

# Discussion Paper

## Settlement services a vital part of refugee protection

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the generous support of partner governments, resettles around 65,000 refugees each year from around the world to countries like Australia and New Zealand where they will restart their lives.

As some of the most vulnerable people on earth, who have survived threats to life and physical security, it is important that refugees are afforded a warm welcome and good support services to help them begin to rebuild their lives as they settle and integrate into their new country.

In producing this discussion paper, UNHCR Regional Office Canberra has invited some of those involved in settlement policy and service delivery in Australia and New Zealand to write on the key issues, challenges and developments in this field.

UNHCR Country Representative for Papua New Guinea, Walpurga Englbrecht, also contributes a paper on some of the challenges in that country – where refugees from West Papua face their own distinctive challenges to survive, integrate and prosper.

We hope this discussion paper provides some insight into the settlement experience, and helps to promote discussion about the vital roles that good policy settings and high quality service provision play in ensuring refugees are able to begin rebuilding their lives.

### UNHCR RO Canberra

The views expressed in this discussion paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily held or endorsed by UNHCR.



Artwork in a New Zealand classroom showing the various countries of origin of the students.

UNHCR/I.Earp-Jones

## Settlement services in Australia: an overview

### From the Settlement Council of Australia

In November 2008, the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA) received a grant from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, in recognition of its role as the national peak body for settlement services. The grant enabled SCOA to set up a national office and employ an Executive Officer. Prior to this, SCOA was known as the National Council of Migrant Resource and Settlement Agencies (NCMRSA), which had operated as a national network of settlement service providers.

In the short time since receiving funding, SCOA has achieved a considerable amount. Some of the key milestones include:

- Establishing a national office in Sydney;
- Launching our website at [www.scoa.org.au](http://www.scoa.org.au);
- Running the first national settlement conference for over 180 delegates from every state and territory;
- Conducting a national survey of settlement service providers in order to map settlement service provision, and to consult on the future role and direction of SCOA;
- Establishing a close working relationship with other peak bodies, including the Refugee Council of Australia, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils and the National Multicultural Youth Advisory Council;
- Attending the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs in Geneva;
- Providing written responses on key issues around settlement issues for refugees and humanitarian entrants;
- Holding meetings with the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services and key staff of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
- Increasing our membership threefold.

### Feedback from the First National Settlement Conference

The first national settlement conference was held in Canberra on 28-29 May 2009, with the theme of "Settlement Services – Building a Future for Social Inclusion". The support for the conference by so many



organisations and workers across the sector and from all corners of Australia, whether working as policy makers, practitioners or researchers was indicative of the very real interest, commitment and need for the sector to come together, to share their experiences, practice and achievements to date.

Over 180 participants registered for the conference to listen to presentations, participate in good practice workshops, and most importantly through roundtable discussions, to develop strategies and recommendations that will drive the national settlement agenda into the future.

As importantly, the current members of the SCOA as well as prospective members and allied settlement organisations confirmed their commitment to support the SCOA's work as the peak body that will represent the many and varied efforts of settlement services through advice to government, research, information sharing and assisting the development of national standards. Many organisations have already demonstrated their commitment through application for formal membership.

Through roundtable discussions, conference delegates identified a number of key recommendations. The recommendations from the conference covered the following themes:

- Sustainable funding for program development;
  - Evidence based and driven service planning;
  - Supporting community empowerment as the most successful pathway to independence and integration;
  - Outcomes focused program evaluation;
  - Strengthening linkages between settlement services and allied services.
- These recommendations will be prioritised and forwarded to relevant stakeholders in accordance with SCOA's key areas of work and resource capabilities, including DIAC

and other Commonwealth agencies, the Australian Social Inclusion Board, Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, Refugee Council of Australia, Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council, Australian Human Rights Commission, and other national peak bodies such as FECCA, ACOSS and the National Women's Consultative Council. A copy of the conference report is available on SCOA's website.

### Responding to Key Settlement Issues

SCOA has produced a number of papers on key settlement issues, in response to government discussion papers and consultations on issues of importance to SCOA's member organisations. These include:

- A response to the Discussion Paper on Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program;
- A response to the Discussion Paper on the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS);
- A paper on Developing a National Model for Multicultural Youth Programs Based on Best Practice Initiatives;
- A Multicultural Policy Paper in light of consultations by the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council (AMAC).

Some of the key recommendations to come out of these papers include:

1. The need for greater recognition and valuing of the specialism and expertise upon which effective settlement services need to be based. Such expertise is built upon a variety of experiences, including:
  - A strong track record in delivering multicultural services;
  - A thorough understanding and respect for cultural differences;
  - Experience in assisting staff and organisations to develop cultural competencies;

- Extensive experience in promoting Access and Equity.
2. Delivering high quality settlement services involves far more than providing information and referral, and linking clients to other services. Seeing settlement as requiring primarily information and referral services promotes a "tick box" approach, and also over simplifies the high level of skill required in delivering effective settlement casework. More emphasis should be placed upon the development of "settlement life skills", based on a client-focused, competency-based approach to adult learning, rather than a "tick box" approach to information delivery.
  3. Flexibility is another key element to the delivery of settlement services across Australia. There is no "one size fits all" solution, especially when it comes to finding solutions to complex issues such as housing and health service provision. It is important to learn from innovative approaches to settlement service delivery, and explore ways that these models can be replicated and/or adapted.
  4. With regard to multiculturalism in Australia, we do not believe a minor makeover on current policy without program development and resource commitment will make much difference. Indeed it will reinforce some of the disappointment and cynicism that already has grown in relation to the current government. SCOA is happy within our limited resources to contribute in a continuing way to this process of stakeholder engagement in the formulation of policy.

With the momentum gained over the last few months, SCOA will continue to work to support the development of the settlement services sector, and to take forward the issues which have been identified as priorities by our members.

*To find out more about the Settlement Council of Australia, or to inquire about membership, visit our website at [www.scoa.org.au](http://www.scoa.org.au) or email SCOA's Executive Officer, Andrew Cummings at [andrew@scoa.org.au](mailto:andrew@scoa.org.au).*

# Breaking down Barriers to Employment

## From Catherine Scarth General Manager, Community and Policy, AMES

The challenges facing refugees are never more evident than when they are looking for a job, with workforce participation rates significantly lower for newly arrived refugees and migrants than for many other Australians.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (2007) showed that 75% of humanitarian entrants (HE) and refugees were unemployed 4-5 months after arrival and only 16% were participating in the labour force. By 16-17 months after arrival, 43% of HE were still unemployed and only 32% were participating in the labour force. This low workforce participation rate contributes to significant individual distress and impacts on social cohesion.

