



FMRC
FAIRFIELD MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE

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**Community Relations Commission's
Investigation of the impact of the settlement of
African refugees in NSW on government services
and contracted agencies.**

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INTRODUCTION

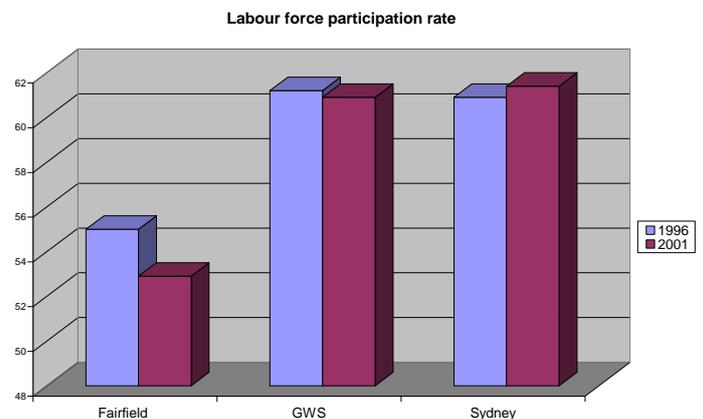
The Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (FMRC) has been providing settlement services for 20 years to newly arrived refugees and immigrants, in what has been and continues to be the local government area of highest settlement of humanitarian entrants in NSW (DIMA Settlement Database 2005).

Over the last five years, Fairfield has been the largest first settlement point with 8639 people arriving under the humanitarian program and family stream. In the last 12 months Fairfield has settled 1693 new arrivals, the top 5 countries are: Iraq, Vietnam, China, Cambodia with the Sudan taking fifth place. Fairfield City continues to hold the NSW record for settling the largest number of refugees, humanitarian entrants and immigrants (family stream). Nationally we have the second largest number of new arrivals settling, being pipped to the post by Greater Dandenong in Victoria.

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre continues to play an integral role in the provision of settlement services through information and referral, settlement information sessions, English classes, TAFE Outreach programs, material aid, and capacity building programs.

The consistently high rates of settlement over the last 25 years, explains some of the socio-economic hardships and infra-structure shortages experienced by the population of Fairfield, as follows:

- **English Language Proficiency** - 35910 residents (population 181480) have poor or no English language ability.
- **Poverty** - 2 out of 3 households have less than \$ 399 per week.
 - Fairfield Centrelink has the largest customer base in the country.
 - The median income for Fairfield as at 2001 Census was \$ 282 which is less than the Henderson Poverty Line \$294.
- **Unemployment** - 28.4% youth unemployment and 8.5% all ages (As at Dec 2004). These unemployment rates are significantly higher than the Sydney and National average. The real unemployment rates (much higher rates than the National and State averages among CALD communities is unknown) as no data is collected.
- **Labour Force Participation Rates**
Figure 1 shows that workforce participation rates have also dropped from 55% in 1996 to 53% in 2001 suggesting a higher proportion of residents are dependent on other forms of income.
- **Housing** - lack of affordable, appropriate and obtainable housing options. Fairfield LGA has the largest public housing waiting list in NSW.



Yet despite or because of these socio-economic factors and ethnic diversity, service providers in Fairfield are well equipped through an accumulated wealth of institutional (government and non-government agencies) and professional expertise unmatched in other areas, as well as a highly diverse, collaborative and welcoming community.

One of the positive aspects of African settlement is the preparedness of the communities to take on responsibilities in relation to supporting the settlement of newly arrived community members.

Some of the more challenging aspects is the diversity of cultures and languages within individual African source nations eg Sudan, large families, single head households (often female), poor literacy levels, schooling and health issues. These challenges are not a revelation in themselves – the problems, issues and needs of the African communities are very similar to those experienced by other refugee communities in particular the South East Asian communities and we have learned a great deal from the previous waves of refugee settlement and as a result have become much more responsive, culturally sensitive and pro-active in our delivery of services to those communities and new refugee communities like the African communities.

1. To identify barriers of the settlement needs of African refugees in consultation with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs; NSW Government agencies, non-government organisations and African communities.

This document represents the FMRCs considered response to the Terms of Reference of the Community Relations Commission's Investigation of the impact of the settlement of African refugees in NSW on government services and contracted agencies.¹

As with previous 'waves' of humanitarian movement to metropolitan NSW, Fairfield has been a popular destination for newly arrived African entrants.² The FMRC has worked and consulted with emerging African communities to ensure smooth settlement, appropriate service delivery, and capacity building for the development of community infrastructure towards self-reliance.

The FMRC has observed that humanitarian entrants from African communities experience barriers to settlement and need further assistance relating to: language, literacy levels, access to interpreters, appropriate and affordable housing, employment, education, Centrelink, health and mental health, domestic violence, immigration, ... - all unsurprising given our experience with the needs of previous groups of refugees/humanitarian entrants. African communities like refugees before them have experienced the horrors of civil war and oppression, oftentimes exacerbated through decades of poverty and natural disasters.

Service Barriers to Government and Non-Government Agencies in the Fairfield LGA

Language

Language is always one of the major settlement issues, as it is the key to communication and vocational pathways, employment and improved access to all government and non-government services.

Most of the refugees and humanitarian entrants from Africa attend the 510 hours as well as the additional 100 hours available through the Special Preparatory Program. (SPP) provided through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The AMEP expanded its business through the additional provision of an extra 400 SPP hours of tuition for young humanitarian entrants aged, between 16 to 24years with low levels of schooling. The hours of tuition were increased from 15 hours/week to 20 hours/week for SPP students

¹ The FMRC notes the use of the exclusive mention of 'government services and contracted agencies'. As with many settlement service providers, the FMRC is neither, rather a funded provider. There appears to be some definitional confusion elsewhere, and a sector-wide clarity of the difference and understanding of 'commercial in confidence' contracts. The lack of sector-wide knowledge of what contracted agencies have been contracted to provide, has led to inappropriate referrals, under-utilisation of partnerships and co-case management potential, and poor outcomes for clients.

² Former Indo-China, South America, Former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Middle East...

assessed as having the capacity for more intensive delivery. (Source:DIMA – Australia’s Support for Humanitarian Entrants 2004-2005).

However, these communities come from different African countries and cultures with varying levels of education. Most African community members have either very high or very low education levels. This differs from other refugee communities arriving in Australia, in that there is usually a large proportion of each community who have a mid-range or basic level of education.

Generally, after completing the 510 hours or more, the refugees do not feel they have learned enough. Part of the reason is the lack of interaction with native English speakers. Attendees at the English language centres feel the curriculum does not help them to progress greatly.

One of the main issues that affect the access to English classes for women is the lack of vacancies for childcare at the English language centres particularly for children under 2 years of age. The refugee communities are at times characterised by large numbers of children or very young children. Usually, the women have to be put on a waiting list until a vacancy is available for their child/ren.

Recommendations

- ***AMEP providers review their curriculum so that it suits the needs of African refugees and humanitarian entrants, including greater interaction with English language speakers.***
- ***More innovative methods need to be developed to improve the learning outcomes for new arrived Africans who are illiterate.***
- ***English for Work Programs should be provided in addition to the 510 + hours so that a mechanic from the Sudan who wants to learn the English terminology used in his former trade to assist him with requirements to have his qualifications bridged and recognised is able to do so.***
- ***At the lower levels, AMEP providers need to increase language support, as students need explanations of English terminologies in their original language. In addition, native English speakers should also be used as instructors.***
- ***TAFE increase its capacity to access new arrivals wishing to continue study in order to further develop their English language competencies. Barriers like long waiting lists and fees need to be removed.***
- ***The federal government make more childcare places available specifically for AMEP participants.***
- ***DoCS and the Kindergarten Union develop a collaborative framework with registered child care services (like occasional child care) near AMEP Language Centres to take up underutilised places, expand hours of operation and that this be funded by DIMA through the AMEP program.***

Lack of NAATI Accredited Interpreters

Data from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs indicate that in 2003-04, people from the Sudan were granted 6,147 Humanitarian visas (DIMIA, 2005). This made it the largest group, followed by 1,400 Iraqis (DIMIA, 2005). This implies more new language groups coming into Australia. The Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) has made an attempt to accommodate the Sudanese languages, mainly Dinka and Acholi. But, there are not enough trained interpreters in the languages already mentioned and other Sudanese and African languages. The costs of interpreting are too high and put a lot of strain on agencies. In addition, the accreditation of the languages by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) requires people to possess a standard of a variety of skills. People from the African communities who are interested in becoming interpreters find this difficult, as they may not have enough skills to qualify for the NAATI standards. In order to accommodate these, NAATI may have to lower its standards, initially at least to language aide level.

The discussion about new and emerging languages like Nuer, Bari, Maadi, Moru, Lotuho, Swahili, Kirundi, and Kriol just to mention a few, cannot be complete if their use in other important services like health, social security and housing is ignored. It is important to note that all the services that these communities use need to have access to interpreters who speak these languages. One other thing to think about is the fact that most of these languages do not cover all concepts present in English e.g. cancer of the cervix. Language experts may need to carry out some research to identify suitable explanatory vocabulary, to define words that do not exist in these languages.

Recommendations

- ***DIMA promote early identification and training of interpreters for new communities, ideally prior to or immediately after the first arrivals with an unsupported language.***
- ***In the recruitment of interpreters for languages, NAATI should recognize experience that was acquired overseas, for example: acting as interpreters for the UNHCR and other camp officials. It is imperative that institutions in NSW in particular and Australia in general recruit and develop the interpreting skills of individuals from the new communities through training from TAFE and other relevant bodies .***
- ***NAATI lower its standards, initially at least, to the Language Aide level and that the costs of NAATI accreditation be funded through existing Job Network Agencies and/or other government departments requiring a pool of Interpreters ie Health, DoCs, Police Service, Centrelink and of course CRC and TIS, etc.***

Housing

The notion that on-arrival accommodation for 4 weeks is adequate is flawed and naïve. The added pressure of finding longer term accommodation in that short period is immensely unsettling and stressful. It is reasonable for refugees and humanitarian entrants to expect and be provided with affordable, appropriate and stable accommodation for the first 3 to 6 months of arrival. A lengthened tenancy upon arrival will allow the entrant to focus on and address the myriad of other necessary and immediate settlement needs.

A number of African families, especially the Sudanese, are characterised by large numbers of children. The average family size settling in NSW was 3.5 in 2003/04 and 3.36 in 2004/05 with 1133 refugee/SHP households settling in NSW – 83% were families with 1 to 5 members; 16%

were families with 6 to 9 members; and 1% with 10 – 13 members. (Source: DIMA – Australia’s Support for Humanitarian Entrants).

The Australian housing market public or private is not geared to very large families. And when the market does on rare occasions offer larger properties the costs become prohibitive. Therefore, large families are forced to live under a lot of stress due to inadequate housing. Some families rent two premises within close proximity. Other families squeeze into inadequate accommodation causing overcrowding and are therefore unable to maintain and look after the properties they are renting to the satisfaction of the landlords. In addition overcrowding has a negative affect on the educational performance of children, as there is a lack of quiet space for study and homework. It is also culturally inappropriate with the African families for unmarried children to live away from their parents. Added to that is the affordability of housing in the private rental market, which leaves families who depend on Centrelink benefits in rental stress and facing rental arrears and often subsequent evictions.

Further anecdotal evidence reflects the incidence of at least some discriminatory/racist practices within the rental market, especially the private rental market. It is likely that limited sensitivity and awareness of the particular needs and issues affecting African communities is one of the contributing factors for this discrimination.

Recommendations

- ***The State Government advocate and lobby the Federal Government for increased funds to grow the public/community housing stock to appropriately accommodate newly arrived refugees, including regional and rural areas.***
- ***The Commonwealth whether through DIMA or other federal departments resurrect and provide subsidised accommodation for a minimum of 3months to 6 months for newly arrived refugees. This may be determined by some form of assessment for extended on-arrival accommodation beyond 3 months.***

Child Care

There has been a lot of debate as to why child care has become an issue in service provision in the community sector. The simple explanation to this is the arrival of the new and emerging communities who have a lot of children under school age. Child care supplements from Centrelink are insufficient, as the costs in the mainstream child care centres are still unaffordable for these low-income earners.

The high costs of child care also has a prohibitive impact on funded organisations in running activities as State and Federal Funding programs do not provide adequate program funds to cover the costs for child care. Added to this is the cost burden of legislation for Child Protection in Australia which rules out the traditional systems of child minding used by these communities and results in a lack of culturally appropriate child care. In 2004/05 13.3% (1744) of all the people (13140) assisted under the humanitarian entrants program were children under the age of 5, a further 14.4% (1895) were aged between 5 and 9 years. (Source: DIMA – Australia’s Support For Humanitarian Entrants 2004/05). These figures represent a significant impost on existing child care services and community services running educational and information programs for new arrivals.

Recommendations

- ***Federal and state government funding programs provide additional funding to cover child care costs in the delivery of programs.***
- ***Migrant Resource Centres form partnerships with relevant agencies and programs to form Playgroups with women from African communities.***

- *The federal government provide increased number of child care places for humanitarian entrants in the first year of arrival to provide access to English language classes (AMEP), vocational courses and other relevant settlement and community programs.*
- *The state government through DoCs provide additional funding for Mobile Child Care services.*
- *That TAFE provide fee free child care certificate courses to African communities.*

Employment

A recently held employment seminar revealed a high rate of unemployment and underemployment in the African communities due to lack of English language, job-seeking skills and local job experience. It is clear that the Job Network System is not assisting the African communities effectively in accessing employment. For example, out of 15 people who attended the employment seminar, only 1 had secured a job. And he was assisted by a private employment agency, not a job network member.

