safe Kitchen Routines"

Trainees view 4 VR videos:

1. Showroom
2. Two action videos
3. One interaction

After viewing:

- Learners practice the activities
- Use posters with hygiene steps for reinforcement

3. Group Activity – "Digital Recipe Relay"

Scenario: Groups follow a simple recipe (e.g. fruit salad) using images or a tablet app.

Task:

- Each member takes a role (e.g. reader, measurer, timer)
- Steps are checked off digitally or with stickers

- End by taking a photo of the finished product

Reflection prompt: "Was the recipe clear? What helped us follow the steps?"

Learning focus: Step-by-step following, visual navigation, teamwork

Front Desk Operation

1. Digital Literacy Activity – "Guest Check-In"

Trainees use a simplified front desk app simulation (e.g. mock *Cloudbeds*) or a printed form.

Steps:

- Search for guest by name or picture card
- Confirm booking details (room number, nights)
- Tap "check-in" or place a sticker
- Select a short welcome message from a phrase list

Support: Use name cards with photos and check-in sheets with images and symbols.

2. VR Experience – "Reception Desk Basics"

Trainees view 4 VR videos:

1. Showroom: hotel lobby and desk area
2. Two action videos: checking booking, printing room key
3. One interaction: guest asking for late check-out

After viewing:

- Role-play greeting a guest and confirming a room
- Use real or mock tablets to repeat check-in steps

3. Group Activity – "Guest Request Role-Play"

Scenario: One learner plays the guest (e.g. "I lost my key"), another the receptionist.

Task:

- Listen to the request
- Use printed or digital icons to take the right action
- Practice polite, simple German phrases ("Einen Moment, bitte.")

Reflection prompt: "What did I say well? What was hard to remember?"

Learning focus: Hospitality communication, listening, digital interaction

Stock Management Assistance

1. Digital Literacy Activity – "Scan and Record Delivery"

Using a basic barcode app (or QR code printouts) and an inventory form:

Steps

- "Receive" item (e.g. box of gloves)
- Scan or match barcode
- Enter or choose quantity
- Mark status: OK / Damaged / Missing using colour-coded stickers

Support: Use photo labels, number cards, and verbal support.

2. VR Experience – "Stockroom Routine"

Trainees view 4 VR videos:

1. Showroom
2. Two action videos
3. One interaction

After viewing:

- Use mock items (e.g. boxes with labels) to practice
- Update a visual inventory list (paper or tablet)

3. Group Activity – "Inventory Teamwork"

Scenario: A delivery arrives. Each team receives a list and box labels.

Task:

- Count items
- Update stock form together
- Decide if anything is missing or broken

Reflection prompt: "Did we work well together? What part was clear or confusing?"

Learning focus: Group communication, using forms, following quantity rules

To reflect:

- Reflecting on
 - Reflecting on what I did today, what task felt easy for me?
 - Reflecting on today's digital task, what made me feel confident?
 - Reflecting on using the app, what part did I enjoy most?
 - Reflecting on the video, what do I remember clearly?
 - Reflecting on the group activity, what did my team do well?
- How can

- How can I ask for help when I don't understand a task?
 - How can I remember the steps next time I use this tool?
 - How can I use this skill in a real job?
 - How can we help each other learn more?
 - How can I use my phone to practice this task at home?
- Considering
 - Considering the tools we used, which one felt most useful?
 - Considering the instructions, what helped me follow them?
 - Considering the video, what was different from what I expected?
 - Considering the group activity, how did we communicate?
 - Considering today's task, what would I like to repeat or practice again?

Section 5 - Impact Assessment and Self-Assessment Tools

1. Digital Literacy: Competency & Progress Evaluation

a) Digital Competency Checklist (Trainer-led)

Purpose: Track each trainee's ability to perform basic digital tasks by observation.

Use: Check after each session or week.

Skill	Can perform independently	Needs help	Not attempted yet
Turn on and unlock a device			
Use touch screen (tap, swipe)			
Open an app			
Use camera to take a photo			
Enter numbers (e.g. temperature)			
Use icons to send a message or mark task			

Trainers can adapt the checklist for each job role and mark progress over time.

b) Mini Practical Task (Informal Test)

Example task: "Use this device to mark a room as cleaned" (housekeeping), "Scan this barcode and enter quantity" (stockroom).

Trainers observe and note ease, confidence, and errors, rather than grading accuracy.

2. VR Training: Feedback and Scenario Recall

a) Post-VR Group Questions (Oral or Visual)

- "What did the person do first?"
- "What tool did they use?"

- “What was different from your experience?”
Use image cards to help learners answer if they cannot express it in words.

b) Emoji-Based Feedback Scale

Learners point to a symbol or sticker to express how they felt after VR:

- 😊 = I understood well
- 😐 = I understood some parts
- 😞 = I was confused

Trainers note which videos may need to be repeated or followed with extra support.

3. Digital Skills: Self-Assessment and Tracking

a) “I Can...” Self-Assessment Sheet

Task	I can do this alone 👉	I can do this with help ☐	I want to practice more ?
Use a tablet or phone in training			
Watch and understand a video			
Enter a number or mark a task			
Ask for help using the device			

b) Digital Skills Growth Chart (Visual Timeline)

Each learner receives a progress card with 4–5 icons

Each time they complete a digital task in training, they receive a sticker or tick.

This builds confidence and visual recognition of progress.

Implementation Tips

- Use visual aids wherever possible (tick boxes, emoji faces, photo guides).
- Repeat assessments gently and informally over time—don’t wait for “test day.”
- Encourage peer support in reflection activities, especially across languages.
- Include time at the end of each session for short reflection moments using tools above.

ANNEX

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