Via Commonwealth Government settlement programs including the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), AMES works with recently arrived refugees in Victoria from a wide variety of work backgrounds ranging from skilled professionals and trades people to those with limited work skills relevant to the Australian labour market.

Research undertaken in Victoria in 2008 identified a number of barriers facing refugees attempting to enter the labour market in Australia. These include:

- recency of arrival;
- discrimination;
- low English language skills;
- lack of education and training;
- lack of labour market knowledge;
- poor access to formal and informal employment networks;
- poor provision of advice (including guidance and training);
- unrecognized or non-transferable qualifications and overseas experience; and
- cultural transition issues and pre arrival experiences (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2008; McDonald et al 2008).

Typically these barriers to employment are collapsed to: "lack of English, lack of local work experience and lack of qualifications". AMES experience and research show that the barriers are more specific, subtler within a number of identified areas, inter-connected, and involve a number of affective (or personal) factors as well as external factors.

While in some respects refugees, skilled and unskilled, share similar experiences of engaging with the labour market to other migrants, their migration experience is very different.

Pre- and post-arrival experiences set them apart. The effects of torture and trauma; the need to adjust to life in an industrialised society after long periods in a refugee camp; the pressure of managing domestic responsibilities for family members who themselves are trying to cope with resettlement; health problems; and the

absence of an already established ethnic community, all shape or exacerbate the standard employment barriers faced by other migrants (RCOA, 2008).

In addition, many refugee job seekers experience institutional discrimination and racism on arrival (VMCC & VEOHR 2008).

Discriminatory practices impact on employment opportunities for these groups in a range of ways, such as – recruitment bias; underemployment and lack of recognition of qualifications; access to and utilisation of job search agencies; over-representation in low skilled, low paid employment; under-representation in the public sector; and behaviours of small and medium enterprises (Ibid; Constable et al 2000).

In 2006, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) found that employers with a skill shortage had not considered the possibility of recruiting a skilled migrant or refugee. The VECCI survey indicated that many skilled arrivals are taking up jobs in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations such as aged care, sales and taxi driving.

Other studies also show these migrants suffer substantial occupational downward mobility and loss of occupational status, even many years after arrival (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007). Many refugees are at risk of becoming an underclass of workers in Australia – median incomes for migrants from Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance is between \$228 and \$234 per week as opposed to \$488 for Australian-born



residents and \$431 for the whole Australian population (DIAC 2007).

AMES experience is that a 'one size fits all' approach to employment assistance is neither appropriate nor adequate for most refugees. People with complex settlement needs require settlement support that is individualised and integrated with labour market participation – and as soon after arrival as practicable.

For example, the AMES Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) Program, one of AMES Transition to Work strategies, enables refugees to secure their first job in Australia, to learn about Australian workplace culture, and to gain local work experience in a time-limited and real job. Hopefully, this leads to permanent employment in the mainstream labour market.

Through this coordinated program refugee job seekers benefit from:

- information about Australian job search methods and practical application of this in relation to specific opportunities;
- opportunities to observe and practise workplace behaviours and communication in situ and receive constructive feedback on performance;
- a positive relationship between work placements and securing a job (i.e. the opportunity to demonstrate skills to a prospective employer led to subsequent employment); and
- mentors to assist with becoming job ready and managing the transition into sustained employment.

At the same time, AMES has worked to shift understanding by employers of the special needs and particular benefits that refugee employment can offer.

Employers need to consider the manner and method of attracting job seekers.

This extends from where jobs are advertised through to the types of questions asked in interview situations to elicit the appropriateness of the candidate. Upskilling of managers to mentor employees and the positive contribution that new cultures can bring to the workplace are additional benefits delivered through refugee employment recognised by ILM employer participants.

When approached many employers are willing to offer work placements and

vacancies to refugees; particularly through an ILM program that enables them an opportunity to test a refugee job seeker's capacity before proceeding to a longer-term contract.

With incentives, such as liaison staff who speak the first language of the worker and assist with work training, employers concerns about potential risks are alleviated and a good match between business requirements and individual skills can be achieved.

AMES research shows that where there is a good match, work experience may lead to ongoing employment.

A recent business roundtable of employers participating in such programs noted that there had been 'sensational' outcomes for the business and participants with 'performance levels on a par or better than peers'.

There was agreement that the risk of hiring a refugee was not less or greater than hiring anyone else.

Promoting the values and unexpected benefits of refugee employment will begin breaking down the perceptions and barriers that employers fear when confronted with a refugee job seeker.

The resulting employment will lower the hurdles the refugee must jump before feeling they are settling properly into their new home.

It will ensure that Australia continues to benefit socially and economically from the contribution of people from refugee backgrounds.

#### References

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## Housing & homelessness

### From the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Housing and homelessness are amongst the greatest challenges facing asylum seekers in Australia. Asylum seekers who have applied for protection can live for years in the community without stable accommodation and without access to any mainstream housing services.

Homelessness is a challenge not only for asylum seekers but for many Australian citizens and permanent residents, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics reporting over 105,000 homeless people in Australia each night.

Australia wide, there are a number of not-for-profit support agencies who work with asylum seekers to address their basic welfare needs. Collectively, not-for-profit services meet the legal, health, social and basic welfare needs of asylum seekers, but all of this well-integrated support comes undone when an asylum seeker has no place to live. For all of these services, access to appropriate housing is the missing link.

During the refugee determination process, people seeking asylum are arguably the most marginalized of all groups of homeless people. This is due largely to the fact that they are denied access to public housing and Centrelink and have no safety net to ensure ongoing income to pay rent. In addition, current housing policy renders asylum seekers ineligible for many mainstream services leaving them reliant on the support of charities to avoid homelessness whilst awaiting an outcome of their protection claim.

### Key housing issues faced by asylum seekers

The process of seeking asylum is neither instantaneous nor a permanent state. It is transitional and asylum seekers need transitional housing during this time.

Key issues faced by asylum seekers needing emergency and transitional accommodation include:

- The struggle to gain access to housing agencies for emergency and transitional accommodation;
- The lack of understanding and willingness of housing agencies to provide an adequate emergency and transitional accommodation response;
- A (well documented) lack of safe rooming houses and emergency-type accommodation options;
- No current entry point to access mainstream transitional housing.

In Victoria, the funding for emergency accommodation is allocated predominantly through the State Government's Housing Establishment Fund (HEF). While the HEF guidelines do not disqualify asylum seekers from accessing emergency accommodation, many housing services that distribute HEF reject asylum seekers on the basis that they do not have access to income. It is assumed that they have no 'exit options' from housing services and therefore they are denied entry. As this report demonstrates, this is simply not true.