One of the access issues here is that the new arrivals are not familiar with the job-seeking system in Australia. When referred by Centrelink to a job network member, the expectation is that the job network cards provide them with a job. In addition, the communities do not know what job network members do and how to contact them. This is mainly because the traditional mode of communication is verbal, not through written material and in any case all Centrelink client correspondence is in English. Thus, the numerous letters received from Centrelink mean very little to them and are confusing.

Upon referral to a job network member some, not all, refugees and humanitarian entrants, immediately qualify for Intensive Assistance. The 3 months wait policy is frustrating, as they are not used to writing resumes, using touch screens and newspapers in searching for jobs. It is therefore a waste of time for them to be clients for the first 3 months.

Lack of local experience is still one of the major obstacles to employment for refugees and humanitarian entrants. These individuals bring with them skills and a lot of experience that could benefit Australia. Local businesses should work together with job network members and DEWR (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations) to provide short or long-term opportunities to individuals for work experience. (See Attachment D - SEAD Pilot)

Recognition of Overseas Qualifications

Though the average years of education for refugees from Africa is low, there is a minority who are highly skilled in various specializations: education, engineering, law, etc that Australia is not benefiting from. Even after receiving further qualifications from here, employment is difficult which adds to their frustration with the settlement process. For example, a Sudanese lady who was granted a Bachelor of Education from Sudan, did her postgraduate degree at Newcastle University and specialised in Biology and is still unable to find work in her profession. A Sudanese with a Doctorate in Agricultural Engineering, which he got from an American University, is now depending on social security benefits. Another male changed his overseas profession and studied Civil Engineering in Australia. He was still unable to obtain employment in the field of Civil Engineering and is currently doing a Masters Degree at Wollongong University.

There are also doctors who are struggling with Australian medical exams, others with degrees in economics and many other disciplines. What is surprising is that people think that African refugees do not want to work and want to remain dependent on Centrelink money which is not the case, because many Africans have been contacting Centrelink because they want to work and they were

referred to job network agencies which does not solve their problems as Job Network does not assist them with getting employment or assist with recognition of overseas qualifications.

Workers' Rights

Some refugees from Africa who are fortunate to be employed are either not knowledgeable of their work rights or are unaware of procedures put in place for lodging complaints. This places them in a position of disadvantage. An incident happened in January where a group of Sudanese refugees were contacted through a pastor in one of the churches in Blacktown and were recruited to go to Griffiths in rural NSW and work on a farm. They were transported by that person, who had promised to provide them with accommodation, and agreed to work for two weeks then come to see their families on the weekend before going back. When the two weeks finished and they wanted their wages, the employer deducted amounts for accommodation and food, as well as the hire of the equipment used to harvest the crops. These unexpected deductions from their pay left the workers with very little in their pay packet. They felt betrayed, exploited and angry and decided to contact the police, which did not improve the situation as the police were more interested in maintaining calm and unable to resolve what amounted to a pay dispute. The workers made their way back to Sydney with nothing but frustration. The group believed that they would not be able to recover the wages lost and decided not to take the matter further.

Industrial Reforms

This submission will not enter into the political arguments regarding a flexible and competitive labour market versus diminution of award conditions, unfair dismissal, capacity to negotiate contracts with the employer etc. These are areas that time will demystify and uncover one way or another.

What is patently clear however, is that CALD communities and in particular newly arrived refugee communities have absolutely no hope in even beginning to understand their rights and therefore are vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers. And no one would dispute that such employers exist.

Recommendations

- *The 'Three months wait' policy should not apply to individuals from refugee communities as they are unfamiliar with the employment system in Australia and would find it difficult if not impossible to navigate.*
- *State and Federal governments commit funds to community education and training programs that focus on labour market trends.*
- *To improve skill supply data we recommend a modification of both the Centrelink and Job Network assessments and technologies for training and employment planning purposes. The assessment should collect data on skill type, skill level, overseas qualifications and qualification recognition.*
- *Job Network Providers are held more accountable in their service delivery to newly arrived communities under the humanitarian program.*
- *DIMA collect data on entrants under the humanitarian program on qualifications, occupations and work experience in the countries of origin.*
- *The Job Seeker Account be increased from \$ 800 to \$1500 for CALD communities as the \$ 800 is quickly whittled away for interpreting and translating costs. By contrast English speaking clients can use the \$ 800 toward travel costs, driver & forklift licenses, hearing aids and other resources for successful employment placement.*

- *DIMA advocate with other federal departments and state government for early intervention and prevention programs to be put in place immediately upon arrival of refugees/humanitarian entrants in addition to existing employment service programs to minimise the risk of long term unemployment.*

- *The state government re-instate the Skilled Migrant Placement Program (SMPP) and/or lobby the federal government to fund similar programs .The SMPP assisted skilled migrants to get overseas qualifications assessed, translated and recognised, facilitated work experience and job matching. The loss of this program has left a huge gap particularly for people not arriving under the Skilled Migration Program like humanitarian entrants.*

- *The federal government provide information to CALD workers in community languages so that they will have an equal chance of understanding the negotiation process and signing up to mutually acceptable employment conditions.*

- *The federal government institute mechanisms that require employers to provide interpreters to assist with the negotiation and ensures that the CALDB employees fully understand the conditions set out in the employment contract.*

- *The State government in any of its policy and campaigns for or against the industrial reforms ensure that the CALD communities understand those processes by providing information in community languages.*

School Education

The Intensive English Centres (IECs) in high schools have proved to be crucial in preparing students from refugee backgrounds for the mainstream educational system. However, there is an issue of enrolling children into school based on their ages. Some children who have spent a number of years in refugee camps or have little or no formal education are disadvantaged as they may end up a few classes above their previous standard. In addition they have to adjust to a completely different educational system that is more student- oriented. They also have to adapt to new study habits like presentations and research. Added to this is the lack of equipment to do these tasks e.g. computers. It is hard for the parents to support their children with homework and participate in the school activities of their children because of their limited English language skills. It also hinders the ability of parents to have a say in the decisions affecting their children and affects the ability of schools to communicate to the parents the issues facing their children, for example, truancy, nutrition and hygiene. It is, therefore, important that the education system employs a greater number of language aides in schools.

The humanitarian program entrants nationally for the year 2004/05 includes 5406 young people/children between the ages of 5 to 19 years: 73% are from Africa. The average years of schooling for African people has declined from 5.2 years in 2003/04 to 1.6 years in 2004/05. The reading ability of all people assisted in IHSS in their main language 2004/05 shows that 15% were ranked Good to Very good and 38% as Poor to Not at All and 47% Not Stated. It can be carefully assumed that out of the Not Stated category a further substantial number of entrants will not be able to read. Equally a substantial number would be Dinka speakers, which is an oral not written language. This data is set against the backdrop of African primary and secondary school age children having been in refugee camps for prolonged periods, many of them born in Camps.

Other issues are related to health, nutrition, loss of family and friends, trauma, grief and so on, which are not conducive to focusing on structured learning and which can result in truancy, behavioural issues and lack of capacity to concentrate and absorb the learning.

It needs to be acknowledged and welcomed that DIMA has increased access to SPP of 400 hours for young people aged 16 years to 24 years to prepare this client group for the more formal teaching environment of the AMEP. DIMA has also increased youth services for this target group in the 2003/04 CSSS grants.

Of all the demographic data available the aforementioned data is the most concerning and requires immediate, intensive, consistent, remedial literacy and numeracy programs to ensure that these young people are not left on the margins and disenfranchised from their own communities and the wider community as the social fallout would be both immense and tragic. All efforts should be made to ensure this cohort of young people have a viable future in Australia.

Recommendations

- ***The Commonwealth government provide the states with increased per capita ESL funding that takes into account the enormous intensity of support required impacting on schools across NSW and other states.***
- ***The number of IECs be increased and located in primary and secondary schools.***
- ***Special educators be used to provide assessments and a curriculum for remedial education programs.***
- ***The federal government fund a pilot “to school transitional program” to be implemented by School Education NSW and the contracted IHSS provider. The orientation would be between 3 to 5 days orienting newly arrived primary and secondary school age children and their parents to how the school operates from classroom, playgrounds, the role of the principal, teachers, teachers aide and, counsellors works, uniforms, school hours, recess and lunch. So that the first formal day at school is not so overwhelming and frightening for either the children or the parents.***
- ***The state government enhance the home work help programs with an emphasis on remedial education programs in literacy and numeracy through DET for both primary and secondary schools.***
- ***Education services and other community based programs mainstream and ethnic-specific services work on innovative ways of learning to enhance the capacity to focus and absorb the learning.***
- ***The 16 to 24 year old cohort who are unlikely to enter school education are offered remedial and bridging programs accessed through TAFE.***

Tertiary/Adult Education

Adults have faced problems accessing educational institutions due to language difficulties. For most of these qualifications from overseas, their level of English language is often not adequate for them to join the tertiary colleges. The situation is further aggravated as Australia is unable to recognise the previous experience and qualifications from overseas. Bridging courses would be the solution, but it depends on the number of people.

We will continue to urge TAFE to provide courses that are relevant to the target group. The FMRC will also, through the provision of information, inform the community about the courses available to them at TAFE like trade bridging courses, apprenticeships, traineeships and other vocational courses.

Recommendations

- *More bridging courses need to be developed at tertiary levels so that Australia benefits from the skills the refugee communities come with from overseas.*
- *More data needs to be collected on the skills and experience brought into Australia through Humanitarian Program.*
- *More data needs to be collected and made available on the levels of unemployment among CALDB communities and lengths of unemployment.*
- *More English for Work programs need to be provided through accredited trainers ie AMEP, TAFE, Universities and of course Job Network providers.*
- *More data needs to be collected on the participation rates of CALDB communities in Labour Market programs like LNNP and Apprenticeships and Traineeships.*

Health

There are several dimensions to access the NSW health system. There is difficulty in accessing the health system due to lack of knowledge of the health services available in the area. In addition due to cultural and language barriers mentioned earlier it is hard to access doctors as only a few doctors are familiar in working with African communities. The FMRC through its involvement on the Board of Settlement Services International and the Refugee Health Information Network (RHIN) is well aware of the health issues and problems of African refugees. African humanitarian entrants present with malaria, sleeping sickness, parasites, rickets due to poor nutrition and lack of sun (A Sudanese family all had rickets because the family stayed mostly inside for two years as their children had stones thrown at them by other children.) **Source: SSI Case Record.** Over 30% have inactive TB and these have a health undertaking for regular check ups; sickle cell anaemia and dental problems, etc.

None of these health conditions pose any significant health risks to the wider community, but could if left unchecked have negative impacts on the health of refugees themselves. Gaps of up to six months in health screening prior to departure are currently being addressed with a second health screening, immediately prior to departure. By August 2006 all humanitarian entrants from Africa will receive a second pre-departure health screening to ensure that no entrant with communicable diseases like HIV and tuberculosis enters Australia. In addition refugees will undergo 'fitness to travel' check ups.

It would seem that the tragic death of "little Richard" within 24 hours of his arrival in Sydney in November last year , may in part at least, be due to inadequate health information provided to the IHSS contractor. This was acknowledged by a representative from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) at the December 2005 Settlement Service Providers Meeting. (See **Minutes Attachment A, the section is highlighted in blue.**)

The NSW Refugee Health Service plays a significant role in educating health service providers about the health needs of African refugees and developing options for treatment and management of health issues. A refugee dental clinic operates weekly from Westmead Hospital. Another initiative Health Assessment for Refugee Kids (HARK) clinics have been established and have seen over 100 patients. Referrals do not require a doctor's referral but is preferred in order to recover costs. Check-ups usually require 2 visits and appointments are frequently not kept due to transport costs. The NSW Refugee Health Service co-ordinates referral and transport arrangements for African refugees.

Recommendations

- *The Australian government, as a priority, resource initiatives to support building the health resilience of refugee children and youth, with particular emphasis on building the capacity of African communities to understand and address their health issues.*
- *The Australian Government fund NSW Health to provide more comprehensive and timely on-shore health assessments eg HARK, particularly in the case of large group arrivals from Africa.*
- *The Australian Government give due consideration to proposals for a dedicated item number for GPs seeing newly arrived refugees, and for certain specified medications to be listed on the PBS.*
- *The Australian Government increase the funding for free Dental clinics to NSW and other States and Territories to ensure all humanitarian entrants receive full dental care.*
- *DIMA provide adequate information on the health status of humanitarian entrants and health follow-up requirements upon arrival in Australia and that this information is made available to the IHSS provider as part of the referral information for new arrivals.*
- *DIMA issue Humanitarian Entrants with hand-held health records providing detailed information on previous health screening results, immunisations provided and any other important health information eg hospitalisation prior to departure.*

Immigration

As with previous refugee communities, many members of the African communities have the impending need of reuniting with members of their immediate family. For instance, in a number of cases immediate families have been separated as they were forced to flee for safety or for other reasons. This may have been due to factors such as having to leave the refugee camp for reasons such as ill health, being kidnapped and then returning to find that the processing of the refugee application was finalised. Another possible reason is when relatives are missing and presumed dead, so their details are not included in the application as part of the migrating family. Consequently, when the relative is found the Australian permanent resident must then lodge a humanitarian application. For these reasons, upon arriving in Australia, many newly arrived refugees are anxious to propose their immediate family or extended families to ensure their safety and provide emotional support and important family networks. It should be noted that the family is very important in African cultures and extended families play important roles in terms of providing guidance, advice and support, caring for the young or elderly relatives.

