

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THINKING ABOUT AND SPEAKING ABOUT REFUGEES

What follows are the core messages we are trying to promote. They are the principles on which this resource has been based. They are relevant to all grades and phases.

We have identified six principles:

**BREAKING BOUNDARIES
BUILDING BRIDGES**

DIFFERENT IS MORE

**ONE STRUGGLE
MANY VOICES**

**THEIR TODAY
EVERYONE'S
TOMORROW**

**TALK ABOUT IT
WORK IT OUT**

WE ARE ALL MIGRANTS

BREAKING BOUNDARIES BUILDING BRIDGES



What differences do we give significance to?

We are all different in so many ways, and yet we tend to categorise people according to specific differences. We then make all sorts of assumptions based on those categories, treating the people who belong to them as stereotypes, justifying our irrational prejudice and unjust discrimination. In the short term it is easier to create divisions and boundaries than to build bridges, because bridges require us to spend energy working things out.

In the long term divisions and the exclusions they support hurt us all. Societies based on principles of inclusion thrive more than those that don't. We can begin by admitting that whether we perceive boundaries or commit to building bridges it is a choice, and not an accurate representation of some natural order. What will it take for us to use our critical, creative and collaborative skills to build bridges and create a society that is socially and economically inclusive? We cannot allow our country's borders to create the illusion that we can be kept separate from the challenges happening in the rest of Africa and the world. If we cannot perceive that everything is connected we will not be able to face global challenges together.

RECOGNITION OF THE REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM



The first-ever Refugee Olympic Team competed at the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. This illustrated the courage and perseverance of refugees but also showed the potential for change in the attitude of the international community. [\[See: http://www.unhcr.org/afr/rio-2016-refugee-olympic-team.html\]](http://www.unhcr.org/afr/rio-2016-refugee-olympic-team.html) When Yiech Pur Biel fled

South Sudan in 2005 he was separated from his family. He was nine years old. Through social media his mother found out that he was going to compete in the Rio Olympics as an athlete running the 800 metres. With the help of UNHCR she managed to re-establish contact. "It was a great thing to speak to my mother after twelve years," he said.