The Department of human services in Victoria has authorised a small amount of recurrent funding to assist asylum seekers with emergency housing. This is a good start and will assist a small number of asylum seekers in housing crisis, however all Housing Services providing HEF need to respond to asylum seekers when they present in housing crisis.

Accessing transitional (medium term) housing proves just as difficult. Whilst assistance is helpful in overcoming an immediate emergency housing crisis, this accommodation is available only for a minimal amount of time (generally two weeks). The type of accommodation sourced is crisis/emergency accommodation, which is not suitable or sustainable for ongoing tenancy. Currently asylum seekers are refused access to transitional housing programs.

In Victoria the State Government has recently responded to asylum seekers presenting post-Homeless World Cup by providing an excellent model of support including transitional housing. This is to be applauded and ideally used as an example of how to respond to all asylum seekers in need of transitional housing.

### The impact of homelessness on settlement of on-shore refugees

While homelessness is a key issue when someone is seeking asylum, it would be wrong to assume that their housing troubles disappear when they are granted permanent residency. Our experience informs us that asylum seekers who are granted a protection visa don't rejoice for long as they face a new set of difficulties. The effects of living in destitution and uncertainty for a prolonged period of time in the Australian community (and for some in detention), do not disappear with the granting of a visa. Without the proper information and support, making the transition can be very difficult.

Asylum seekers who are granted a protection visa have immediate and full access to the entitlements of an Australian permanent resident, such as Centrelink, Medicare, etc. As for public housing, asylum seekers are entitled to 'join the queue' only once being granted permanent residency regardless of how many years they have already lived in Australia.

Once granted a permanent protection visa, an individual or family is faced with the task of sourcing housing quickly, but rarely has access to the much-needed IHSS program offered to newly-arrived offshore refugees. Sourcing housing is very difficult for people who have been forced to rely on charity, may have language barriers and frequently will not have the multiple private rental referees required for entry into the highly competitive private rental market. Without dedicated one-on-one support to

source housing, many people fail at this crucial stage of their settlement.

### Asylum seekers' homelessness needs to be included in a national response

Social inclusion cannot be achieved without access to housing.

The housing sector has a key role to play in creating social inclusion. The Federal Government's willingness to approach social issues holistically is encouraging and the desire for collaboration between sectors is a welcome step. These principles need to apply to all who lawfully reside in Australia, including asylum seekers.

While the Federal Government has shown its readiness to tackle the housing crisis in Australia – the White Paper *'The Road Home'* (2008) promising to halve homelessness and to provide supported accommodation for all in need by 2020 – there is no mention of asylum seekers, despite their well-documented housing challenges and regular presentation at housing services. In its current form, this appears to be a truly 'white' paper.

A key feature of *'The Road Home'* is a 'no wrong doors' system, which states that *"There should be no wrong doors for people who are homeless when they seek help"*.

To date asylum seekers have been told by mainstream and specialist housing and welfare services that they are at the 'wrong door' when attempting to access emergency and transitional accommodation.

Now is the time for all levels of government to affirm their commitment to ending homelessness by providing the resources and collaborative support to prevent asylum seekers from becoming and remaining homeless. This will have long-term benefits by helping the many asylum seekers who are granted permanent residency to successfully meet the challenges of settlement and become fully-fledged citizens of their new country.

# Strategic Settlement Framework

## *Laying stronger foundations*



**From the Hon  
Laurie Ferguson MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for  
Multicultural Affairs & Settlement  
Services**

The promise of protection only begins with a refugee visa. Disembarking at a crowded airport, often with no English, no understanding of the world you have entered, and no idea where you are to be taken, is both a point of desperation and an act of trust. Leaving everything that is familiar would send fear and trepidation through most of us.

Protection should mean security and safety; it should also mean a chance to build a new life. Refugees have remarkable resilience and a great willingness to contribute. Settlement services are our commitment to provide a means – a path – to achieve full participation and to help them begin their new life.

Australia's refugee program is an expression of humility and compassion; it is about a fair go.

Organisations and dedicated individuals that form Australia's settlement sector have worked tirelessly

to make us a world leader in settlement services.

This year, our Government undertook to consult extensively with the sector as a basis for forming the new model of settlement services. The public response was inspiring.

In total we held 17 community and Government consultations and 11 focus groups with refugees. 460 individuals representing 210 community organisations and more than 80 Government agencies participated and shared their views. Most importantly we met with 195 refugees from 18 different nationalities.

As Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, I meet regularly with refugee groups – Sudanese, Somali, Hazara, Sierra Leonean, and Burmese. However, it is a different experience to sit and listen to their accounts of going through the services we provide.

The consultations confirmed that the fundamentals of the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) program (the core services) are still relevant and appropriate. In fact these are a front on which we are an acknowledged world leader.

However the consultations also revealed gaps and issues around isolation, lack of youth engagement, problems accessing housing, employment and training and some weaknesses in cultural orientation.

In certain instances clients spoke of 'tick and flick' services, feeling as though they were not provided with enough tangible assistance or support beyond the first few weeks.

On a national level, IHSS does a good job in meeting the immediate needs of refugees through services such as airport pickups, household goods, health checks, Centrelink and school enrolment.

However, settlement is as much a mental and emotional re-alignment as it is a physical relocation. We are less successful when it comes to creating

sustainable settlement outcomes. By this I mean working with the client to identify their strengths and providing the necessary tools to advance them along their settlement pathway.

The Minister and I are looking to set out a new settlement framework – to provide a continuum from offshore to onshore to deliver long term sustainable settlement outcomes. This continuum covers the broad range of settlement services delivered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship including our offshore Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO), IHSS, the Settlement Grants Program, Adult Migrant English Program, Complex Case Support and interpreting services.

We must ensure these programs work cooperatively to support our clients on their pathway to independence. The pathway for clients between these programs needs to be as seamless as possible.

The framework will lay the foundations for an integrated service delivery network that will support new arrivals to rebuild their lives in Australia.

At the crucial centre of the new settlement framework are our clients. We must not lose sight of this and must develop programs that are client-centred and achieve real and practical outcomes.

It is a matter of working with clients to build their capacity to deal with the many barriers they will face along the way, and equally it is about identifying their individual strengths and capacity to contribute.

As you are all aware, since the last tender of IHSS services, the complexity of the caseload has increased. We now receive many entrants who have lived in refugee camps for several years and children who may not have known any other life. Many entrants have no or low literacy in their own language and no English skills. This is a result of no or interrupted education. Equally, a significant portion have had

limited opportunities for employment experience. Many arrive with health needs and have experienced torture and trauma.

### **So what does the future hold for settlement support?**

The first step in building a new settlement framework is the redevelopment of the initial settlement services model, currently known as the IHSS.