Recommendations

- *The proposers need to be assessed properly through face to face interviews to make sure that the proposer is fully capable of helping the newly arrived families in their basic settlement needs.*
- *The contracted agency should be given a full report on the proposers capability to take care of the newly arrived family(ie if the proposer is able to enrol children in local schools and can link them up to other appropriate services)*

- *The contracted IHSS providers should have constant contact with both the proposer and the newly arrived family.*

Financial Issues

Newly arrived refugees/humanitarian entrants wishing to sponsor relatives under the offshore refugee program currently need to cover the cost of all airfares. This is creating additional hardship and placing more emotional strain on sponsors, as most are recently arrived and have their own dependents to support. Local residents who are Sudanese and accessing the Sudanese NILS program or obtaining personal or bank loans find themselves with unmanageable debts. Clients from other nationalities are raising the funds privately, asking for personal or bank loans or applying to the IOM (International Organisation for Migration). IOM loans can only provide a maximum of \$4000 per family and require a down payment equivalent to 35% of the estimated travel costs. For some sponsors the IOM limit is inadequate and they often seek additional loans to cover the 35 % deposit and additional airfares when sponsoring more than two family members. Some Fairfield residents have been able to access the general local NILS program where they have borrowed up to \$2000 to assist with costs of airfares. The concept of lending money is very strong in a number of cultures and nationalities (eg. Sudanese), so there is a high expectation placed in the community to provide personal loans, without proper knowledge or consent, making unaffordable repayments

Domestic Violence and Family Breakdown Issues

In African cultures males play a more dominant role than females so that husbands are the head of the household and usually the breadwinners and control finances. Centrelink payments are viewed by African communities as a major contributor to domestic violence and family breakdown, as this represents a shift of power to women and young people (Youth Allowance) in the family dynamics. In Australia the law gives more protection to women which makes it difficult for some members of the African communities to come to terms with new laws. For instance some males believe that their authority within the family can be undermined by these laws. Another contributing factor to domestic violence and family breakdown is the high unemployment facing newly arrived Africans and of course post traumatic stress disorders.

Policing and Alleged Targeting of Africans

Blacktown LGA is known to be a suburb where African drivers feel targeted by the police because of their race. Though it is a fact that some of the drivers from the new and emerging communities violate traffic law regulations, it should not be used as a stereotype. In 2005 at a Random Breath Test (RBT) roadblock, an African driver who had three passengers had every aspect of his license details and car meticulously checked. When nothing wrong was found the driver was requested to turn on the interior lights to view who was sitting in the back seat. The driver and passengers thought that this treatment was excessive when compared to the treatment of two drivers immediately ahead of their car, who were simply breathalised.

Policing or alleged over policing of African communities is an issue that has been identified at various forums. Unfortunately, very little has been done to address this, as the police authorities on one side would always argue that people from new communities were unaware of the Australian system and were always on the wrong side. This is frustrating to many Africans as it hinders the scope with which issues may be addressed

In an attempt to find data on crime statistics relevant to African communities nothing was found to be notable. In Blacktown, which has the highest number of new African settlers, the police figures show that African crime is not high compared to the rest of the population. However traffic infringements regarding currency of licence, registration etc is seen as a problem. (**Source: Blacktown Council**)

The Police Services in Blacktown, Auburn and Fairfield have worked very closely and pro-actively with African communities by providing information on their law enforcement and community roles, participating in soccer matches and barbecues. These events were organised through Police Ethnic Community Liaison Officers (ECLOS), local Police Services and Migrant Resource Centres. The activities are an important and very successful crime prevention and community relations tool between ethnic communities and the Police. It is of course a testament to what we have learned over time from the settlement of refugees and migrants from South East Asia and the Middle East. The Police Service is to be commended on its rapid response and willingness to participate in the prevention and educational programs.

Recommendations:

- ***Community relations activities are encouraged to be on a regular basis and the state government provide small funding injections to the Police Service to conduct such programs.***
- ***The Police Service formally encourage the recruitment of African Police to its Services.***
- ***The Police Service recruit African ECLOs as a matter of urgency particularly in areas with large African new arrivals like Blacktown and Auburn.***
- ***The CRC (as part of its EAPS role) in conjunction with the Police Service develop and implement a cultural education program on African communities to be included in the Goulburn Officers training program and local police services.***

Prejudice and Discrimination

African women raised concerns about negative experiences to discrimination at work places. African women, especially those working in nursing homes, have pointed out that their workload compared to other non-African colleagues was higher, which led them to believe there was inequality in treatment by supervisors. In a recent consultation on discrimination, women pointed out that they have been bullied. They also heard remarks about their skin color, hair texture and body odour. They were also forced to take shifts that did not suit their other personal responsibilities.

An incident happened to a Sudanese Teacher's Aide in an end-of-year picnic where racist comments were made against her by another pupil's parent while she was with some newly arrived Sudanese pupils. The comments were made by a middle Eastern parent speaking Arabic which of course was understood by the Sudanese pupils and Teacher's Aide. The comments were along the lines of "These slaves what are they doing here, they don't know anything!" The pupils were deeply disturbed and hurt by these derogatory comments. The Teacher's Aide reported this to the school Principal.

More work needs to be done to identify areas of discrimination and prejudice. The above anecdotes were collected at a recent consultation with the Anti-Discrimination Board.

There appears to be many experiences of perceived or real discrimination and racism among members from the African communities. However not much is documented and unlike other communities who have learned their rights and therefore report to the various bodies like the Anti-Discrimination Board, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission or the Ombudsman's Office, the African communities have not lodged many if any formal complaints to any of these offices.

Recommendations

- *Government and non-government organisations working with African communities provide information on the laws and institutions available to protect them from discrimination and racism and where necessary assist them in making formal complaints.*
- *The Anti-Discrimination Board and other like bodies promote their services to the African communities as a matter of urgency.*

2. Monitor and assess the impact of African Humanitarian migration in NSW.

The FMRC would like to draw the attention of the investigation to the following case studies which we believe illuminate some local impacts of African humanitarian migration to Fairfield and other areas of metropolitan Sydney.

Impact of African Resettlement of NSW

There is no doubt that the settlement of refugees from Africa has had an impact on the NSW community, government and non-government service providers. So far we have identified some of the barriers and issues faced by both African refugees and the service providers. It is of course also important to recognise the contributions a relatively new community is making toward the support of their own communities and also the very real successes and positive impact African communities have made with the wider community through various capacity building initiatives and other more individual endeavours, aspiration and successes.

Individual Aspiration and Success

Responding to Opportunity

Mr X, his wife and four of his children arrived in Fairfield in mid- 2003. The family fled Ethiopia for reasons of political persecution, because MR X was an active member of the opposition party. He and his family spent many years waiting for an asylum country in the Kakuma refugee camp. In Kakuma, Mr X worked with the UNHCR as a volunteer Camp Co-ordinator, and his children were able to attend some education classes. After arriving in Australia, Mr X and his wife improved their English at ACL, and Mr X became involved as a volunteer at the FMRC. Inspired to help others like himself settle in Australia, he has begun studying Community Welfare at TAFE. Two of his children have completed Year 12 and are now studying at university. This in itself is a tremendous achievement by his daughter and son who had only been in the Australian School system for less than 2 years and experienced disrupted schooling before that. And of course the triumph over adversity of this family in staying together and supporting each other toward building a successful new life in Australia.

Capacity building initiatives through the Formation of Social and Welfare Infra-Structures

African communities have in a relatively short period of settlement, adjusted impressively well to the new society, in spite of the immense obstacles and barriers faced upon arrival. The community spirit and resilience is comparable to the refugees from Indo- China, Europe and the Middle East.

African communities have quickly formed efficient welfare, cultural, social and religious support structures to assist in the smooth settlement of newly arrived community members. This admirable effort is sometimes more efficient than contracted providers eg IHSS. There is no doubt that community support initiatives have alleviated some of the pressures on NSW and federal service providers.

A number of African organisations have been formed and incorporated to support their communities in Australia and overseas. These organisations provide direct support to new arrivals through volunteer labour and raise funds from the scarce resources of their membership. Some like the Sudanese community, have set up no-interest loan schemes to cover the costs of flights for relatives coming to Australia through the humanitarian program, etc. Others provide spiritual and religious support. Finally groups are formed for the purpose of cultural expression through music, dance and traditional crafts.

Some newly incorporated African organisations have received small amounts of funding eg. The Aweil and Congolese organisations. It is noteworthy that no African community is in receipt of CSSS or other DIMA/Federal funding, with the exception of the NSW African Council who have one CSSS grant.

There exists considerable outrage among African community leaders that all the federal funding programs targeting African communities (the largest of these being DIMA) are concentrated with Migrant Resource Centres, Anglicare and other larger organisations. This system of settlement service delivery, has been described by some Africans, as a form of “welfare colonization”.

Aweil Community

The Aweil Community Association in Australia is an Incorporated Association in NSW of Southern Sudanese who hail from the Aweil region. The Association was formed to address the welfare and settlement issues of Southern Sudanese. It is managed by a group of volunteers without financial support from the government or any organization. One of the Association’s highlights is the ability to assist newly arrived humanitarian entrants who come to Australia under the Proposer Support Program with all the necessary services, ranging from receiving arrivals at the airport to assisting them, with food, registering them with Centrelink, school enrolments, banking and finding more permanent and affordable accommodation.

The Congolese Community Association was established shortly after the arrival of an influx of refugees from the Congo Republic. The Association was founded primarily with the support of several key families, and has been successful for several years in being a central point for information for more recent arrivals from the community, and for mainstream service providers seeking knowledge of the community. The Association has become incorporated, and has sought and received small grants for community activities. The Association has suffered the in-fighting of small-community politics that the FMRC has observed across many communities – accusations of mismanagement, financial mismanagement, nepotism and distribution of misinformation. The community has approached and received support from the FMRC which provided mediation and resourced skills development. The Association is supported by community members with strong leadership skills and with strong desires for community members to settle and to contribute positively in the wider Australian community. With appropriate support, mediation, and skill development the Association will achieve its goals.

African Workers Network:

The FMRC has observed the impressive speed with which some individuals within the African community have been able to adjust and participate in service delivery in both the health and settlement sectors. Though only a small fraction of the new and emerging communities, the group of workers maintains an expertise that has enriched the service delivery in both the settlement and health sectors through the provision of culturally appropriate interventions and increasing the access of African communities to state and local government and non-government agencies. The workers have taken a further step to form the African Workers' Network (AWN), which is a forum for workers in the community sector from African background that aims to provide peer support, provide synchronized and accurate information to its peers and client base, advocate on behalf of African Communities settling in Australia, For example the group developed and lodged a submission to the CRC Investigation on African Settlement.

Spiritual Well-being

The Ethiopian community is a growing Fairfield community belonging to the tradition of the Coptic Orthodox church. They meet for religious services once a week in a House purchased by the community to build their own church welcoming all Africans to its existing facility for spiritual practice, and social support. The group is largely self-reliant, and through their own initiatives have raised the funds within their own community for the purchase of the property in Canley Vale. Such a church will provide a centre for community spiritual practice, but also social support, cultural identity and recognition. The community receives advice from the FMRC regarding negotiation with council regulations and similar concerns.

Cultural Heritage

The Acholi Cultural Group belong to an ethnic minority from war-torn Sudan. A small number of families have settled in South-West Sydney. The Acholi Cultural Group has been established through community-instigated initiatives. The group meets every Saturday at FMRC facilities, initially with the goals of preserving the rich cultural heritage of dance and music, transferring skills to younger generations, and fostering cultural identification for younger generations.

The group has become increasingly in-demand in a fee-for-service capacity for entertainment at local events. The group has been gratified by the income they have been able to generate, and the appreciation that the wider community is showing for their culture. The group leaders have approached the FMRC for support in finding funding for resources for the group, and for developing their small-business potential.

The perception of “welfare colonization” is not conducive to working in partnership with African groups who remain unfunded and perform similar work of funded organisations and do so quite effectively. It is recognised that the diversity of African communities makes this difficult, but not impossible, particularly as there are programs which specifically target the Sudanese communities and it should be possible to support existing Sudanese organisations to take on the challenge of self-determination. The FMRC believes that if this inequity remains unaddressed it risks marginalisation and the social consequences that come with it.

The Impact of the MEDIA on Newly-Arrived Refugees from Africa

The FMRC believes that a focus on the impact of newly arrived refugees from Africa can forgo an understanding of the impact that the wider NSW community has on newly arrived families which is often shaped by the media. The FMRC would like to briefly draw the CRC investigation’s attention to two alarmingly contrasting stories that have appeared in NSW newspapers in February and March, 2006.