Yasuyoshi Chiba, AFP, Getty Images

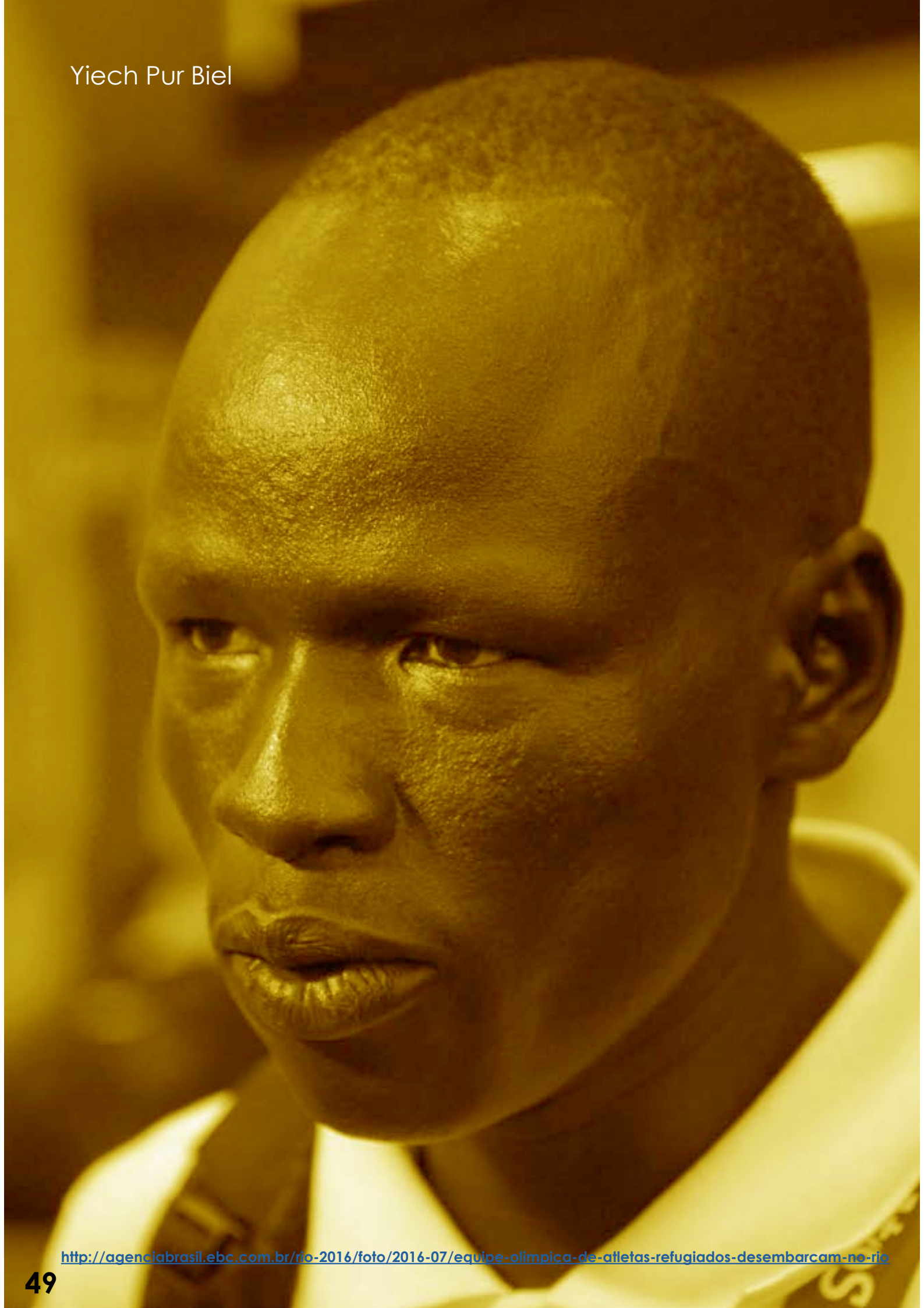
Yiech also said, “I have another family too now, one of refugees, 65.3 million of them.” Since the Olympics he has continued to do work as an ambassador for refugees. He said. “I now have a chance to share my story and this has motivated many people. Travelling has given me room to share my story with the world.”

Yiech is training hard for Tokyo 2020, where he hopes to break the 800 metres world record held by Kenyan athlete David Rudisha, whom he regards as a role model. “When I met Rudisha in Rio, I told him I will break your record in Tokyo,” he said. “He encouraged me and told me to go ahead and break it.”



**“I HAVE ANOTHER
FAMILY TOO NOW,
ONE OF REFUGEES,
65.3 MILLION OF THEM.”**

Yiech Pur Biel



DIFFERENCE IS MORE



A refugee is not just another mouth that needs to be fed, or another body competing for our country's resources. Most refugees bring with them a wealth of personal experiences, valuable cultural capital, diverse knowledge resources and vibrant creativity. Their presence, their languages and their entrepreneurial spirit infuse our culture with new possibilities. The way they rebuild their lives after such devastating experiences and losses provides a model of courageous determination that we can all learn from. These gifts, these migrant imaginations, make us all wealthier, adding to our collective intelligence. Taking their wellbeing seriously is an investment in our future.

“Refugees and migration cannot be disassociated from development, as migration is a source of cultural and social enrichment for hosting countries.”

Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, *President of Mozambique*
(at UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, 19 September 2016)

“Refugees are also often described as a burden for the countries hosting them. They are perceived as a drain on state budgets, a weight on the economy and an unfair competitor for national workers, bringing down wages. However, research looking at the long-term effects of refugees around the world has proved that this view is in many cases wrong. While a large influx

of refugees is likely to have a significant socio-economic impact in the short term, if given the opportunity, refugees, including young people, tend to make substantial contributions to their new country – expanding consumer markets for local goods, bringing in new skills, generating employment and filling labour market niches.”