We will provide entrants with greater hands-on support and guidance to navigate Australian systems, to understand Australian culture and to give them every chance to make it in Australia. We will be more responsive to client needs.

We will strengthen the flexible client-centred approach to case management that we currently have – working directly with clients, tapping into their strengths, building on them, and developing their capacity in other areas. Emphasis will be placed on tailoring case management to individual needs.

During a client focus group in Brisbane one client told us that he had been a bus driver for more than 20 years in his home country of Burundi. He said he would love to work as a bus driver but he did not know how to get a licence or how to get Australian workplace experience – experience that would mean Australian bus companies would hire him. This story too often resonated throughout the consultations, with clients stuck in a vortex of 'no Australian experience – no Australian jobs'.

Along with English proficiency, and participation in community life, employment is a key settlement marker. Effective case management is about working with clients to identify their path to meaningful and appropriate employment.

Part of a client-centred approach lies also in the capacity to be flexible in the

intensity of support provided. We are exploring options for innovative housing solutions – including group housing and other community housing models. For select clients, initial group housing allows for services to be concentrated and structured around their needs.

Vulnerable clients will benefit from increased contact time, intensive case management, comprehensive cultural orientation, group based learning and collective support structures. For clients who may face issues of isolation it will create opportunities to form friendships and links which are the basis of a new life.

However, group housing will not work in all places or for all clients. For many clients, settling directly into a new community and locality and connecting to local facilities through hub-style services will deliver the best settlement outcomes.

Accommodation should be about a flexible approach based on the needs of the client.

Consultations have confirmed our views that structured onshore cultural orientation is lacking under the current program. Resounding support was received from those clients we met for the introduction of an onshore orientation program that reinforces and builds on the messages delivered through AUSCO. Many clients commented that AUSCO gave them some good basic information but they often found it difficult to contextualise and absorb.

The purpose of delivering an onshore cultural orientation program is to equip entrants with information and knowledge to assist them become lawful and participating members of our community. Such a program will present information about Australian social and cultural norms, law and order, finance and budgeting, tenancy issues, health literacy and much more.

Emphasis will be on skill development and competency-based learning rather than time-based service delivery. With

almost 70 per cent of the current intake being under 30 years of age (and this trend likely to continue), we need to ensure the needs of young people are not forgotten.

To that end there will be a stronger focus on youth – with greater consideration of the individual needs of our young refugees. The program will provide entrants with more effective links to other settlement and community programs and stronger connections with community supports such as ethnic organisations, and recreation and social groups.

A number of clients reported to me during consultations that they were not introduced to their local ethnic community and only became acquainted by chance meetings with people from their home country in the streets or shops. Connections with ethnic and cultural groups soon after arrival can often combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. I see this as an important function of an initial settlement program.

We must remember that an initial settlement program such as IHSS can only do so much. In outlining the new directions, I am not talking about guaranteeing that on exit from this program every client will be successfully settled – because realistically speaking settlement is a lifelong process.

What we are looking at is a program built around sustainable settlement outcomes, strength based case management, competency based transitions and client focused service. We recognise that not all refugees start from the same point and not all entrants settle at the same pace. To this end, the new initial settlement program will be client-centred, flexible and adaptable.

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Adaptation of speech delivered 25 September 2009 in Brisbane. The contents of this article is not to be taken as documentation relating to the IHSS request for tender. Tenders must rely on information in the official tender documents. Please check AusTender for further information.

# Settlement services in New Zealand: an overview

## From Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand

The present strength of the refugee resettlement programme in New Zealand has evolved over the last thirty years and is built on a national structure that is unique internationally. All refugees arrive at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre in Auckland, where they receive six weeks of multi-agency assessment, ESOL and orientation support, followed by placement and case management by a national resettlement NGO, Refugee Services, into six locations across New Zealand.

In the next stage of initial settlement in the community, intensive support is provided to each family through Refugee Service's caseworkers, social workers, cross-cultural workers and volunteers, so that sustainable connections are made to local communities for housing, schools, medical care and local services.

New Zealand society has become more culturally diverse in the last decade and ethnic and language differences are no longer such a novelty. This has produced a more mature and understanding receiving community, which on the whole is positive and welcoming of refugees. This change has been underpinned by government policy on diversity, so that integration is encouraged and supported. Local festivals of celebration provide the opportunity for a wider cross section of New Zealand society to enjoy the richness of food, dance and story telling brought by former refugees, and give refugees an opportunity to proudly display their culture as part of the increasing ethnic diversity of New Zealand communities.

The strong culture of support from local communities has been captured and formalised in a volunteer programme managed by Refugee Services. Motivation for becoming involved in a volunteer support group is wide ranging, but New Zealanders' love of travel means

that there is delight in finding the world on our doorstep, and many involve themselves in refugee resettlement. More recently the support of the receiving community has been further enhanced by regional responses to involve the 'tangata whenua', or indigenous population, in ceremonies of welcome for refugee groups on arrival from Mangere into the permanent settlement location.

Refugee support programmes guide towards integration, and a high level of achievement of independent functioning is achieved after the first year from those who have not been highly traumatised. The numbers of young former refugees who are emerging from tertiary education is being tracked by some ethnic communities, and numbers of graduates increase every year.

As the refugee sector has become more cohesive in recent years, respectful relationships have been built between all players, based on a national settlement strategy led by government, and developing regional strategies. However a national refugee policy is still to be developed. This would provide a more robust framework within which to develop engagement and partnership between government, NGOs and refugee communities.

What has already emerged is a strengthened information flow with settlement planning across all agencies, and communication in post-Mangere reports to the resettlement agencies, including NGOs and government departments.

The most recent addition to the refugee sector has been a national refugee network developed by former refugees themselves – the articulation of the refugee voice in advocacy and policy making.

A significant research programme is being conducted by Immigration New Zealand, the major government department managing the resettlement programme, known as "Ten Years On". The research aims to measure the

progress of refugees after ten years of settlement, based on indicators of good integration. This principle is also implicit in a strengthening of the concept of individualised settlement planning which will be led by Refugee Services, across major settlement themes and indicators of integration.

Various NGOs and refugee communities themselves are involved in local examples of community development which bear testimony to thriving and developing refugee communities – income generation sewing projects, gardening projects to encourage the growth of local produce for economy and health, swimming projects, soccer teams becoming integrated into local soccer clubs, culturally appropriate women's community ESOL classes at which their babies are welcome – the list is constantly growing, and emerges from engagement between refugee ethnic groups and local funding.