Appearing in the local *Fairfield City Champion* on February 8th 2006, the article ‘Family free from life of fear’ tells the story of a widow and her four children from Sudan who are enjoying being part of the Fairfield community after 12 years of insecurity and fear in a Kakuma refugee camp.

The tragic story of the fatal bashing of a newly arrived father-of-four has deeply disturbed Fairfield’s Sudanese and wider African refugee communities. Community members fear for their own safety and for

the safety of their families. Individuals do not have strong knowledge of the Australian justice system, but generally have higher expectations of the Australian justice systems than from the devastated systems they left behind. While it is essential that newly arrived refugees are provided with information about the new system, it is also important that those administering justice have

knowledge of the impact of experiences, and show compassion and understanding for the gaps in knowledge of the laws, police services and the courts.

Refugee father-of-four dies after bashing

- <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/refugee-fatheroffour-dies-after-bashing/2006/02/05/1139074098765.html#>

February 5, 2006 - 2:44PM

AdvertisementAdvertisement

A Sudanese refugee allegedly bashed by a group of youths has died in a Sydney hospital.

Ruol Agang, 28, of Granville, suffered critical head injuries when he was set upon by a group of people in Auburn, in Sydney's inner west, on Tuesday night.

It is believed the father-of-four approached a group of youths who were throwing eggs on Harrow Road about 11.40pm (AEDT).

Police said today Mr Agang died in Westmead Hospital about 5pm yesterday.

Two males from Auburn and North Parramatta, aged 16 and 17, have been charged with maliciously inflicting grievous bodily harm and assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

Another youth, aged 15 from Auburn, was questioned about the assault and released by police on Thursday.

The Media has provided some sympathetic coverage on the issues experienced by African refugees with the new IHSS provider and acted as an advocate for African refugees in support of proper treatment and services. However media coverage has also been quite harmful through a focus in mainstream media and talkback radio on generalisations about the education levels, language skills and even health status of arriving Africans. This had the effect of creating a negative image of Africans in the minds of many Australians.

When Allan Jones makes a comment such as –“ they have never held a pencil in their lives” and then goes on to talk about a range of communicable diseases which he alleges Africans may be bringing into Australia. There is a strong negative influence on the way his listeners view Africans settlement as well as a very negative and demoralising impact on members of the African community who know these comments to be untrue and do not have the opportunity to defend the facts about their community. (refer to <http://www.rehame.com/printclips/2006-03-15/NSWFAIADV/P9643713.pdf>)

Unfortunately the Minister for Health and the Premier were quoted in a similar vein asking for more funds from the federal government to address the health needs of African refugees. Whilst it is understood that more resources are needed to be able to assist refugees with a wide range of health problems, public statements about the possible (yet unlikely) contagious diseases carried by certain groups of refugees have a very deleterious knock-on effect with regard to stigma, racism and discrimination from the general public.

- ***The CRC takes an active monitoring and response role to counter media misinformation and stereotyping of African communities.***
- ***Politicians are properly briefed on the facts of African settlement and are assisted to raise issues in a more considered fashion.***

As part of the assessment and monitoring of community needs, the FMRC's DIMA-funded Sudanese and Iraqi Settlement Services project produced a 'Settlement Services Access Report' last year which is attached here for your interest. It identifies particular experiences and access barriers that Sudanese and Iraqi arrivals to Fairfield have experienced relating to language and interpreters, housing, childcare, employment, child and adult education, health and information needs. (See Attachment B)

3. Coordinate the development of NSW policy and positions on African settlement issues, and report back to the Premier, and Minister for Citizenship.

The FMRC welcomes the CRCs role in coordinating the development of NSW policy to appropriately respond to the needs of newly arrived refugees in NSW.

As a provider of settlement services to newly arrived refugees in Fairfield, the FMRC acknowledges that the co-ordination of NSW Policy and positions on African Settlement issues is timely, pro-active and requires a responsible and sensitive approach to a complexity of needs and issues. It requires valuing and acknowledging existing expertise in the sector, and existing strengths in the community as well as recognising gaps in services which may result in serious social, health, educational and economic deficits if not seriously addressed early in the settlement

Lack of Information

Information is of course the key to such co-ordination. The CRC Investigation on African Communities will hopefully through the submission and other processes, provide a more knowledge based approach to address the settlement needs of African communities.

The availability of hard data on CALD communities is extremely scarce and this is an area that both the NSW state government and federal government departments need to improve on if we are to develop appropriate and social policies and implement responsive programs.

There is even less information on newly arrived African communities where they are from, skills, occupations, ages, first and secondary settlement points, level of unemployment and labour market participation rates, AMEP registrations and completion rates, TAFE enrolments, Job Network Outcomes by CALDB etc. the list is endless. Not many public institutions keep good data on CALD communities.

Recommendations

- *DIMA provide state/territories government agencies with timely information regarding the arrival, destination, and comprehensive demographic data of humanitarian and refugee groups.*
- *The NSW and the federal government departments keep better data on CALDB communities.*
- *CRC be invited to participate in all the DIMA settlement planning initiatives and working groups such as the recently formed working parties on Health, Education, Initial Arrival and Support.*

The so-called ‘differences’ between African refugee communities and other/preceding refugee communities are: a greater number of large sized families, high levels of illiteracy in the first language, little formal education from one generation to the next, people coming largely from rural areas who have lived through and survived decades of poverty and conflict, persecution and sexual violence.

However, we believe there are more parallels and commonalities than differences with earlier-arriving refugee communities which provides us with unique opportunities to apply the knowledge and experience gained by government and non-government service providers in addressing, and responding pro-actively and appropriately to overcome the barriers and problems faced by the African communities in their settlement in order to build productive lives in Australia..

Some observations we are able to make are:

- that service providers have in fact responded quickly to the needs of African communities, these include Centrelink, health services, community based services like Migrant resource Centres, Refuges, Domestic Violence, youth services etc.
- that both government and non-government services have already been successful in recruiting a substantial number of very capable African language aides and welfare workers.
- that a wide range of government and non-government providers are much more prepared to participate in programs which provide information about the histories, cultures, traditions, and religious practices of the African communities than they were with previous refugee communities .
- that African communities already have in place significant advocacy skills and considerable community support programs through an admirable commitment to be self-reliant, supportive and self-determining.
- that some service providers appear to be daunted but not paralysed in their efforts to address the complex needs of African clients. Despite expressing concerns about how needs can be met these services are actively engaged in developing programs to meet those needs.

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS)

- **People assisted under IHSS in NSW in 2001-2005:**

NSW	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	Total
Refugees	951	1,031	651	1,129	3,762
SHPs	1,007	2,437	2,563	2,748	8,755
Total	1,958	3,468	3,214	3,877	12,517

- **Arrivals to September in NSW for 2005-2006:** Refugees 434, SHPs 407, Total 841
- On average the African component is approximately 70% for the year 2004/05 Africans comprised 73%. (Source: DIMA-SSPF Minutes September 2005)

DIMA has provided approximately \$11 million per year over the next five years to the IHSS Consortium led by ACL to provide:

1. CCIR – Case Coordination, Information and Referrals
2. On-Arrival Reception and Assistance
3. Accommodation Services
4. Short term Torture and Trauma Counselling
5. Volunteer Coordination
6. Advocacy and Raising Community Awareness

To date the new provider has operated under a cloud of controversy gathering much media attention with allegations of conditional provision of food vouchers which were withheld if refugees refused to sign the standard tenancy agreement, allegations of neglect and theft in the little Richard case, insufficient allocation of food and hygiene products, inadequate orientation, particular difficulties in Newcastle- particularly insufficient engagement with established volunteers, and so on. (Source: **Report of Inquiry into ACL Management of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy by Banki Haddock Fiora – Lawyers February 2006**)

Whilst it has been a “baptism of fire“ for the new provider considerable energy has now been spent to address the short-comings and improve the service delivery to its client base. ACL has already addressed and delivered on many of the recommendations made by the FIORA Report, however allegations from clients who are left with scarce resources are still circulating. It is difficult to gauge what are remnants of earlier events and what complaints are in fact current. There is no doubt however, that ACL is in the unenviable position of reclaiming trust from its client base and other service providers in ACL’s capacity to provide comprehensive, effective and timely services. It will continue to be an uphill battle for ACL to build a solid reputation in its IHSS provision.

IHSS in general, irrespective of old or new providers, has suffered from confusion among other service providers of what services are to be provided, for what length and what measurable outcomes are to be achieved prior to exiting clients to post- IHSS services ie CSSS/MRCs/MSAs now SGP Programs. There exists further confusion as to what constitutes complimentary services as other DIMA funded programs are not to provide IHSS services.

Recommendations

- ***DIMA and the New ACL provider conduct joint information seminars on the types of services IHSS is to provide and what outcomes are expected to be achieved for the client base before they are exited to Post-IHSS services.***
- ***DIMA provide the new IHSS provider with very clear KPIs and evaluates these after the first 12 months of delivery. And that the KPIs cover comprehension and capacity rather than previous IHSS assembly line delivery eg tick a box for visits to Centrelink, enrolment in schools, etc.***
- ***CRC and DIMA closely monitor the delivery of IHSS and Post-IHSS services in NSW.***
- ***DIMA streamline arrangements with Centrelink to ensure interviews and support payments can occur within one week of arrival as well as improve access to other federal agencies which may impact on the delivery of services to IHSS clients and are outside the perimeter of ACL influence, such as Medicare .***

Settlement Grants Program

Another looming issue regarding settlement services is the implementation of the Settlement Services Review. DIMA has progressed the implementation of the new Settlement Grants Program (SGP). And in May 2006 all those that applied for the first time under this program, ie established and new ethnic-specific organisations, Migrant Resource Centres, Councils, AMEP providers (including for profit), and other organisations will know the results of their application efforts. Whilst DIMA has made it clear in many public consultations that it is not the intention of the new funding program to dismantle the existing MRCs/MSAs. It may nevertheless result in some “collateral damage” when implementing a project with narrower target groups and a time-limited settlement funding program between 1 to 3 years. The SGP targets refugees/ humanitarian entrants post IHSS, and family stream entrants with low English proficiency, and dependants of skilled migrants with low English proficiency in regional areas who have arrived in the last five years.

Technically, at least according to funding guidelines, any communities who have been in Australia for more than five years fall into the established community category and are therefore not eligible under the SGP’s current funding guidelines.

In a scenario where the Sudan and other parts of Africa ceased to be source countries from July 2006 the humanitarian program arrivals between 2000 and 2005 under current SGP guidelines would incrementally become established communities between 2005 and 2010 and therefore not entitled to SGP funding .

Given that DIMA acknowledges the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of African communities and understands and acknowledges the high settlement needs among this cohort due to experiences of prolonged civil war, high incidence of torture and trauma, and poor literacy levels due to low average years of schooling. [The average number of school years declined from 5.2 years in 2003/04 to 1.6 years in 2004/05 (Source: DIMA – Australia’s Support for Humanitarian entrants 2004/05).] It would seem logical and indeed prudent to return to the drawing board to redefine the period it takes for a new community to become established.

Recommendations:

DIMA reconsider its five year settlement target and expand this to 15 years, which would seem to be a more reasonable period for successful settlement which develops the skills for life in Australia and builds community infra-structure.

DIMA implement Recommendation 39 of the Settlement Services Review by providing funds under the SGP for established communities that still experience a high level of settlement needs characterised by poor English language literacy, high unemployment, lack of community infra-structure and support, and so on.

In Summary

It is our hope that the Investigation into the Settlement of African Humanitarian Entrants in NSW will result in improvements of service delivery through the improved communication, rationalisation and co-ordination of existing state and federal policies and programs. And where necessary enter into new areas of resourcing through further funds from the federal government in areas of education, health and housing. And perhaps new and more state/federal cost sharing arrangements can be negotiated.

CRC Investigation into African Settlement – Attachment A

DIMIA/SETTLEMENT SERVICES PROVIDERS FORUM

10.00 am – 1.00 pm, Friday 2 December 2005

Level 5, 26 Lee Street Sydney

Chairperson

Ms Maria Psiroukis, Manager, Team 4, MAS NSW, DIMIA

Attendance/Apologies: See Appendix A

Welcome and Introductions (Maria Psiroukis)

Ms Psiroukis announced her departure as Manager, Team 4 and introduced Marisa Dominello as the new Manager and Chairperson of the SSPF.

Announced that MAS would be moving to Elizabeth Street with effect from Monday 19 December. All client services would still be actioned in Lee Street, ie visa applications and enquiries, Students and Citizenship

Confirmation of Minutes from previous meeting (2 September 2005)

The minutes were accepted and confirmed.

Business Arising from previous meeting:

22 votes were received about the venue with the preferred venue being the city.

Next SSPF to be in Elizabeth St and details will be disclosed closer to the meeting date next year.

Guest Speaker: Denis Nihill, IOM Regional Representative

IOM was founded in 1951, as was UNHCR in response to the large numbers of refugees and displaced persons resulting from the Second World War.

Changed name twice since that time. Originally called the International Government Committee for Immigration

IOM is an intergovernmental organisation which currently has 112 member governments who are a party to it.

IOM has an operational budget of AU\$2 billion (US\$1billion), 250 field locations and approximately 5000 staff worldwide.

Corporate operations were decentralised to Manila from Geneva due to costs.

Refugee movements is one part of IOM's function; they organise movements to countries that take large numbers of refugees such as USA and Canada through to the smaller level countries such as Australia and New Zealand (who take approximately 750 refugees per annum).

Recently, organising refugee movements has become more complex and costly due to the location of many refugees ie out of West Africa.

Other work undertaken by IOM includes responding to humanitarian disasters. IOM is the largest agency in Aceh due to the political conflict. When the tsunami struck, IOM was

able to quickly respond to the crisis by changing their operations to community rebuilding. This is also happening in Sri Lanka and the Sudan which is part of the UN's co-ordinated approach.

IOM is also working on the issue of human trafficking, particularly of women and children from the Balkans and countries of the former Soviet Union. IOM is concentrating the project in the Mekong and Balkans. The project is funded by AusAid and the main component is public information through many channels such as schools, family groups, town hall meetings and the media. Of particular concern are young women being duped into the sex trade by being promised non-existent jobs.

Assisted Voluntary Return –gives people the option of a dignified return. The process is mainly undertaken in Europe and to a lesser extent Australia. IOM facilitates this process for failed asylum seekers to return home before they are deported. IOM would prefer input at the beginning of the asylum seeker process rather than at the end of the process.

IOM suggests that the provision of information or meetings with asylum seekers at the beginning of the process would assist people to make an informed decision about whether they want to go through the process, given DIMA's new client based approach,. In particular clients should be given up to date information about the situation in their home country which may have significantly changed since they left.

IOM provides technical cooperation or capacity building to assist governments improve their border management. For example, IOM is currently working with the former Yugoslavia which is now split into 12 countries.

IOM is also involved in Asia Pacific consultations. Key partners are governments and other international bodies, including UNHCR.

The issue regional of labour immigration is emerging very quickly. IOM is trying to persuade the Australian government that some labour mobility with countries in the Pacific would assist these nations achieve greater fiscal stability than just providing aid. IOM is currently working with the World Bank on this issue.

IOM has assisted refugee movements to Australia for many years. The location of refugees has changed significantly over the past years. Refugees from Africa are very significant at the moment. Africa is a particularly difficult and very expensive environment to operate in, eg the cost of medicals.

The Australian refugee program has improved significantly over the past few years. Last year, the government decided to pay for medicals for SHPs which is very helpful.

Appreciated speaking with groups such as the SSPF who are involved in the 'real world' of assisting refugees rather than having just an abstract view.

Recently IOM operated from offshore processing centres on Nauru and Manus Islands. This situation was difficult for IOM as it was a significant departure from their normal operations. However, IOM decided it should be involved at the beginning of this process to make it a better operation than what it may have been.

IOM Refugee Travel Loan Fund –is an interest free loan program to help proposers/migrants meet the costs of refugees bound for Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) (see www.iom.int/australia/forms.. for more information)

The IOM Refugee Travel Loan Fund was operated out of IOM funds. However, IOM was giving out more money than it was getting back so the scheme needed to be reviewed. IOM still wants a loan fund to assist refugee families and this is being worked on.

Refugee Assisted Travel Scheme (RATS) existed a few years ago but it was not a very clear system.

In June 2005, the IOM Refugee Travel Loan Fund received a one off grant of \$2.5 million from the Australian Government to allow adjustments to the interest free travel loans program to ease the financial burden SHP proposers face in meeting migrants' travel costs. This amount is notionally for the next 5 years. Realistically the fund requires about \$20 million for capitalisation to make the fund viable on a long term basis. Whilst the \$2.5 million is appreciated it does not satisfy the need for refugee travel.

IOM established an advisory group for the operation of the fund which includes people such as Margaret Piper formerly from the Refugee Council of Australia and also one person from each State working with major NGOs and refugee groups. The group will look at the thresholds to make the scheme more accessible but also to keep the fund viable. On the current amount available, the fund has \$500,000 a year to lend for the next 5 years.

The loan fund currently allows for \$4000 per family. Once approval is granted, a down payment equivalent to 35% of the total travel costs is secured from the sponsor in Australia. The balance of the travel costs is an interest-free loan secured by a promissory note signed by the loan beneficiary or his/her sponsor in Australia. The loan is repaid over a maximum period of 15 months. The minimum repayment is \$50 per fortnight*. Unfortunately, IOM does not have many people taking up the offer because \$4000 is not enough for example, for a family of 11.

IOM looking at raising funds privately eg going to Qantas etc.

*IOM's website states \$50 per month minimum payment; however the information to proposers states \$50 per fortnight. IOM confirmed that it is \$50 per fortnight and will update their website in the near future.

Questions:

Q: Which country has the best Refugee program?

A: Australia. The system here is integrated and seamless. Consultative process is effective. NZ is also good but is very similar to Australian system.

US system is too large because of the large intake of refugees. If there are any deficiencies in the Australian system, they are well known and the consultative process is effective in information to the minister and other decision makers.

Q: A report produced by a think tank suggests that the level of international cooperation has declined in the last few years. Is this true?

A: There is a report issued by Jeff Crisp, who works for the Global Commission. Jeff has long term connections with the UNHCR. Many refugees are internally displaced who don't have international protection. This is a challenge and a concern.

Q: When a family comes from Africa, what type of health screening do they have before their arrival into Australia?

A: They are screened just before they arrive because time may have lapsed since their previous health screening. The recent tragedy (little boy with sickle cell anaemia who died) in NSW was investigated and it was not a medical error. It was a clerical error that had not been cross-checked. Currently working with DIMIA on e-health, ie get tele x-rays emailed to Sydney. There is a definite need for quality assurances now that Regional Medical Officers (RMOs) have been pulled back to Australia.

Q: Is it true that people with amputees are not allowed to come to Australia?

A: Not aware that this is the case. Offshore, they have to meet the health requirements. A doctor would make a recommendation and decision depending on the (health) costs to the Australian community and services available. All factors are considered on an individual basis.

Q: If Australia can't help these people (amputees) and you say we have the best refugee and humanitarian system in the world, then who will take them? They are the ones who are most in need.

A: Sweden takes people with health problems. NZ also takes some number of refugees who are HIV positive.

Q: What paper work do new entrants come with in relation to their health and immunisation records?

A: They carry their medical records. That is all I am aware of regarding this issue.

Training Update - Monica Tilche (DIMIA) – Summary of power point presentation at Attachment 1.

Mentor program has been postponed. There was great interest but have experienced problems with attracting enough workers to be mentored. May link the mentors with new workers on orientation training to facilitate the program.

Q: Is there some way that training can be accredited towards workers' study? This will motivate them. Suggestion to contact Kathy Girloc.

A: Purpose of CSSS training is to assist workers in their work in the field. TAFE modules may require workers to attend training away from their workplace on a regular basis.

Caroline Blyton (new Training Officer) to follow up with the suggested contact and report back at the next meeting.

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) Update – Igor Vyvey (DIMIA) – Summary of power point presentation at Attachment 2.

ACL is the new contractor, who operates as a consortium. Works with Resolve FM, STARTTS and Mission Australia. Anglicare is the prime contractor in rural NSW.

Q: Illawarra Multi Services met with ACL on 31 November. ACL informed them that they can decide where to send people. Is this true?

A: This is partially correct. In the Newcastle region, DIMIA makes the decision where they go as we need to advise IOM about travel. This is also the case for Wollongong. We can be more flexible in allocation of cases in Southern regions as once they arrive in Sydney they can travel by road.

Follow up further information on allocations:

Illawarra is part of the Southern Metro IHSS area and therefore ACL has some flexibility in deciding whether to send entrants that way rather than keeping them in Sydney.

ACL would take a range of settlement factors in mind when making that decision. They also have the capacity to move entrants as they have done recently when entrants were not happy in Wollongong. DIMIA does not systematically indicate to ACL whether the entrant is intended for Wollongong/Illawarra when referring cases to the Southern Metro Region.

DIMIA may however indicate to ACL proposed settlement in that area (through comments on the referral) for example because the family has links there.

In the Northern Metro Region DIMIA does specifically indicate whether the case is earmarked for Newcastle because flight bookings are required. This distinction does not apply to the Southern Metro Area as entrants travel to Wollongong by road.

ACL have indicated their intention to continue sending entrants to Wollongong as appropriate.

Questions:

Q: What are ACL contracted to do regarding case management?

Q: Please clarify the minimum time for case management? There seems to be differences ie. The last SSPF minutes said 4-5 months?

Q: Also if an individual is case managed for up to 6 months, what services can they expect to get in this time? Eg. Centrelink visit once, assist with shopping once when the new arrivals don't have skills to do shopping etc?

A: IHSS is provided on a needs base only. A client's time in the system varies depending on when they reach a level of capacity.

IHSS is a case based service and it varies depending on client needs. There are two categories – Refugees and proposer supported entrants – they both have different levels of need from the IHSS providers.

Comment: No one knows what ACL is actually contracted to do. Communication between IHSS providers and post IHSS service providers is lacking when don't know what is in IHSS providers contract. As a consequence there is too great a power differential in favour of ACL.

A: The client's interest is the most important thing. DIMIA expects IHSS and CSSS/MRC to liaise and cooperate with the clients' interests at heart.

Q: When can CSSS workers start working with their clients? Need to know what services have been provided through IHSS.

Each client who has been exited from IHSS should have an IHSS certificate detailing what services they have accessed and what services they now need. Generally clients access CSSS/MRC services post IHSS but may do so earlier where the services are complementary.

Members of the SSPF suggested that the final details of the contract of services (not the financial details) should be made available to see what the client can expect so that they could advocate on their behalf.

If you have a complaint about ACL services or if you a client is not getting the services you expect they should receive, you need to make that complaint direct to ACL and copy the email to your DIMIA consultant so they are aware of the situation.

Q: At what point can service providers start working with clients? The previous meeting minutes say anytime. Service providers are under a different impression. They thought that it was first IHSS then post-IHSS- but are now unsure at what point they can step in.

A: When a client comes to you, they will come to you with an exit certificate which will tell you the services they have received to date.

Comment – ACL is more interested in their profit margin and case officers leave clients in half finished situations because they are paid to be there for only a certain length of time. There needs to be a greater level of transparency in the process.

ACL are new at the moment and there may be slippages during the transition phase. DIMIA has found ACL to be receptive following previous feedback and things have already changed.

Settlement Planning Update – Jenne Harray (DIMIA)

Jenne introduced herself to the meeting and gave a short background of her work in DIMIA.

Settlement Grants Program:

Applications closed 25/11/05

NSW received 180 applications

The applications will be assessed by NSW DIMIA

Recommendations to National Office then to Minister

Minister to make decision and announcement in May 2006

New grants to commence on 1/7/06

Transition from MRC funding to MSA funding, for continuing CSS grants will be topped up by 25% until 2008. The total cost will be \$1.65 million.

Minister has written to those affected

There will be no changes to work programs

The budget paper has been revised

Signing the letter equals acceptance of the top up.

Questions:

Top up is funding plus 25% each year to 2008?

A: Yes, for continuing CSSS grants only

How is the top up to be spent?

A: Not to be spent on the work program

When will the announcement be made for successful grant recipients?

A: Announcement will be in May, unsure when in May it will be.

Is there an increase in the number of grants applied for this year?

A: Approximately 40 more than last year.

Comments:

It would be good to have at least 3 months from when the grants are announced to when work begins on 1 July 2006.

Time taken for sole workers to complete the application for the grants round needs to be incorporated into their work programs.

The grants process tends to favour large organisations over smaller ones, especially where large organisations have more people and more resources to devote to the process than small organisations.

This version had the least amount of quirks, although having to save work every 20 minutes is still a problem. There were no 'bottlenecks' this time and DIMIA's IT area should be commended as they are nearly there with this system. However, the online system of application does discriminate against small ethno-specific organisations that don't have access to the internet.

DIMIA still allows organisations to lodge their applications on paper. However, there is an expectation that all work will be online by 1 July 2006 for all organisations.

Questions:

Will there be a formal opportunity to give feedback on the SGP process?

A: Yes

How are the applications assessed? Is through the work programs? Numbers not always 'clean'. There is a perception that work plans could be misunderstood.

A: Optional complementary outputs provided to expand on work program.

How are specific projects assessed against a standard work plan?

A: Entire application is taken into consideration including outcomes and project plan.

Legislation Update - Maria Psiroukis (DIMIA) – Summary of power point presentation at Attachment 3.

Follow up – further information about eligibility for traineeship/ apprentice visas and the definition of Non-citizen for this visa is at Attachment 3 under 'Trade Skills Training Visa'.

General Business

RSVP for future meetings:

assists with catering and room configuration; and

Security to building and issuing cards.

Currently experiencing high turnover of managers in MAS and DIMIA generally:

Announced at End of Year Function, Jim O'Callaghan, NSW State Director will be leaving with effect from 20/12/05.

New NSW State Director, Gavin McCairns will commence in April 2006.

Rural and regional database

What skills are required?

To be followed up at next meeting

Next meeting:

Date : Friday, 3 March 2006

Venue: Level 5, Conference Room,
300 Elizabeth Street (Tower C)

Meeting closed at 12.45pm

Appendix A

CSSS Attendees:

Amanda Field	Illawarra Multicultural Services
Rosemary Chopra	St George MRC
Alla Khlebakova	Russian Ethnic Community Council
Susan Madrell	MNS North
Johanna Mestanza	MNS North
Anni Gallagher	Orange City Council
Nicole Schlederer	ECC NSW
Soubhi Iskander	Coptic Orthodox Dioceses
Seham Georges	Coptic Orthodox Dioceses
Ibrahim Rezkalla	Australian Egyptian Council Forum
Truc Le	Vietnamese Womens Association
Maria Iglesias	MDSI
Peta McLean	The Smith Family Burwood
Yasmine Loupis	Sydney Multicultural Community Services
Yamamah Khodr Agha	Fairfield MRC
Hafize Erdogan	Australia Alevi Cultural Centre
Jenny Grey	Gynea Community Aid Service
Tatiya Hastie	Thai Welfare Association
Ricci Bartels	Fairfield MRC
Li Lin	Chinese Australian Services Society
Jenny Gong	Chinese Migrant Welfare Association Inc
Senada Ljukovac	Bosnian Herzegovina Project Inc
Ibtisam Hammoud	Al Zahra Muslim Women's Association
Hongpasith	
Sengsoulsyauong	Lao Australian Association Inc
Miguel Ferrero	CBMRC
Kim Chung	Australian Chinese Community Association
Edmond Nehme	Maronite Catholic Society
Rana Dabliz	Bhanin Association
Andre Kortbawil	Australian Lebanese Christian Federation
Michael John	
Kwiatkowski	SLASA
Peter Wong	Australian Chinese Community Association
Hana Abrirahman	Lebanese Moslem Association
Fiona Luckhurst	Nepean Migrant Access
Abeda Iqbal	Auburn MRC
Natalie Taha	Australian Lebanese Welfare Group
Jamal Bassam	St George MRC
Cathy Gao	Chinese Migrant Welfare Association
Riza Yaman	Turkish Welfare Association

DIMIA Attendees:

Maria Psiroukis
Marisa Dominello
Jenne Hharry
Igor Vyey
Monica Tilche
Rachel Khalil
Joseph Finnianos
Norberta Pereira
Thi Nguyen
Raja El-Tabar
Susan Barker
Ian Johns
Preety Duggal (minutes)
Bronwynn Black(minutes)

Apologies:

Esther Rice	MNS North
Holly Brown	Crows Nest Centre
Merryn Howell	May Murray Neighbourhood Centre
Nada Tizzone	St George MRC

Legislative Changes- Since 1 September 2005

8 October 2005

Amendments to mandatory student visa cancellation - exceptional circumstances

From 8 October 2005 the Migration Regulations 1994 was amended to allow for exceptional circumstances that are beyond a student visa holder's control to be taken into consideration by the Minister prior to cancelling a student visa for a breach of condition 8202.

Condition 8202 relates to a student visa holder's enrolment attendance and academic progress.

1 November 2005

From 1 November 2005, the Migration Regulations 1994 have been amended to merge the offshore and onshore former resident visas (Subclasses 832 and 151) into one class and one subclass.

This amendment establishes a new visa class - Special Eligibility (Class CB) - and sets the Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 criteria that must be met in order to make a valid application for the new Class CB visa.

The Occupational Trainee visa

From 1 November 2005, the Migration Regulations 1994 ("the Regulations") was amended to:

remove the reference to skills obtained through occupational training being used after leaving Australia;

allow subclass 570 (Independent ELICOS), 572 (Vocational Education and Training), 573 (Higher Education), 574 (Postgraduate Research) or 575 (Non- Award) Student visa holders who are onshore to be considered for the grant of an Occupational Trainee visa (OTV) where the student visa holder has successfully completed their principal course and they require a period of work experience for registration in their profession, either in their home country or in Australia;

allow Occupational Trainee dependents to work 20 hours per week;

require Occupational Trainee visa applicants to provide evidence of adequate health insurance cover;

require all Occupational Trainee visa holders to maintain their health insurance cover while in Australia;

require Australian organisations lodging an occupational training nomination to sign a declaration that the trainee will be employed under Australia's Industrial Relations law and relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory awards and conditions for the industry;

require that Occupational Trainee visa applicants be at least 18 years of age to be granted an OTV, unless the applicant can demonstrate exceptional circumstances to be granted the visa while under 18 years of age;

From 1 November 2005, the Migration Regulation 1994 (the Regulations) were amended to allow dependent family members of New Zealand citizens to apply for permanent residence under the employer sponsored visa classes while they remain in Australia.

The Regulations will include the New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship (Temporary) subclass 461 visa as a qualifying visa for the Labour Agreement, Employer Nomination Scheme or Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme subclasses of visa.

Sponsored Family Visitor

From 1 November 2005 the Migration Regulations 1994 will be amended so that in a limited set of circumstances a sponsor who has previously sponsored a subclass 679

(Sponsored Family Visitor) visa holder and has been barred for 5 years may be approved to sponsor another subclass 679 visa applicant. The sponsorship may be approved where: the previously sponsored subclass 679 visa holder failed to depart Australia within the period specified by the visa; the failure to depart Australia occurred due to circumstances beyond the visa holder's control; and those circumstances occurred after the visa holder arrived in Australia.

5 visa sub-classes abolished:

From 1 November 2005 the Migration Regulations 1994 will be amended so that five temporary visa subclasses are abolished. These amendments implement the recommendations of the 2002 Review of the Temporary Residence Program, that certain rarely-used visas be abolished to simplify arrangements for applicants and to streamline visa processing.

The Subclasses to be abolished are:

424 (Public Lecturer);
425 (Family Relationship);
430 (Supported Dependant);
432 (Expatriate (Temporary)); and
446 (Confirmatory (Temporary)).

Few visa applicants will be affected because only a small number of these visas are currently granted.

Working Holiday Maker's

On 1 November 2005, the Working Holiday visa was expanded to allow working holiday makers who have done three months seasonal work in regional Australia to apply for a second Working Holiday visa. This change has been developed in consultation with Australian government agencies including the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and other stakeholders including the National Farmers Federation.

The expansion of the Working Holiday visa program will provide an incentive to working holiday makers to work in the harvest industry which is experiencing severe labour shortages.

Remaining Relative visa criteria

From 1 November 2005 the Migration Regulations 1994 ("the Regulations") were amended to restrict eligibility for Remaining Relative visas (Subclasses 115 (offshore) and 835 (onshore)) to those applicants who, together with their spouse, have no near relatives, other than those near relatives who are: usually resident in Australia; and Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents or eligible New Zealand citizens.

Trade Skills Training visa

On 1 November 2005 the new Trade Skills Training visa came into effect. This visa allows non-citizens to undertake apprenticeships in regional areas of Australia, in trade occupations experiencing skills shortages, where no Australian has been found to fill the position.

An eligible apprentice is a foreign national who meets eligibility requirements for this visa. The apprentice may be approached by, or may approach, the Australian sponsoring organisation, to initiate participation in a trade skills training program.

When the application for trade skills training is lodged, the apprentice can be inside Australia as long as they hold a current substantive visa (ie they must be lawful) that is NOT one of the sub-classes below:

a Sponsored Family Visitor - Short Stay (subclass 679) visa

a Special Purpose visa.

On completion of the apprenticeship, holders of the new visa will have the opportunity to apply for permanent residence under existing regional migration visas.

Further information as requested at the meeting:

Technical details

The new Trade Skills Training visa (subclass 471) will be a temporary residence visa within the Sponsored Training (Temporary) (Class UV) visa class. The new visa has the following key requirements.

The applicant

The applicant must:

be sponsored by an Australian employer or organisation (which must apply for and be granted approval as a Trade Skills Training visa sponsor, and will need to give undertakings in relation to the applicant);

be between 18-35 years of age;

have vocational English;

have the educational, qualification and skills background to undertake their apprenticeship;

have the financial capacity to meet apprenticeship tuition course fees, as well as living expenses, travel and school costs for themselves and any spouse or dependant children accompanying them;

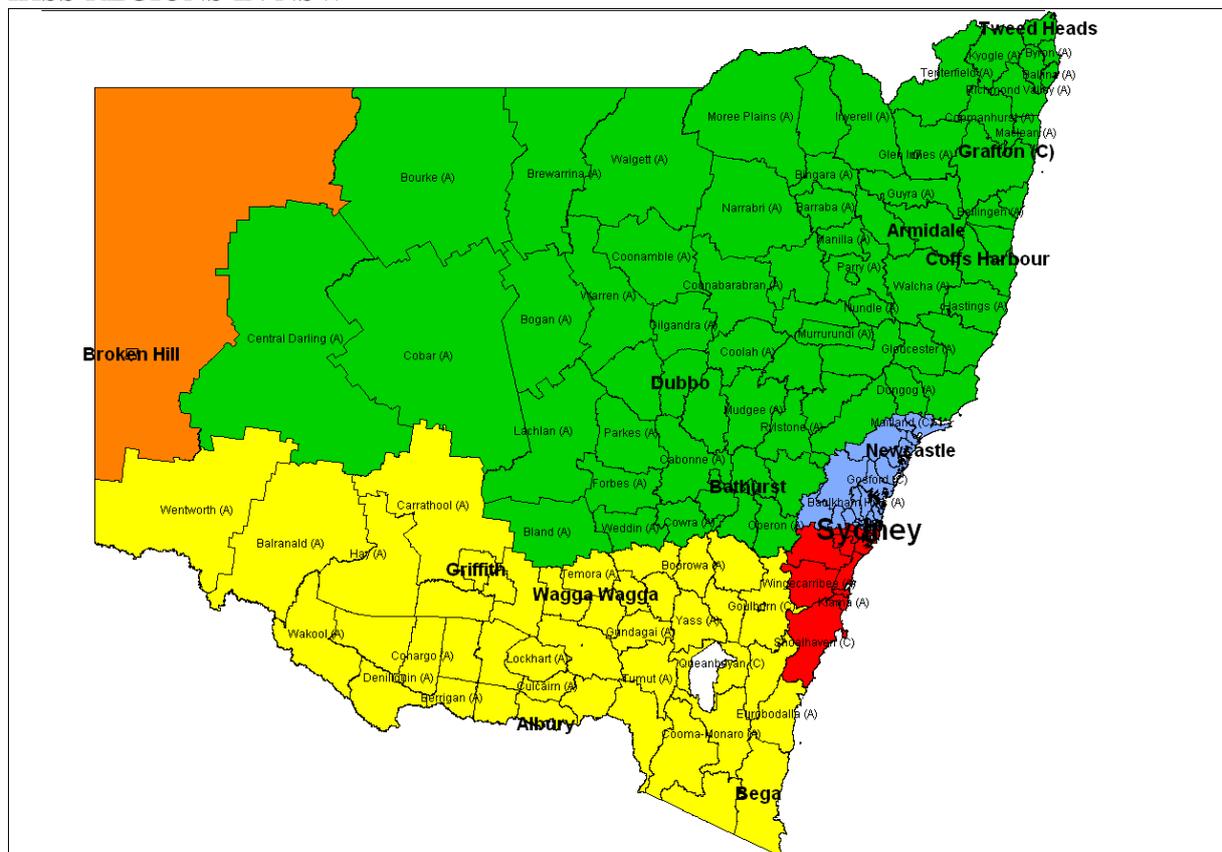
obtain adequate health insurance; and

have an offer of employment as an apprentice, and be genuinely intending to undertake the apprenticeship.

For further information please see <http://www.immi.gov.au/allforms/tst/index.htm>

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy Update

IHSS REGIONS IN NSW

Arrivals to date in NSW for 2005-2006

Arrivals in NSW from 1 July to 27 October 2005.

Refugees	397
SHPs	862
TOTAL	1259

From 1 October to 27 November 2005

Refugees	262
SHPs	381
TOTAL	643

NSW Contractors

New contracts from 1 October

Contracts now signed for all 3 NSW contract regions.

ACL is the lead agency in consortium to deliver IHSS services in 2 contract regions -

Metro North & Metro South - with Resolve FM, STARTTS & Mission Australia

ANGLICARE is the prime contractor to deliver IHSS services in the Rural NSW region centred on Coffs Harbour

What Next?

NSW specific information will be distributed when all details finalised.
Transition plans completion over the next few weeks to ensure seamless service for entrants.
Volunteer Coordination expected to be in place by mid-December

Expected Humanitarian Program Composition

2005-2006

AFRICA 60.9%

Sudanese approx 3200

Burundians approx 1200

Liberians approx 500

Togolese maybe later

MID.EAST/ SW ASIA 30.9%

Iraqi approx 2500

Iranian Bahai

Iraqi/Afghan family members PPV holders

ASIA 7.8%

Burmese approx 900

EUROPE 0.4%

AMERICAS few split family cases

Training Report to SSPF -December 2005

Please see updated training calendar available today for range and timing of courses

From next year, training will take place in the new DIMIA premises:

Level 5, 300 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills

Since last SSPF report I gave you in September, 16 training sessions have taken place.

These have included nine courses for new workers

Two for management committee members

One for experienced workers

Four general courses

Six courses provided information in relation to 'core' DIMIA accountability and service agreement issues, whilst ten offered opportunities for discussion of effective settlement service delivery strategies

Mentor Program:

Program is designed to offer professional development to experienced workers and a framework of support for new workers - postponed to next year

Sessions will be held February, March and April

Mentors attend 3 sessions

'Mentees' attend 1 ½ sessions and receive ongoing mentoring support for duration of program

Mentors' professional development training provided through Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE

Does training help?

For the period 1 Sept 2005 -1 Dec 2005,

a total of 31 recently-appointed workers were first-time participants in CSSS/MRC training

List of Training Providers

TAFE

Sydney Institute

Northern Sydney Institute

South Western Sydney Institute

Private consultancies

Management Alternatives,

Crystal Phoenix,

Isabella Malouf

CSSS/MRC funded organisations

Blacktown MRC

Non-government organisations

Working Women's Health (Victoria),

Our Community (Victoria),

Public Interest and Advocacy centre (PIAC)

DIMIA

Training Highlights -September – December 2005

Training provided by *Blacktown MRC*

Introduction to Settlement Services 17 November

14 new workers benefited

Information delivered by MRC staff; DET; STARTTS; Centrelink; Dept of Housing;
Refugee Health

Successful training partnership

Workers able to obtain locally relevant information

Facilitating Emerging Leadership forum held 21 September

Discussion outcomes from this forum can be found at:

<http://www.mapl.com.au/support/support1A.html>

Risk Management - evening course, new in 2005

Nature of the risk management process; social and legislative changes that are taking place that are impacting on risks and risk management;

Requirements for Boards and Management Committees;

Identifying organisational risks;

Developing and organisational risk management process

Settlement Services Showcase 1 – *Innovation in the CSSS*

small group of workers review work program concepts: service type, outcome and output;

practise designing own outputs and performance measures;

role-play to see reports from reader viewpoint;

practical report-writing in small groups with assistance of DIMIA consultant

suitable for workers lacking confidence or experience in this area

Training held 1 December

Working with Post- IHSS Clients – presenter Samia Baho (Working Women's Health – Victoria)

CRC INVESTIGATION INTO AFRICAN SETTLEMENT

ATTACHMENT B



SETTLEMENT SERVICES ACCESS REPORT

DRAFT.

Clement Meru

Community Settlement Services Worker

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre

April 2005

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Introduction:

The Settlement Services Access Report is the outcome of a consultation meeting that was organized by the Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre for the Sudanese community on 14 December 2004. The meeting was attended by 60 members of the community living in Fairfield and Liverpool, most of whom had been in Australia for not more than one year. Some findings related to employment that will be discussed resulted from an employment seminar that was held for the African communities living in Fairfield on 9 March 2005. Some of the issues also emerged from my experience in providing information, referral services and assistance in settlement needs to newly-arrived humanitarian entrants and refugees from Sudan and Iraq.

The report will outline the settlement needs of the community, service barriers to the mainstream government and non-government agencies. It will also provide some recommendations and actions for improving access to settlement and other relevant services.

Overview of Sudan:



Source: www.sudan.net, 2005.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa with a total area of 2.376 million square kilometres (www.sudan.net 2005). It is located in Northern Africa and has a population of 39.1 million (July 2004 estimate, CIA, 2004). The culture is very diverse, comprising 52% black, 39% Arab, 6% Beja, 2% foreigners and 1% other (www.sudan.net). This accounts for 29 major ethnic groups who speak a number of languages: Arabic is the official language and also the lingua franca. Other languages major language groups include the Nubian, Ta Bedwie, diverse dialects of the Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, Sudanic languages and English. The population believes in a number of religions: Sunni Muslims accounting for 70% and is located in the north. 25% of the population believes in indigenous religions while Christianity accounts for 5% and is practiced mainly by the southerners and some people in Khartoum (CIA, 2005).

The Sudan became independent from British and Egyptian rule in 1956. Since then the country has experienced two civil wars. The first civil war started when the Southern Sudanese opposed the domination of the economic, political and social aspects of the country. A period of peace relative stability existed between 1972 and 1983 when Field Marshal Jaffar Nimeri declared Sharia Law. Several Northern –dominated governments prevailed until 1989 when the Brigadier Omar El Basir, who is now a General and heads the country, took over power. Both wars left 2 million people dead and displaced more than 2 million within and outside the Sudan.

Several peace efforts tried to bring an end to the conflict. In January 2005, peace agreement was signed between the government of Sudan and the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army/Movement. The main impetus to the settlement was pressure from both Europe and the United States.

Overview of Iraq:



Source: CIA, 2005.

Iraq is located in the Middle East and covers 432,162 square kilometers (July estimate, CIA, 2004). It has a total population of 25.4 million who belong to several ethnic groups, namely, 75-80% Arab, 15-20% Kurdish, 5% Turkoman, Assyrian or other (July estimate, CIA, 2004). The majority of Iraqis, about 97% belong to the Muslim (60-65% Shia, 32-37% Sunni) faith. Christians account for 3% of the population. The main language spoken

is Arab, which is spoken by the majority of Iraqis. Other languages include Kurdish (official in Kurdish regions), Assyrian and Armenian.

Iraq attained independence as a kingdom from British rule in 1932. It was declared a republic in 1958(CIA, 2005). A number of military rulers governed the country, the last of whom was Saddam Hussein. War broke out between Iraq and Iran in 1980 and lasted until 1988. Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait in 1990, culminating into the first Gulf War in 1991(CIA, 2005). The second Gulf War started in 2003 when Saddam Hussein refused to comply with United Nations' inspections and destruction of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This resulted into his removal and establishment of a freely elected Iraq government in January 2005. Peace, however, has not prevailed as insurgency continues.

Data on Iraqi refugees after 2002 could not be obtained. Overall an estimated 4 million Iraqis were believed to be displaced all over the world. In the beginning of 2002, 400,000 Iraqis were seeking asylum (UNCHR, 2005).

Resettlement in Australia:

Data from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs indicate 3,580 Iraqi-born migrants and humanitarian who were granted visas in between 1999 and 2004 lived in Fairfield (DIMIA, 2004). This accounted for 35% of the total number of overseas migration and resettlement. The statistics did not differentiate between individuals who came under the On-shore or Offshore programs. Latest data from DIMIA also puts the number of Sudanese-born humanitarian entrants living in Fairfield at 187(DIMIA, 2004). It does not give any indication of secondary migration.

Service Barriers to Government and Non-Government Agencies in Fairfield LGA

Language:

Language is always one of the major settlement issues, as it is the key to communication and, therefore, access to all services. Most of the refugees and humanitarian entrants from Iraq and Africa attend the 510 hours of English language tuition that they are entitled to because they need it. However, these communities come from different cultures and have varying levels of education, the Iraqis having had some higher level of education. The majority of the people from the African communities, however, have had limited or no education. Generally, after completing the 510 hours, the refugees do not feel they have learned much. Part of the reason is the lack of interaction with native English speakers. Attendees at the English language centres feel the curriculum does not help them to progress much.

One of the issues that affect the access to English classes is the lack of enough vacancies for childcare at the English language centres. The refugee communities are characterized by a large number of children. Usually, the women have to be put on a waiting list until a vacancy is available for their child.

The Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (FMRC) will work with TAFE to provide extra English classes as a supplement.

Lack of Interpreters:

Data from the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs indicate that in 2003-04, people from the Sudan were granted 6,147 Humanitarian visas (DIMIA, 2005). This made it the largest group, followed by 1,400 Iraqis (DIMIA, 2005). This implies more new language groups coming into Australia. The Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) has made an attempt to accommodate the Sudanese languages, mainly Dinka and Acholi. But, there are not enough trained interpreters in the languages already mentioned and other Sudanese languages. The costs of interpreting are just too high and put a lot of strain on agencies. In addition, the accreditation of the languages by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) requires people to possess a standard of a variety of skills. People from the African communities who are interested in becoming interpreters find this difficult, as they may not have enough skills to qualify for the NAATI standards. In order to accommodate these, NAATI may have to lower its standards.

The discussion about languages of the new and emerging languages like Nuer, Bari, Maadi, Moru, Lotuho, just to mention a few, cannot be complete if their use in other important services like health, social security and housing is ignored. It is important to note that all the services that these communities use need to have access to interpreters who speak these languages. One other thing to think about is the fact that most of these languages do not cover all concepts present in English e.g. Cancer of the cervix. Languages experts may need to carry out a research to discover suitable terms that explain vocabulary, which is non-existent in these languages.

Housing:

The majority of African families, especially the Sudanese, are characterized by large sizes with a lot of children. The Australian housing system does not cater for that. Therefore, large families have are forced to live under a lot of stress due to inadequate housing. Due to the overcrowding, other families are not able to maintain the properties they are renting to the satisfaction of the landlords. In addition overcrowding has a negative effect on the educational performance of children, as there is lack of quiet space for doing homework. It is also culturally inappropriate with the African and Mid-Eastern families for unmarried children to live away from their parents. Added to that is the affordability of housing in the private renting market, which leaves families who depend on Centrelink on benefits in rental stress.

The FMRC will support clients through letters of support and raise housing issues to the Department of Housing and community housing commissions.

Childcare:

There has been a lot of debate as to why childcare has become an issue in service provision in the community sector. The simple explanation to this is the arrival of the new and emerging communities who have a lot of children under school age. Childcare supplements from Centrelink do very little help, as the costs in the mainstream childcare centres are still unaffordable for these low-income earners.

The high costs for childcare also have a negative impact on the FMRC to run sessions, as it cannot afford to higher a worker for a lengthy period. Added to this is the legislative burden on child protection in Australia which rules out the traditional systems of child minding used by these communities.

The FMRC will continue to work in partnership with TAFE to organize childcare courses to members of the community.

Employment:

This is probably one of the main challenges that Australia has to deal with. A recently held employment seminar revealed a high rate of unemployment and underemployment in the African communities due to lack of English language, job-seeking skills and local experience. The efforts by Centrelink to improve its services through the use of Personal Advisors should be applauded. Yet, clearly that system is not assisting the African communities effectively in accessing employment. For example, out of 15 people who attended the employment seminar, only 1 had secured a job. And he was assisted by a private employment agency, not a job network member.

One of the access issues here is that the new arrivals are not familiar with the job-seeking system in Australia. When referred by Centrelink to a job network member, the expectation is that the job network cards (issued through Centrelink) provides them with a job. In addition, the communities do not know what job network members do and how to contact them. This is mainly because the traditional mode of communication is verbal, not through written material. Thus, the numerous letters received from Centrelink mean very little to them and are confusing.

Upon referral to a job network member some, not all, refugees and humanitarian entrants, immediately qualify for Intensive Assistance. The 3 months wait policy is frustrating, as they are not used to writing resumes, using touch screen and newspapers for searching for jobs. It is therefore a waste of time for them to be clients for the first 3 months.

Lack of local experience is still one of the major obstacles to employment for refugees and humanitarian entrants. These individuals bring with them skills and a lot of experience that could benefit Australia. Local businesses should work together with job network members and DEWR (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations) to provide short or long-term opportunities to individuals for work experience.

Education for children:

The Intensive English Centres (IECs) in high schools has proven to be crucial in preparing students from refugee backgrounds for the mainstream educational system. However, there is an issue of enrolling children into school based on their ages. Some children who have spent a number of years in refugee camps or with little or no formal education are disadvantaged as they may end up a few classes above their previous standard. In addition they have to adjust to a completely different educational system that is more student-oriented. They also have to adapt to new study habits like presentations and researches. Added to this is the lack of equipment to do these tasks e.g computers. All IECs should form homework support groups for school children. Furthermore, the IEC program should be extended to include the primary schools.

It is hard for the parents to support their children in homework and participate in school activities of their children due to limited English language skills. It also hinders the ability of parents to have a say in the decisions affecting their children. This also affects the ability of schools to communicate to the parents the issues facing their children, for example,

truancy, nutrition and hygiene. It is, therefore, important that the educational system employ as many language aides in the schools.

Education for Adults:

Adults have faced problems accessing educational institutions due to language difficulties. For most who have qualifications from overseas, their level of English language is not adequate enough for them to join the tertiary colleges. The situation is further aggravation as Australia is unable to recognize the previous experience and qualifications from overseas. Bridging courses would be the solution, but it depends on the number of people.

We will continue to TAFE urge to provide courses that are relevant to the target group. The FMRC will also, through the provision of information, enlighten the community about the courses available to them at TAFE, apprenticeships.

Health:

There are several dimensions to access to the health system. There is difficulty in accessing the health system due to lack of knowledge of the health services available in the area. In addition due to cultural and language mentioned earlier doctors it is hard to access doctors. In addition only a few doctors are familiar in working with African communities.

The FMRC will provide information session about health services in Fairfield LGA. A tour of the health services will also be arranged so that access to health services in the area is improved.

Lack of Information:

Another issue that is relevant to IHSS providers is the need for orientation the new arrivals on their rights and responsibilities. People get traffic fines and there are cases of fare evasion on trains because the regulations in the countries of origin of these communities may be different. In Sudan a bus conductor collects fares from passengers in public transport. Here, because there is no such policy, some new arrivals do not pay for tickets out of lack of enough knowledge about the system or inability to read English. An information session could be held so that new arrivals know that they could pay hefty fines for violating some rules that they may view as simple. It is, therefore, their responsibility to

Case 1:

Ms.P is a widow from Southern Sudan with three children. She arrived in Australia in January 2005 with the two younger children aged 21 and 19, while the elder daughter who is unmarried left behind in Cairo. As it is culturally inappropriate for unmarried children to live alone, the client is worried about her daughter living alone in a foreign country. The proposer was working and could not assist the client's family in accessing medical services. The CSSS worker had been assisting the client had been assisting the client with information and assistance on settlement needs. The client had been experiencing some symptoms as a result of torture. As the family had not received any kind of medical attention since arrival and did not have a GP, the worker referred them to the NSW Refugee Health Service for a complete medical assessment. In addition the family was referred to Mercy Refugee Service for assistance with transport on the date of the appointment. The appointment was postponed for two weeks, as the NSW Refugee Health could not secure a Dinka-speaking or Sudanese Arabic speaking interpreter.

Follow-up with the family indicated the client had been referred to a specialist and will undergo an operation soon.

Case 2:

Mrs. S is a 49- year-old Southern Sudanese woman who arrived in November 2004 with her 21 year-old daughter. Both are attending the 510 hours of English language tuition at Fairfield ACL. They were renting a 2- bedroom apartment for \$350 a fortnight and used their allowance from Centrelink for paying rent and other basic expenses. The individual who proposed for the family fulfilled part of her obligation, but due to personal reasons could not assist the family to look for permanent housing. The worker from the IHSS provider did not work intensively with the client

A domestic argument took place when the daughter came home late one night. She decided to move out of the house, leaving Mrs.S to pay for rent from her allowance, which was only \$450. As the client was distressed from the breakdown in family relationship, the CSSS worker referred her to STARTTS for counseling. In addition, the worker assisted her in filling an application form for Hume Community Housing. The worker also contacted NESH (Non-English Speaking Housing) who are willing to give the client priority.

The client wanted to be self-sufficient and pay her own bills. She was referred to AMES Employment. The Case Manager at AMES Employment was not able to find the client any job due to her lack of English language skills and local experience.

Case3:

Mrs W is a 35-year-old married Southern Sudanese woman with six children aged 16, 14, 13 7, 6 years and 18 months respectively children and was receiving Parenting Payment. The family arrived in Australia in 2002. She is enrolled at Fairfield ACL (Australian Centre of Language) but could not begin classes, as there was no vacancy for her 18-month old son. She was put on a waiting list. The ACL was prepared to pay for childcare outside if she was able to get vacancy. She contacted a childcare centre near her house. The centre would not accept children who were less than two years. She claimed Centrelink had asked her to look for work, as she was not doing any approved activity. The CSSS worker contacted the Multicultural Services unit in Centrelink and was informed that the since the client had a small child and was on Parenting Payment, she was not expected to do any activity. It became apparent that the client did not differentiate between Centrelink and her job network member.

Fairfield ACL got a vacancy for the client's child, and now the client is attending English classes.

One strong point emerged from working with newly arrived humanitarian entrants. Though the IHSS providers had been rendering some assistance, the humanitarian entrants would like to see more work being done to improve services for them. This was important for the Enhanced Proposer Support Program, as most of the clients who fell between the gaps were as a result of their proposers not providing enough support and the IHSS providers not being able to fill the void completely.

References:

CIA (2004) TheWorldFactbook <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/su.html>
(Accessed 18th April 2005)

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<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107996.html> (Accessed 18th April 2005)

CIA(2004)TheWorldFactbook <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html>
(Accessed 18th April 2005)

(UNHCR)http://www.unchr.pl/english/newsletter/21/powrot_do_iraku.php (Accessed 19th April 2004)

Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs Settlement Database
(Accessed 20th April 2004)

CRC Investigation into African Settlement – Attachment C

ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE AFRICAN SERVICES NETWORK COVENED BY St. VINCENTS DE PAUL. (SOURCE: SSPF MINUTES 04/12/03-

Issues identified include:

- *Housing*
 - Racism/discrimination by real estate agents/landlords
 - Families knocked back because of size
 - Short leases offered (eg. 3 months)
 - Greater or additional bonds required
- *Education*
 - Literacy – often new arrivals are illiterate in their own language
 - Children not always in the school year of their age
- *Identity*
 - Refugee children growing up in another country prior to settlement in Australia, eg. Sudanese young people who have grown up in camps in Kenya etc.
- *Family breakup*
 - The perception that Centrelink is pulling families apart with allowances. Eg family and other payments paid to female spouse rather than to male spouse which may cause cultural disharmony contributing to the breakup of families.
- *Health*
 - Big issues in African communities, often have multiple health issues
 - Health system needs to adapt to community needs
 - ASN has not focused on this as the NSW Refugee Health Service convenes the Refugee Health Issues Network
- *Financial Management*
 - Accessing Centrelink and managing allowances;
 - People getting themselves into debt
- *Employment and Training*
 - After language – finding a job
 - Africans have skills and experience but no documentation to prove their skills, training or level of education
 - Educating Africans with regard to OH&S legislation to reduce the risk of working in dangerous situations.

Lessons learnt through working with African community:

- Need to be more dynamic – two way process between worker and new entrant;
- Be culturally appropriate –take the time to understand their way of doing things (eg decisions may need to go to an elder; decisions and action may take a lot of time;
- Work less prescriptively;
- Tap into other agencies.

NESB OUTREACH MILESTONE 1 REPORT

Name of Funded Organisation: Cabramatta Community Centre

Project title: ... Neighbourhood Outreach

CSSS Grant ID Number: N05/2536

Target Group(s) Serviced: Newly Arrived Communities with Emphasis on Iraqi.

Target Area(s) Serviced: Fairfield

Date of this report: 7/10/05

Copy from your previously completed identification of Milestones pro forma the information about the milestone you are now required to report on:

Description of Milestone	Key Performance Measures	Milestone reporting due date
<p>Milestone: In partnership with Grow, UWS and DEWR run a pilot Skills and Experience Assessment and Development (SEAD) program, targeting overseas trained engineers with an emphasis on engineers from Iraq.</p>	<p>Quantity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At least 15 participants. - Number of participants completing the 12 week program. - Number of participants gaining work experience. - Number of participants with a comprehensive portfolio of directly related to experience and skills as well as value added skills. - Number of participants moving into bridging courses. <p>Quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved understanding of the engineering employment sector and the cultural contexts of the Australian work environment. - Improved networks with Engineering professionals. - Evaluation of Program. <p>Evidence –see Attachments.</p>	<p>7 October 2005</p>

1. Did your organisation fully achieve this milestone?

YES

2. Is this Milestone Report submitted under a re-negotiated due date?

NO

- 3. Provide a brief summary of your organisation's achievement of this milestone using the identified key performance measures. Supporting evidence may be provided as an attachment to this report.**

Background to SEAD Pilot

Skills and Experience Assessment and Development (SEAD) emerged from the Fairfield Employment Task Force (partnership between GROW - Sydney's Area Consultative Committee, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre and Fairfield Council) when Dr Regine Wagner, Director of Centre for Learning and Social Transition (CLAST) UWS, made a presentation on her findings of the paucity of overseas qualified professionals accessing employment in their field of expertise, particularly so , for immigrants under the refugee, humanitarian and family streams.

The Task Force referred the issue to be progressed through the Skilled Migrants Working Party convened by the FMRC. Dr Wagner wrote a submission to the UWS Research Unit citing the FMRC as a partner in the SEAD Pilot targeting Engineers. We were advised in February 2005 that the UWS funded \$ 25,000 to the Action Research Pilot.

SEAD Working Party Meetings (See Attachments 1, !A, 1B)

March – April '05

- An initial planning meeting was held in March to identify the type of program to be offered and course outline, promotion needs, who and what to target with the publicity to attract participants, suitability of participant, English language proficiency, type of engineering fields, course applicant interviews. It was also decided to expand the partnership to include a DEWR representative.

May - June '05

- Developed disseminated the Flyer with detailed information for referral agencies and potential participants. (See Attachment 2)
- Flyer was distributed through all the Migrant Resource Centres, Job Network Providers, and Ethnic- specific agencies, Fairfield Migrant Interagency, TAFE etc.(200)
- FMRC took phone enquiries and made initial eligibility assessments for the course short-listing applicants for interviews.
- Contacted short-listed applicants for the Interview.
- Course Outline Developed (See Attachment 3)
- Conducted interviews –informal structure set against the criteria for participation. Panel – Ricci Bartels-FMRC, Marion Shaw, SEAD Project Co-ordinator-UWS, Regine Wagner UWS, and Peter Tate (Qualified Engineer) GROW
- Advised successful applicants and arrange commencement.

July to September'05

- **SEAD 12 week course commenced 11/7/05** – Guest speakers included: Associate Professor Keith Bennett, Head of the School of Social and Human Sciences; Kim Leever, Co-ordinator of the Regional Development Grants Scheme, Surendra Shestra, Acting Head of the School of Engineering).
- **Course ran 3 days/week.**

-2 days of course work – Portfolio development on field expertise and value adding skills, Australian Labour Market, Engineering in Australia, Professional Bodies and Associations, Mock interviews etc.

-1 day Computer Laboratory – further develop computer skills – emails, internet, chat rooms etc. All course notes and supplementary supporting documentation have been placed on Web CT, which is a UWS learning web site where students can also use the site to communicate with their peers.

-Formulated letter to Centrelink to approve course as genuine activity . (**See Attachment 4**)

-Work Experience Placements – issues were finding companies who were prepared to participate and appropriate Insurance coverage.

The Outcomes are as follows:

Quantity

- 40 Interested applicants
- 20 Interviews - statistical details as follows:
 1. **Countries of origin** - Applicants were primarily from Iraq – 70%, China – 10%, Syria- 5% and India 5%.
 2. **Gender** - 80% Male and 20% Female.
 3. **Migration Category** -15% arrived under the Skilled Migration Program, 85 % under refugee, Humanitarian Entrant and Family Migration Streams.
 4. **Year of Arrival** - 70 % arrived in the last 3 years – (between 2002 –2005), 5% 6 years, 25% not known.
 5. **Engineering Fields** included – Civil and Construction, Mechanical (Diesel), Electronic and Optics, Chemical (Petroleum), Electrical, and IT.
- Referrals came through Ames Employment (2), Mission Employment (1), Bonnie’s Women’s Refuge, Assyrian Australian Welfare, Assyrian Radio, FMRC clients and other MRCs.
- 15 students commenced the program.
- 9 students completed the 12 week program, including work experience and graduated on the 29/09/05.
- Work place experience organisation included : 2 private companies, UWS, NSW Fire Brigade, Blacktown Council and Fairfield Council.
- 3 students went on to other vocational study.
- 2 students gained employment – as teachers at TAFE in a similar field.
- 1 student gained employment with Maintrain (Private Co.) resultant from the work experience placement.

(**Attachments 5 & 6**)

Quality

- Professional Portfolios depicting skills and experience which make them more competitive in employment applications in the field of Engineering.
- Improved understanding of the engineering employment sector
- Improved networks with Engineering professionals
- Improved skills in Job Interviews
- Better understanding of the Australian Work environment through the work experience placements and course work.
- Improved computer skills and connecting to a peers network through the UWS CT.
- Evaluation – Participants’ comments : Work experience was seen as the most valuable component of the program and in fact attracted participants to the Course. Most of the participants had applied for various positions in their engineering or similar field but were

always rejected for reasons of not having any Australian work experience. Portfolio Development ranked high as it provided more refined ways of marketing their experience and skills. Developing stronger contacts in the fields of Engineering at the tertiary level, professional bodies and peers provided a productive learning environment.

PLEASE NOTE: A fuller report is being prepared by the SEAD working party with the Project Co-ordinator- Marion Shaw and when this becomes available it will be forwarded to DIMIA.

Some of the operational issues throughout the delivery of the program were:

1. Inadequate Resources:

- It would have been better if a separate person was appointed to attract companies willing to take on people for work experience placement. The role would include finding placements, supporting and co-ordinating placements and making sure of Insurance coverage.
- Insurance coverage was a big hurdle to overcome. At one point it looked like we would not get coverage. We tried through DEWR and Job Network but they could only assist if students were registered with the Job Network provider under Intensive Assistance. In the end UWS provided the Insurance coverage.

2. **Job Network** – lack of support or interest from the Job Network providers with the exception of AMES Employment.

3. **Work Experience** -The SEAD project substantiated the need for intensive programs which include work experience placement for professionals. The defunding of the NSW Skilled Migrant Placement Officer Program left an enormous gap. Job Network providers are not running similar programs and perhaps should be doing this as a specific program target for skilled professionals.

4. Outline any new or emerging settlement needs that have been identified through the implementation of this Milestone.

Skilled Arrivals: DIMIA’s recent study showed that the Skilled Migration Program is very successful. One might expect this, given that Applicants are required to provide evidence of employment and employer in their application. However, the skills and qualifications under the Humanitarian, Refugee and Family streams go largely under the radar. There are no statistics on skills and professions, and no programs to fill the identified skill shortages through this group. Instead we are spending large amounts of money to recruit overseas when we already have a vast range of professions to begin filling Australia’s skill shortages. Better data collection, interdepartmental co-operation and communication and projects like these will go a long way towards this.

5. Would you like to suggest any changes to your Approved Work Program to better meet the settlement needs of your target group?

NO

Prepared by: Ricci Bartels
Signature of Funded Organisation’s

Authorised Representative:

Ricci Bartels.....

Position on Management Committee: FMRC Co-ordinator/CCC Executive Officer

Date: 07 /10 / 05