A new deal for every forcibly displaced child (2016) London: The Save the Children Fund.

“Refugees have skills, ideas, hopes and dreams ... They are also tough, resilient and creative, with the energy and drive to shape their own destinies, given the chance.”

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees



ONE STRUGGLE MANY VOICES



Young South Africans who are struggling to survive may be offended by anyone who encourages spending the country's precious resources on refugees.

In their minds, not only is nothing gained, but also, their own future seems stolen from them in the process. If these young people can be convinced that the struggles they face are the product of the same power dynamics that create the struggles of refugees, they may begin to see that they are part of the same struggle

for dignity, equality, freedom and justice. The poverty, unemployment and disempowerment that young South Africans experience are not the result of refugees, but the result of a society that still perpetuates privilege and oppression. By understanding the plight of refugees, their dislocation and the discrimination they face, young South Africans can gain insights into their own struggle – not because it competes with that of refugees, but because it is based on the same dynamics.

**“FOR TO BE FREE
IS NOT MERELY
TO CAST OFF
ONE’S CHAINS,
BUT TO LIVE IN
A WAY THAT
RESPECTS AND
ENHANCES
THE FREEDOM
OF OTHERS.”**

Nelson Mandela

Anti-apartheid revolutionary and
first president of a democratic
South Africa





THEIR TODAY

EVERYONE'S TOMORROW



The real crisis facing us is not a refugee crisis but our unwillingness to be vulnerable to fellow Africans in their hour of need. This invulnerability does not make us strong. It makes us fragile in our rigidity, unable to learn and adapt to change. By responding with violent defensiveness to the idea of the refugee as an invader and usurper, we lose the very thing we are trying to protect – our own humanity and dignity. The real crisis that will affect us all is a critical lack of compassion and imagination.

Xenophobia is a symptom of our collective failure to show dignity to all human beings. Things cannot continue as they are. Whether we like it or not, the future will not be anything like the past. How we treat refugees today will determine the future we all share tomorrow.

"We are the people who have been denied the future, the rights and the dreams we used to imagine. Our dream has become a nightmare ... You want us to remit, but what we need is for you to commit — to justice, to development that does not tear families apart and to a future that relies on the strength of its people, not to the continued export and exploitation of labour ... Let's work for a world without vulnerability, insecurity or invisibility."

**Eni Lestary Estari Andayani,
Chairperson, International Migrants
Alliance at UN Summit for Refugees
and Migrants, 19 September 2016**

"Support for displaced people is overwhelmingly stuck in the 'humanitarian' box, meaning that fulfilling the rights of refugees and other displaced populations such as IDPs are only rarely integrated into national development plans. The inappropriateness of relying on short-term humanitarian financing to support populations in protracted crises has been well documented; reliance on short-term humanitarian aid for these populations undermines their resilience, denies them long-term development opportunities and ultimately increases the likelihood of long-term dependence on humanitarian aid."

**A new deal for every forcibly
displaced child (2016) London: The
Save the Children Fund.**





TALK ABOUT IT

WORK IT OUT



Just because you cannot see a solution immediately doesn't mean you should give up and resort to default patterns of thinking, speaking and acting. Working it out does take energy, time and attention. The solution may not exist in some ideal form just waiting to be discovered. We may have to grapple and persevere. The solution may be something we need to innovate for the very first time, after considering all the evidence, questioning our assumptions (categories and stereotypes), admitting our fear and ignorance, approaching the challenge from many different points of view, and listening to everyone who has been affected. To do this we don't need debates in which people are trying to win, but conversations in which people are trying to understand. We need find ways to maintain such productive conversations for as long as it is necessary to co-create the best solutions possible.