Specific challenges still need to be addressed. In the wake of the global recession, how do resettlement agencies manage their budget costs effectively? One way this is being dealt with is to strengthen partnerships within the sector. Work needs to be done to identify the specific costs of various levels of support needs, and to ensure that there is a match to the provider of services – in health, social support or education. Some direct funding cuts have affected refugee entitlement to study support, especially the cessation of the Refugee Study Grants. Refugees are also affected indirectly as a small minority group, by the impact of policy cuts – cuts in community education which reduces funding for certain refugee specific benefits, more pressure on state housing from the wider community, and fewer employment opportunities.

Like all resettlement countries, New Zealand experiences limited family reunion opportunities and this is recognised as one the most significant

stressors for refugees. Although it is one of the key components to facilitate good settlement, requests for family reunion of extended family members far outstrips the mechanisms for applications within the Refugee Family Support Category, of 300 places per annum.

Interpreting requirements from communities also outstrips the capacity of government agencies to provide them

– a telephone link (often to Australia) is useful, but face to face interpreting requires capacity development.

New Zealand has a long history of responsiveness to UNHCR requests for the acceptance of emergency, vulnerable or high needs cases. However this can result in groups where the numbers are too small to appoint ethnic staff from their own communities, and there

is consequent difficulty in providing interpreting support or a stable emerging community.

In spite of these stresses, New Zealand has a well connected refugee sector, committed to finding capacity solutions and ensuring that the refugee programme remains well accepted at the heart of our increasingly diverse society.

An early example of refugee resettlement circa 1950s. After years in a German camp, one family prepares to start life afresh in New Zealand.



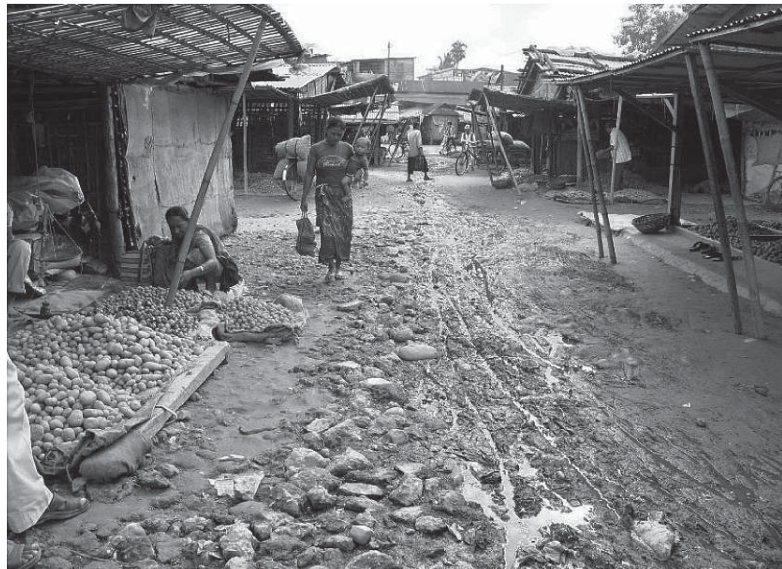
## Refugee research in New Zealand

### From IMSED Research

During 2008 the New Zealand government launched a new phase of research with refugees. The IMSED Research team within the Department of Labour has begun two new studies to build on the 2004 research project, *Refugee Voices: A journey towards resettlement*. A new three year project, *Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives on Integration, Community and Identity*, is designed to understand the long-term settlement experiences of former refugees in New Zealand. A smaller but unique prospective cohort study called *Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Needs, Expectations and Experiences* studies short term settlement issues and outcomes by talking to refugees before and again twice after their arrival in New Zealand.

These studies continue to build on the earlier *Refugee Voices*, which was the first large-scale study to look at refugee resettlement in New Zealand. The methodology was highly participative yet included in total almost 400 refugees – including recently arrived refugees and those who had lived in New Zealand for approximately five years. This study gave former refugees a voice by collating their views, experiences and expectations in a broad range of areas – ranging from their backgrounds and expectations of New Zealand, through to their experiences of finding housing, getting support, learning English and settling into New Zealand life more generally. Much was learned about adaptation and settlement service provision. The research highlighted both positive and negative experiences and fed into a number of government and NGO initiatives aimed at improving the resettlement journey in New Zealand.

However, two issues remained little understood. On the one hand, we understood little about refugees' expectations immediately before resettlement and their immediate resettlement needs and experiences. On the other hand, the long term



Busy markets and life in camp conditions.

complex processes of integration, community capacity building and identity construction were unstudied. The current research programme addresses both these issues.

The study *Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Needs, Expectations and Experiences* is an internationally unique prospective cohort study of refugees before final selection and after resettlement in a third country. A small group of 33 men and women of various ages and educational levels who have undergone long term confinement in refugee camps in Nepal are taking part in the study.

They were interviewed in Nepal about what they knew and expected of life in New Zealand, have been followed up at the end of their six week orientation programme in New Zealand, and will again be contacted 18 months after their arrival from Nepal. At this point we have begun to understand how and what refugees learn of a third country before selection for resettlement and how they

approach the unprecedented changes of resettlement to a new and radically different society. We have also heard their views on the experience of the orientation programme that is provided for the first 6 weeks of their time after arrival. These findings and future analyses will help provide a sound base for New Zealand's selection and orientation preparations for its refugee quota programme, and to refine its supports for quota refugees after resettlement.

The three year study *Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives on Integration, Community and Identity* addresses the complex issues of longer term settlement. Internationally in recent years, there has been a widespread focus on the concept of integration in migration research generally and to a limited extent in recent studies of refugees. However, the concept of 'integration' is complex and much debated with disagreement about what constitutes integration and how best to measure successful integration. While the complexities and disagreements



Women continue the industrious practising of traditional crafts.

about the concept of 'integration' are acknowledged, the *Quota Refugees Ten Years On* study accepts the definition of Atfield et al.<sup>1</sup>

- Integration is a two-way process: it involves adjustment and participation on the part of the host society as well as the newcomer;
- Integration is a non-linear process: integration may be fractured and integration experiences in one area can sit alongside continued exclusion in other areas;
- Integration is a subjective process: perceptions are central to the process of integration, and therefore it is important to explore refugees' own experiences of the integration process.

The *Quota Refugees Ten Years On* research programme draws on a number of models of integration. One key focus of the study is to examine the dynamic inter-relationships between and across the various domains of integration, such as health, employment, social networks, and discrimination, which are little understood. These analyses will help identify factors that act as barriers or facilitators to successful integration.

The Quota Refugees Ten Years On study adopts the participative approach of the 2004 study *Refugee Voices* to ensure the research meets the needs of refugee communities in New Zealand. A key to gaining input from a wide range of communities and organisations has been the establishment of an advisory group, which includes former refugees, NGOs and government agencies working in the refugee sector. This group has shaped both the research objectives and methods of the programme. On top of this we have also set up a reference group of interested individuals and organisations,

so that a wider range of people can have input into the study.

The study takes a multi-method research approach. The main data collection method will be a face-to-face survey of 500-750 people who arrived in New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme between 1993 and 1999. During this period, Iraq, Somalia, Vietnam and Ethiopia made up 80% of all refugee Quota arrivals in New Zealand but other nationalities will also be included in the survey. The survey questionnaire was developed through an extensive review of the literature and through interviews and focus groups with former refugees, to gain their perspectives on the areas to include. In 2010 we aim to use qualitative methods again to explore in-depth some aspects of long-term settlement outcomes.

In our pilot of the survey, in late 2009, we explored how best to empower participants to make a supported and informed decision about taking part in the study. As part of this, research participants were able to select which interviewer they wanted to work with, and were provided with choices in terms of age, gender, nationality and language. We also translated the information sheets and consent forms into the four most common languages (Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese and Amharic) and participants were also



The Quota Refugees Ten Years On advisory group.

able to choose the language they would like to conduct the interview in. This same approach is now being used for the main study that went into the field in December 2009 and that will run until mid-2010.

To take into account the different needs and contexts of these people, interviewers have been drawn from the main centres of refugee resettlement in New Zealand and are speakers of the main languages of our research participants. Interviewers are provided with extensive training and on-going supervision. A number of the interviewers are from refugee backgrounds themselves and have therefore been able to bring personal experience of resettlement to the study. Furthermore, the hiring, training and supervision of interviewers from the refugee communities is intended to build community expertise and capacity.

The research studies currently underway are designed as research with, rather than merely about, refugees. Not only will the methodologies contribute to capacity building among refugee communities, but the analyses will provide a strong evidence base for New Zealand to improve its settlement services for refugees both offshore and onshore through quick feedback loops to policy and delivery arms of government refugee services. Because the study designs allow prospective and retrospective study of the mechanisms of both short term and long term outcomes, the results will not only be uniquely useful for New Zealand policy, but the research will also benchmark New Zealand internationally as a contributor to issues of academic debate and significance.

For further information see IMSED Research at [www.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.immigration.govt.nz)

1. Atfield, G., Brahmabhatt, K., & O'Toole, T., (2007). *Refugees' Experiences of Integration*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham and the Refugee Council

# Family reunification in New Zealand

## From ChangeMakers Refugee Forum

Rahma is an elderly Somali woman who came to New Zealand in 1999 under the UNHCR refugee quota programme. Rahma was forced to flee Somalia in 1988 after most of her family were killed, and she lived in Hartisheik, a refugee camp in Ethiopia for 11 years, caring for her orphaned nephews and nieces. After her arrival in New Zealand, and despite poor health, Rahma spent every day fighting to bring her three surviving nephews and a niece, whom she considers to be her children, to join her in New Zealand. In 2008, nearly ten years after Rahma's arrival in New Zealand, they were finally reunited in Wellington.

Without a team of professionals to help Rahma, this family reunion may never have happened. A psychologist and a volunteer lawyer met with Rahma frequently over nearly five years, supporting her through her anguish over such a long separation from her loved ones, and helping with the complex immigration process. A Wellington-based charitable trust paid for the application fees and medicals required by Immigration New Zealand, and then for the airfares to bring these four young adults from Ethiopia to New Zealand.

This team approach by professionals working with refugees in Wellington has significantly improved the chances of refugee families being reunited. It was also the catalyst for four NGOs in Wellington, with extensive experience in refugee family reunification, joining forces to seek to improve existing family reunification policies and practices.

These four NGOs are:

**Wellington Refugees As Survivors Trust** is the mental health service for refugees suffering from torture and trauma. Professional clinical and community staff deal on a daily basis with refugees in need of support and help to deal with responses to resettlement which includes unresolved past trauma, separation from their family members, and general resettlement challenges.

The **Wellington Community Law Centre** has provided free legal advice since 1997 to refugees seeking to be reunited with family members. Approximately ten refugees visit the Law Centre each week seeking advice on family reunification, and more than 140 immigration cases (mainly related to family reunification) are dealt with by volunteers and staff at any one time.

The **Refugee Family Reunification Trust** is a private charity providing financial assistance to former refugees living in Wellington who need help with the costs (mainly airfares) associated with bringing qualifying family members to join them. Over the past eight years, the Trust has helped reunite more than 125 refugee families, including Rahma's family.

**ChangeMakers Refugee Forum Inc** is a pan-refugee development agency representing the interests of 13 refugee communities in the Wellington region. One of its key roles is to work with government and non-government agencies to ensure that the issues relating to refugee resettlement are effectively addressed.

As a first step, these four NGOs worked together to prepare a discussion document titled *Refugee Family Reunification in Wellington*. The following is a summary of the key recommendations and suggestions.

The four NGOs first put forward the following position statement for refugee

family reunification in New Zealand, and expressed the hope that the Government accepts this statement as a foundation for future discussions on refugee family reunification:

*"The family is the cornerstone of society. A healthy society must value, support and protect families – while recognising that the concept of "family" can have different meanings in different contexts and cultures.*

*The forced separation of family members undermines the integrity of the family unit. It can have serious individual and social consequences – especially where separation involves children.*

*Refugees who come to New Zealand, whether as part of our commitment to our international obligations or through other avenues, typically suffer family separation – often in extreme circumstances. As a consequence, they often struggle to fully integrate, participate in, and contribute to, their new communities.*

*Our aim is to assist refugees who have settled in New Zealand to reunite with their families. This includes promoting immigration policy and procedures which recognise and accommodate the basic human need and right of former refugees to be with family."*

The four NGOs work with refugees on a daily basis, and recognise that reunification with family members is a key part of the successful refugee resettlement process. Preoccupation with the predicament of family members left behind in difficult circumstances, and the time and energy committed to seeking reunification, can be substantial barriers to resettlement. Concern for family overseas often impacts negatively on mental and physical health, and compromises the person's ability to focus on language development, education, and employment. Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust has found that its clients' well-being and

assimilation into their new country improves markedly once they are reunited with family. In fact, most clients no longer required their services once the family is back together again.

One of the major problems identified is that New Zealand family reunification policy narrowly defines "family", and takes no account of wider understandings of "family" from other cultures, nor of the obligations and emotional bonds created through the consequences of war and displacement. This means that where there is an interdependent family group, such as a parent with an adult child and grandchildren, or two widowed sisters living together raising their children, only some family members may be eligible to come to New Zealand. As a result, further fragmentation of the family can occur, leaving some members behind in an even more vulnerable position. A wider definition of "family" has therefore been recommended.

The discussion document highlights flaws in existing policies applicable to refugees, and in particular in relation to the Refugee Family Support Category, and recommends that an urgent review be undertaken to ensure that:

- the objectives of the policy are met;

- the numbers waiting in the queue are manageable;
- the length of time waiting in the queue is realistic (currently there is a two or three year wait for selection, and a further two or three years to complete the immigration process);
- the target number of 300 family members of refugees entitled to enter New Zealand under this category each year is met.

Other key policy recommendations include the making of more strategic decisions about the composition of the UNHCR refugee quota programme, particularly the family reunion component, to assist with cases where family separation is a significant and persistent barrier to effective resettlement. To help address the current backlog of applications under the Refugee Family Support Category, the discussion document suggests that one year's 750 places under the UNHCR refugee quota programme be applied solely to family reunification.

The discussion document notes that under current policy some former refugees simply have no avenues available to enable them to be reunited with their families. The implementation of a genuine humanitarian programme is

recommended to address refugee family reunification needs where no other policy is applicable.

The discussion document also comments in some depth on operational issues within Immigration New Zealand which seriously impact on the processing of applications from refugees seeking to be reunited with family members. It is recommended that a number of processes and procedures within Immigration New Zealand be urgently reviewed to improve standards, efficiency and customer service, within an overall context of understanding the special needs of refugees.

Finally, a lack of consistently available resettlement support services for refugees arriving under different programmes is identified, and it is recommended that all refugees should be entitled to a re-establishment grant, clear benefit entitlements, access to a social worker, housing assistance, student allowances and English classes.

One of the main recommendations of the discussion document is the establishment of a working group (including representatives from refugee communities, NGOs and the government) to address the issues and concerns raised, and to report back to the Minister of Immigration.

The purpose of the discussion document, *Refugee Family Reunification in Wellington*, is to help to identify, and to offer solutions to, major barriers to successful refugee family reunification in New Zealand. It is intended to provide a basis for ongoing discussion. The document has been sent to New Zealand's Minister of Immigration, Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman. It has also been sent to Richard Towle, Regional Representative, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

It is available online at <http://www.crf.org.nz/node/40>.

UNHCR/B.Szandelszky



## Tracking the health & wellbeing of refugees in New Zealand

### From UNHCR Canberra

Reading through the case files of the 750 refugees New Zealand takes in each year under its quota system is a stark reminder of man's inhumanity to man, according to Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Centre for Refugee Education manager Maria Hayward.

"The stories contain details of such huge losses and tragedy; they make you cry every time," she says.

While the extreme circumstances from which refugees have escaped leave an indelible mark on their lives, the settlement services available once they reach New Zealand are also vital in shaping their future in their new country.

In November 2009 AUT and the Refugee Council of New Zealand hosted the Looking Back & Moving Forward – Refugee Health and Wellbeing Conference to explore the last 20 years of refugee resettlement and look at issues likely to impact on refugee resettlement in the future.

Keynote speakers at the event included Minister of Immigration Dr Jonathon Coleman, UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle, Director of the University of NSW Centre for Refugee Research Eileen Pittaway, and Changemakers Refugee Forum Executive Chair Adam Awad.

Mr Towle presented UNHCR's global perspective, noting that the total global resettlement capacity for UNHCR-referred refugees is currently around 76,000 places – around a tenth of the current demand.

Towle said it was critical that resources committed to the support of refugees in areas such as health, education, housing and social support are kept at an adequate level even in the current tough financial times.

He also noted it was vital that refugee resettlement intakes retained their integrity and were "racially blind" and purely about the protection of refugees.

"With such a small number of resettlement places compared to



Keynote speakers and organizers of the Conference (left to right): occupational therapy lecturer Shoba Nayar, Refugees as Survivors Chair Gary Poole, Eileen Pittaway, Richard Towle, Adam Awad, Refugee Council President Nagalingham Rasalingham, AUT Pro Vice Chancellor Max Abbott, AUT Chancellor Paul Reeves, and Maria Hayward.

demand, it is vital that those most acutely in need are offered those resettlement places," Towle said.

Ms Hayward's presentation on "a refugee-centred approach to resettlement education: power sharing, inclusivity and critical analysis" was a chance to look at policy and practice but also to look at the human face of refugees in New Zealand and address misconceptions about the country's diverse refugee population.

Following up on the theme of inclusiveness, panels featuring refugees who have been settled in New Zealand included speakers from Somalia, Myanmar, the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, who shared insights into the challenges they faced both in escaping persecution in their homeland and in adjusting to life in New Zealand.

Hayward says AUT's Centre for Refugee Education has played a critical role in the resettlement of refugees and

witnessed significant changes in the past 20 years, for instance the broadening of the ethnicities coming to New Zealand under the quota programme.

"The demographic make-up of refugees has changed dramatically. In the early years there might have been three different ethnicities in a group, now we often have as many as 12 and we need to be inclusive of that diversity," she says.

All of these factors – worldwide demand, post-arrival services, and a more diverse group of arrivals – make settlement and resettlement an extremely complex area.

The 2009 Conference was an excellent opportunity to explore those issues through discussion with academics, service providers and refugee communities so that the next 20 years of refugee resettlement in New Zealand is even more successful than the first.

# Realities of settlement in the context of Papua New Guinea

## From Walpurga Engbrecht UNHCR Country Representative, PNG

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is host to some 10,000 West Papuan refugees and 20 non-Melanesian asylum-seekers and refugees. While the different protection regimes applicable to West Papuan and non-Melanesian refugees impact on their possibilities for settlement, so do the living conditions offered in rural and urban settings. The following article looks more closely at the situation of the West Papuan refugees in lowara-East Awin, in the border and urban areas, as well as of the non-Melanesian asylum-seekers and refugees living in cities in PNG.

West Papuan refugees have been arriving in PNG since the 1960s, with the largest influx, estimated to be between 12,000 and 15,000 persons, occurring between 1984 and 1986. They originate from all areas of West Papua with the majority coming from Merauke, Mindiptana, Wamena and Jayapura districts. In 2000, another group of 500 West Papuan refugees arrived.

In 1996, the Government of PNG adopted a so-called "Limited Integration Policy", granting permissive residency permits (PRPs) to those West Papuan refugees who agreed to reside in East Awin for at least six months. PRPs provide West Papuans with access to a higher standard of protection than non-Melanesians. PRP holders can engage in business activities, enrol in PNG schools and tertiary institutions, access health facilities and enjoy, albeit restricted, freedom of movement. Restrictions include not residing in the border areas of Western and Sepik Provinces, not engaging in political activities, not having voting rights and not having the right to membership of political parties. PRPs are valid for three years. Naturalisation is available to those PRP holders who have established presence in PNG for eight years, and to the second generation of children born in PNG.

But how does this Limited Integration Policy affect the daily lives of the West Papuan refugees in PNG? At this stage, some 2,300 refugees live in East Awin, some

5,000 in the border areas between PNG and Indonesia and another 2,700 refugees in urban areas.

## West Papuan refugees in lowara-East Awin (East Awin)

East Awin is a 6,000 hectare piece of land in a remote part of PNG's Western Province allocated by the PNG Government which allowed for the relocation of West Papuan refugees from the initial makeshift camps near the border where they had crossed. The location of the East Awin refugee settlement is one of the most remote refugee settlements in the world, only accessible by boat from Kiunga town to the Rampsite, about one hour upstream on the Fly River followed by a strenuous six to twelve-hour ride (depending on the weather and road conditions) by agricultural tractor-trailer or trucks to the camp. East Awin's administration centre is located approximately 120 kilometres from the Indonesian/PNG border and 46 kilometres from the Fly River.

There are 13 major settlements – 12 settlements housing refugees, one hosting local residents – located along a 30 kilometre section of the Kiunga to Nomad road. The Government has bought the land and based on a land survey which is currently being undertaken, will provide the land to the families on a 99-year-lease basis.

Land provides a foundation that allows refugees to earn an income by cultivating rubber, fruits and vegetables. However, the rubber trees will only be ready for harvest in four or five years. Meanwhile, the residents have to see how the nascent fruit and vegetable delivery project and the peanut processing project can flourish. The success of the two projects depend on a functioning road and the availability of transportation means, both which are challenges due to the remoteness of the villages, harsh weather conditions and lack of maintenance structures at this stage. Other factors limiting productivity are the poor soil conditions and limited arable land which often forces the refugees to establish gardens outside

lowara's boundaries creating tensions with the local population.

While conditions in general in terms of shelter, education, and health are equal to the standards enjoyed by the local populations living nearby,<sup>1</sup> access to safe water and adequate sanitary facilities remains a concern. Further, the lack of justice services, protection structures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, shortfalls in child protection systems and limited support to vulnerable households are areas which need further attention.

Where refugees after residence of eight years in PNG would like to apply for PNG citizenship, the high fee of Kina 10,000 (approximately USD 4,000) makes this option only available for very few refugees.

## West Papuans in border areas

West Papuans at the border have never relocated to East Awin for at least six months, as required by the Limited Integration Policy. Therefore, their stay has never been regularized, they are not supported by the Government and do not hold PRPs which would provide them access to services and assistance.

Consequently, these settlements in the border areas have only limited health and education services available as provided by various church groups. Where elementary schools exist, they are not registered with the authorities. Aid posts are existent but health staff has only very basic knowledge and drugs are often not available because of delivery delays. Refugees have basic stilt housing available made out of bush materials. Given the pollution resulting from the Ok Tedi copper mine, access to safe water is a major concern. Further, the lack of proper sanitary facilities combined with flooding of the majority of the settlements turns the area into sewage and makes housing, aid posts and schooling inaccessible. The refugees do not have a regular income because of limited access to land coupled with infertile soil and the pollution of the Fly river (from the Ok Tedi river).

## West Papuans in urban settings

West Papuans who live in urban areas but never relocated to East Awin for the required six months do not hold permissive residency permits and are registered. In addition, there are other refugees in urban areas who held permits but never renewed them, not fully understanding the legal implications. While there is the general understanding that they are in principle refugees, the authorities do not feel responsible for them in providing them with proper documentation, necessary services or other support. With no official access to the labour market they have to rely on subsistence farming, but as land is scarce in urban areas refugees are often subject to exploitation.

For example, one particular group bought land but it turned out that the person from whom they bought the land was not the real land owner. There is a culture to rely on verbal agreements as for the use of land. However, where land disputes are brought before courts, titles as recorded in the registry count and not what has been verbally agreed. This resulted in their eviction and they are currently living in a makeshift accommodation – basic floor on stilts and tarpaulin as cover which does not provide adequate protection against the elements. Sanitary conditions are also inadequate. While the Government has named some other locations, actual allocation of land has never happened.

## Non-Melanesian asylum-seekers and refugees

By end of August 2009, there were 20 asylum-seekers and refugees registered with UNHCR, living in urban settings (Port Moresby, Daru and Vanimo). But the possibilities for settlement are limited and negatively impacted by the lack of a proper legal and regulatory framework and the upholding of seven reservations to the 1951 Convention. While the “Limited Integration Policy” allows for the regularization of West Papuan refugees and their access to documentation and services, non-Melanesian asylum-seekers and refugees remain without any government protection and assistance. At this stage, asylum-seekers and refugees rely entirely on the assistance provided by UNHCR (basic shelter, modest financial subsistence allowance and support for access to health services). Furthermore, non-Melanesian asylum-seekers and refugees are particularly vulnerable to xenophobia and racism amongst the local population, heightened after the start of attacks against Asian shop owners in April 2009.

## Successful settlement

Creating conditions for successful settlement is paramount to assist refugees to integrate into society. Refugees need a clarified legal status and proper documentation. They need access to land and the labour market and should be given economic opportunities, as well as ensured availability of education, health, protection (including for women, children and groups with specific needs) and justice services. Comparing the four refugee groups, it becomes apparent that

only the refugee group in Iowara-East Awin and those in urban areas who hold PRPs have an option to settle successfully.

Access to land is a real challenge in the PNG context. 97 per cent of the land is owned by the community and unless the Government is able to buy land, as has been the case for the group in East Awin, refugees do not have access to it. While many West Papuans have integrated into their communities in urban areas, the lack of written agreements on the use of land make them vulnerable to evictions.

Some of the current obstacles to successful settlement also lie in the current legal framework in PNG which actually creates three different refugee groups: a) West Papuan refugees who relocated to East Awin and therefore have access to PRPs and services; b) West Papuan refugees who did not relocate to East Awin and whose status has not been regularised with no access to documentation and basic services; and c) non-Melanesian refugees who do not have access to most basic rights (e.g. legal status, labour market).

To allow for the successful settlement of the different refugee groups, it would be vital for the PNG Government to create a comprehensive protection framework<sup>2</sup> and thus create, for all refugee groups, the same status and rights and eliminate discrimination.

1. It is important to note that the service delivery is quite in a poor state in Papua New Guinea.  
2. The creation of an adequate protection framework would include: adoption of PNG refugee policy; withdrawal of the current seven reservations to the 1951 Convention; broadening of the Limited Integration Policy; revision of the Migration Act, coupled with creation of refugee status determination and reception procedures; and waiver or reduction of the fee of Kina 10,000 for the grant of PNG citizenship.



The entrance to Iowara-East Awin in PNG.