**“WE ALL
BELONG
TO SOUTH
AFRICA,
AND SOUTH
AFRICA
BELONGS
TO US”**

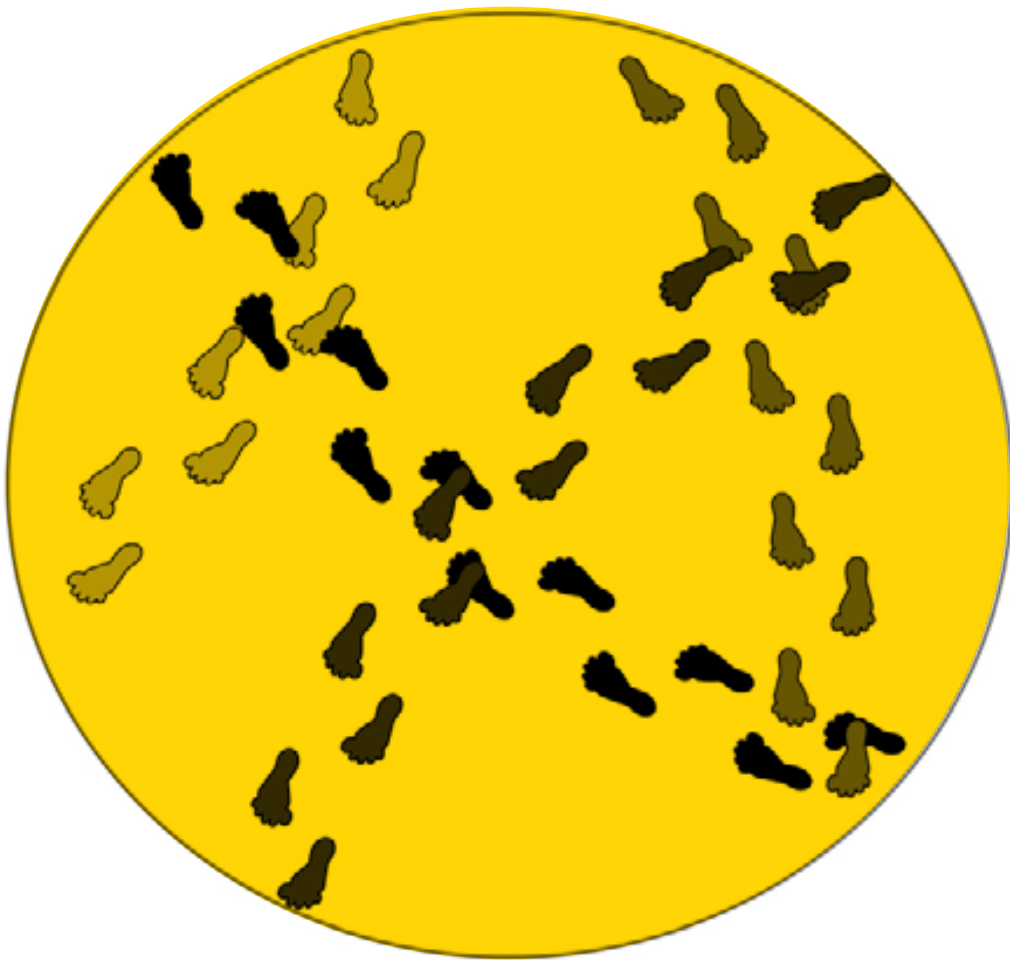
Oliver Tambo

South African anti-apartheid politician
and ANC President





WE ARE ALL MIGRANTS



National borders and immigration control are very recent developments in human history. The history of humans on Earth is a history of migration. Apart from a few very isolated communities, most human populations are made up of people whose ancestors came from elsewhere. It is human nature to dream of a better life and seek out new possibilities.

People are not born where they choose to be. What kind of moral intuition insists that people need to stay where they are? Can anyone expect them to stay in their country of origin when it has become for them a killing field or a prison of unimaginable tortures?

**“NO ONE
LEAVES
HOME
UNLESS
HOME IS
THE MOUTH
OF A
SHARK.”**

Warsan Shire

Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth



