THE ROLE OF REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN SETTLEMENT
An annotated bibliography

June 2013

The resources outlined below were attained through an internet and academic journal search of Australian and international research relating to the role of refugee community organisations and structures on the settlement experiences of refugees. Summaries include the aim and purpose of the research, methodology and major findings as they relate particularly to the role of refugee community organisations in settlement.¹ The list is in alphabetical order according to the first author.


This study investigates the South Sudanese community’s perspective of settlement and the challenges facing them in their settlement journey in the western suburbs of Melbourne. The objective of the study was to investigate the community’s understanding of settlement based on their experiences and to ascertain whether the South Sudanese community’s understanding of settlement is different from the government’s settlement policy.

Methodology:
• Qualitative research using open-ended questions on key settlement themes.
• Six in-depth interviews with members of the South Sudanese community living in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Key findings:
• Establishing community groups is fundamentally important for refugee groups that come from a communal society base. Having connections with people from the same background is important in terms of networking, participation in social events and helping vulnerable community members.
• The South Sudanese are a communal community; friends and relatives play significant roles in supporting newly arrived members. Participants indicated that help from friends and relatives made their lives easier when they first arrived in Australia.

¹ Text in this annotated bibliography is mostly direct or paraphrased quotations from the literature, even where quotation marks have not been used. The content of this annotated bibliography should not be cited without referring to the original literature.
Integration has become both a key policy objective related to the resettlement of refugees and other migrants and a matter of significant public discussion. Coherent policy development and productive public debate are, however, both threatened by the fact that the concept of integration is used with widely differing meanings. This paper identifies elements central to perceptions of what constitutes ‘successful’ integration.

Methodology:
An inductive methodology was adopted, comprising four discrete elements: documentary and conceptual analysis; fieldwork in settings of refugee settlement; secondary analysis of cross-sectional survey data; and verification.

Key findings:
• The framework proposed by the authors specifies ten core domains that shape understandings of the concept of integration. The domains cover achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups in the community; and barriers to such connection, particularly stemming from lack of linguistic and cultural competences and from fear and instability.
• Ager and Strang find that social connection plays a fundamental role in driving the process of integration at a local level. Local respondents commonly identified social connection to be for them the defining feature of an integrated community.
• Many respondents in the study identified ‘belonging’ as the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community. This involved links with family, committed friendships and a sense of respect and shared values. Such shared values did not deny diversity, difference and one’s identity within a particular group, but provided a wider context within which people had a sense of belonging.
• The concept of social capital has been an influential one in identifying assets associated with social connection and trust. Theorists have distinguished between three differing forms of social connection: social bonds (with family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other forms of group), social bridges (with other communities) and social links (with the structures of the state). While these concepts are contested, they offer significant explanatory value in the context of local integration. The authors’ findings suggest that, for the cohort of refugees studied, involvement with one’s own ethnic group (bonding capital) influenced ‘quality of life’ independently of involvement with the broader community (bridging capital).
• Many refugees interviewed in the course of this fieldwork valued proximity to family because this enabled them to share cultural practices and maintain familiar patterns of relationships. Such connection played a large part in them feeling ‘settled’.
• The establishment of connection with ‘like-ethnic groups’ has various benefits contributing towards effective integration. The authors cite Duke et al. (1999, p.119) regarding the importance of refugee community organisations, summarising that these organisations: “provide a ‘voice for refugees’, contact points for isolated individuals, expertise in dealing with refugee issues and flexible and sensitive responses to the needs of their target populations. They also provide cultural and social activities which offer refugees the chance to maintain their own customs and religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their traditions and exchange news from their home country”.
• The structure of the framework proposed by Ager and Strang reinforces a notion that processes supporting the maintenance of ethnic identity (especially ‘social bonds’) in no way logically limit wider integration into society (through the establishment of ‘social bridges’ and other means).
This article proposes a conceptual framework for psychosocial intervention in complex emergencies, seeking to relate together diverse approaches to community support within a single schema. The framework identifies three core domains with respect to which the resources of communities, the impact of conflict and means of intervention can be conceptualised. These three domains of human capacity, social ecology and culture and values are illustrated with respect to the post-conflict setting of communities on the Tigray-Eritrea border.

**Methodology:**

The Psychosocial Working Group (2005) was established in 2000 to bring together five international NGOs (Save the Children US, International Rescue Committee, Medecins sans Frontieres – Holland, Christian Children’s Fund and Mercy Corps) and five research groups (from QMUC, Oxford, Columbia, Harvard and U Penn) to formulate a framework for coherent action, evaluation and development for this developing field.

**Key findings:**

- The framework proposed in this article suggests that ‘unlocking’ resources within communities that have been under-deployed (due to marginalization, for instance) provides one technical basis for intervention.
- Social bonds are argued by the authors to be principally defensive and protective in function, a key element in enhancing wellbeing. In contrast, social bridges are required for economic and political development. Such ideas prompt a ‘phased approach’ to fostering the development of social capital in refugee settings: social bonds provide the initial focus as a basis for security; once these are established social bridges may be strengthened to support broader social and economic development.

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The Settlement Outcomes of New Arrivals (SONA) study aimed to obtain a better understanding of the settlement outcomes of new arrivals (past 5 years) to Australia and what variables contribute to their successful settlement. While the focus of the study was on humanitarian settlement, family and skilled migrants were also included for comparative purposes. The research explores the relationship between settlement, defined as “level of comfort of living in Australia” and variables in areas such as education, interaction with government, employment, income, accommodation, English proficiency, regional location and social connection.

**Methodology:**

The primary methodology for the SONA study was quantitative analysis of data gathered through a self-completion mail survey sent to addresses identified through the DIAC Settlement Database. Over 20,000 humanitarian, family and skilled migrants were invited to participate in the study. The invited sample comprised 60% humanitarian entrants, 20% skilled migrants and 20% family migrants. Criteria used to select records for the study were: humanitarian, skilled and family visa applicants where permanent residency had been granted; visa was granted 12-60 months from date of extraction or the migrant arrived in Australia in that same period, whichever date better reflected 12-60 months experience of living in Australia; primary applicants only and the applicant was 18 years or older. More than 8,500 humanitarian entrants and migrants responded.

**Key findings:**

- Where the Australian Government defines successful outcomes for clients in terms of systemic outcomes (social participation, economic well being, level of independence and personal...
wellbeing), humanitarian entrants define successful settlement in terms of life outcomes (personal happiness and community connectedness).

- The most frequently cited services accessed by humanitarian entrants in the previous six months were: translators or interpreters, cultural organisation/community groups, migrant resource centres, religious organisations and citizens advice bureau or community legal centres.
- This study found that humanitarian entrants are as well connected in their own communities as other migrants. However, they are much more likely than other migrant streams to connect through their religious or cultural groups or through their children’s schools.


Beginning with a review of studies that point out the shortcomings of the sick immigrant and healthy immigrant paradigms, this article argues that an interaction model that takes into account both predisposition and socio-environmental factors, provides the best explanatory framework for understanding the health of immigrants and refugees in Canada.

**Key findings:**

- The author argues that immigrants are not “passive tools of fate”, but “people who respond to the challenge of resettlement with varying degrees of skill and success”. Understanding the psychological resources immigrants muster in order to deal with the demands of resettlement is identified as a major research gap.
- Reporting on research, the author argues that both hospital and community-based studies of the risk of mental disorder in immigrant and minority communities support the concept that “a like-ethnic community of significant size confers mental health advantage”.


This book explores the social and economic settlement of refugees and how this is affected by the characteristics and experiences that refugees bring with them on arrival to Britain, attitudes and aspirations about the migration, access to economic and social institutions, the presence of community organisations and social networks and structural factors that relate to refugee policies.

**Methodology:**

- This chapter explores the settlement of refugees in Britain through a case study of refugees from Somalia, Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) living in the London Borough of Newham, a local authority area in east London.
- Sixty interviews were carried out with members of each community and respondents were selected using snowball sampling techniques.

**Key findings:**

- Bloch argues that, because many refugees arrive in the host society without kinship ties and support networks, the role of community organisations is critical in the early stages of settlement.
- Refugee community groups and organisations tend to emerge to fill the gaps in mainstream provision.
- The functions undertaken by refugee community organisations are diverse. Activities include: the provision of information, advice and advocacy, mediation between clients and other agencies, interpretation and translation, opportunities for social, cultural and political activities, the chance to meet and exchange news from home as well as education and training.
The data show the importance and even dependency on community organisations, especially among those who do not have sufficient command of the English language to deal with bureaucratic situations.

Refugee community organisations have a social role in helping to alleviate the isolation that can be caused by exile. In addition, they fill a gap for those without kinship networks by providing general information.

Community organisations have the very important role of facilitating social, cultural and political activities for forced migrants.

The longer respondents had been in Britain, the more likely it was that they participated in a refugee community organisation (‘group’). Just over half (56 per cent) of those who had been in Britain for less than two years attended a group. Eighty one per cent of those who had been in Britain for between two years and five years and 79 per cent of those who had been in Britain for five years or more attended a community-based group.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents who saw Britain as their home (72 per cent) attended a group compared to 58 per cent of those who did not see Britain as their home. Those who attended groups were more likely to find it easy or very easy to meet British people. This suggests that they were more settled in life in Britain.

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Motivated by an interest in organisations as vehicles of political incorporation, this article investigates what promotes organisational capacity in immigrant communities. The focus is on the influence of government support on immigrant organising: do supportive government policies crowd out local organisations, or do such policies facilitate the establishment and persistence of community organisations?

**Methodology:**

147 qualitative interviews and documentary information from the Portuguese and Vietnamese communities in metropolitan Boston and Toronto.

**Key findings:**

- Organisations play a key role in political incorporation. Organisations act as “a representative voice on behalf of a group, they mobilise individuals for collective action and, through participation in organisational activities and decision-making, they teach people skills necessary for political participation, thereby acting as ‘crucibles of democracy’.”
- State intervention in community organisations can foster immigrants’ and refugees’ ability to establish and to sustain those organisations. Government officials can, for example, provide technical assistance, providing immigrant leaders with information on how to register as a charitable organisation or guidance in writing up a constitution.
- Settlement and multiculturalism policies provide material and symbolic resources that immigrants can use to build large and diverse organisational infrastructure. These findings challenge arguments inspired by de Tocqueville’s image of self-sufficient and self-started civic associations. Instead, the evidence suggests that migrants benefit from government involvement.
- One implication is that “a helping hand might be necessary for full participation in a polity’s civic and political life” and that, by facilitating community building, host societies can encourage migrants’ participatory citizenship in their new home.

This article shows how, despite differences in economic integration, Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians living in the Quebec City area (Canada) established three distinct ethnic communities in the 1980s. It explains how the specific structure of each community is either linked to the presence among refugees of relatively well-educated and economically successful individuals or to the activation of core cultural values, such as religion and sustained interpersonal relations.

**Methodology:**
Qualitative study using sociological survey and life history methodology. The researchers surveyed 80-90% of the Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian community members living in Quebec City in 1987 and collected life histories of 67 individuals.

**Key findings:**
- By setting up, in the host country, social networks based on both kinship and friendship and by establishing ethnic associations and religious institutions, immigrants are able to respond quite adequately to their most important sociocultural needs within a community that mediates between them and the larger society.
- Such networks and organisations can only appear if two basic conditions are met: 1) the presence among the immigrants of a relatively large proportion of well-integrated individuals, able to serve as mediators, and/or the sharing of deeply ingrained core cultural values; 2) some support from the home country and/or the host society.
- Economic integration, as measured by level of employment and occupational adjustment, is a key factor in the organisation of Indochinese communities in Quebec City.
- Community organisation may also be based on patterns and values that are culturally-specific.

Fozdar F and Hartley L (2012) *Refugees in Western Australia: Settlement and Integration*, Perth: Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

This study explores settlement issues for humanitarian entrants in the first four years after arrival with a focus on differences for those who had been in Australia for one to two years compared to two to four years.

**Methodology:**
- Research was undertaken in Western Australia with 76 humanitarian entrants and 22 service providers.
- The research involved a cross-sectional investigation of the settlement of humanitarian entrants to Western Australia one to two years after their arrival, compared to two to four years post-arrival through a series of interviews facilitated by bicultural research assistants and a photographic representation exercise, plus focus groups with service providers.

**Key findings:**
- The authors found that “friends, family and ethnic/religious communities are important in the settlement process at all stages, often providing practical assistance as well as emotional support”.
- Many research participants identified friends and family rather than formal service providers as the main sources of assistance, regardless of whether the challenge had been material or otherwise. Most had provided generalised support, including emotional support, assistance in engaging with local systems and material support in some instances such as being guarantor for rentals, loaning money, providing childcare and so on.
• In terms of formal organisations, some participants were very active in their community or religious associations. Others were unaware of such groups or uninterested in participating. The authors comment that this is noteworthy, as “it is often assumed that humanitarian entrants have access to and will choose to engage with ethno-specific organisations”.

• Religion was identified in this study as a strong unifying factor bringing people together and providing an important structural source for friendship development and support networks. This held for members of different faiths, most commonly Muslims and Christians. Religion appeared to serve an important function in providing a site for socialising and information sharing and also a source of moral education for children.

• The authors conclude that a focus on empowerment and fostering the building of social networks and capacity would assist integration.


The economic integration of refugees is a primary goal of refugee resettlement policy in the USA. This paper describes the occupational adaptation of Vietnamese refugees to electronics technician jobs. It focuses on the role of the refugee community in both shaping members’ job choice and in helping its members use their occupational attainment as a source of pride.

**Methodology:**

The research was conducted in Santa Clara County, California in 1978-1979 with the Vietnamese refugee community. Most of the data were gathered through the author attending a six-month job training course with a group of Vietnamese refugees that had been in the United States between three years and six months.

**Key findings:**

• The author argues that role definitions, as well as values, are “refracted through the prism of the ethnic community”. The refugees’ ethnic community (including both an established ethnic group and other new arrivals) helps members redefine occupational roles and recreate an occupational hierarchy

• Refugee community plays an active role in its own resettlement through informal self-help networks which exist between friends and relatives. Through these networks refugees determine appropriate jobs and help each other find employment.

• When community support for a job is strong and mutual assistance associations form, refugees set up activities such as job placement and training programs.

Gifford SM, Correa-Velez I and Sampson R (2009) *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*, Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre

This report describes the key findings of a longitudinal study (2004 to 2008) investigating the experiences of settlement among a group of 120 recently arrived young people with refugee backgrounds settling in Melbourne. The study’s overall aim was to identify the key social determinants of wellbeing and settlement and to describe the lived experiences of these young people as they shape their lives in Australia.

**Methodology:**

• The longitudinal study began in 2004 and young people were recruited through three Melbourne English Language Schools (ELS) that had high numbers of students with refugee backgrounds.

• Data collection involved a series of activities carried out in school, home and community settings, on a yearly basis over four years.
• Participants were given a ‘settlement journal’ in which they recorded their experiences through drawings, photos and answering questions. This was facilitated by research assistants and interpreters/bicultural workers in the classroom, at participants’ homes, or public libraries.
• In the fourth year follow-up, a minimum set of data was collected either over the phone or in a brief meeting with participants.

Key findings:
• The study identifies optimism and high self-esteem as strengths displayed by refugee youth on arrival.
• “Belonging to a community is one of the most important social determinants of wellbeing among young people in general and social inclusion is a key determinant of successful settlement for youth from refugee backgrounds both in the short and longer term.”
• The authors cite research that shows that having a strong supportive relationship to one’s ethnic community “is important both in the early years of settlement and for longer term integration”.


This paper explores ethnic community formation and social capital among six groups: Germans, Dutch, Hungarians, Poles, Italians and Greeks. It argues that social capital within the family is particularly important in overcoming deficiencies in other forms of capital; although it can only be successfully utilised when close relations exist between parents and children.

Key findings:
• The findings of this paper suggest that ethnic community formation has served as a positive strategy for immigrants in overcoming social isolation and economic difficulties by providing employment opportunities and a sense of familial surroundings within their own ethnic group.
• Social capital is utilised more effectively by groups with stronger cultural boundaries and a collective sense of identity.
• The author argues that ethnicity can be considered “a distinct form of social capital which is constructed from one’s cultural endowments and includes obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms”.
• An ethnic community provides immigrants with a sense of familiarity and protects them from discrimination and furthermore “provides the second generation with alternative economic and social resources”.

Hugo G (2011) Economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants, Canberra: Department of Immigration and Citizenship

This study assessed the scale and nature of the economic, civic and social contributions of humanitarian entrants over a longer term perspective, incorporating the contributions of both first and second generation humanitarian entrants. The study notes that there are three areas that will be crucial to Australia’s future prosperity: population, participation and productivity and that an assessment of the contribution of humanitarian settlers must take into account these areas. The study looks at the contributions made by humanitarian entrants in four categories: (1) Impact on Australia’s population profile; (2) Labour force engagement and participation; (3) Economic contribution beyond labour force participation; and (4) Social and civic contributions.
Methodology:

- Mixed methods were used, including: quantitative analysis of data from the ABS Census and DIAC’s Settlement Database as well as an examination of earlier Australian research on the second generation of particular migrant groups.
- Quantitative and qualitative data was gathered from a survey of 649 humanitarian families recruited through migrant resource centres and other settlement agencies.
- In-depth discussions were conducted with 70 key people and organisations that provide settlement, employment and education services to humanitarian entrants.

Key findings:

- The author found that humanitarian settlers in Australia demonstrate more entrepreneurial attributes, are filling important labour shortages in the Australian economy and develop economic linkages with origin countries by sending remittances to and establishing trade networks and opportunities.
- The study also found that humanitarian settlers remit more money to their homelands than other migrant groups and that “The humanitarian diasporas play roles in their home countries which have a positive developmental impact and help to reduce poverty, particularly as remittances flow directly to families and hence can have an immediate impact in improvement of well-being at the grass roots level”.
- There are high levels of volunteering amongst humanitarian entrants which contributes significant economic and social benefits. Levels of volunteering are often underreported and underestimated; for example, much of the work humanitarian migrants do within their own communities is not recognised as voluntary work by state and commonwealth governments.
- Existing migrant communities are critical in providing support networks to new arrivals and a source of knowledge about the way things work. People move to communities where existing support networks are already established. There is a deep underestimation of the civic contribution individual refugees make with regards to supporting new arrivals within their own communities.
- Some individuals within newly arrived refugee communities are ‘over-used’ and this has important and often negative effects not just for the individuals concerned but also for the communities they represent.
- Whilst much of the early engagement of humanitarian entrants is in developing their own communities in the initial years of settlement, their engagement over time widens.
- The report argues that there is a need to shift away from the current service delivery model which key informants believe is based on a welfare paradigm. Settlement services need to entail a community empowerment model which focuses on developing the capacity of the community.
- The report recommends a line of ethno-specific funding which focuses on building capacity and addresses the needs of specific ethnic groups in a way which is economically viable. Multicultural services need to re-introduce ethno-specific principles to ensure that services are based on a combination of mainstream and ethno-specific services.


This paper questions the applicability of British Government policies for refugees and the ability of refugee groups to form communities. Kelly argues that refugee groups do form community organisations and that among refugee groups this can lead to the formation of ‘contingent communities’, which are consciously constructed as a response to British policies and practices.

Key findings:

- The role of formal organisations and associations in the settlement of immigrants and the incorporation of ethnic minorities has been examined and found to have many positive aspects.
Rex et al. (1987) found that community associations have four main functions: overcoming isolation, providing material help to community members, defending the interests of the community and promoting the community’s culture. In addition, it has been suggested that through networking and information sharing, associations can play an important role in assisting the adaptation of the community members to the host society.

- For refugees, community associations can perform many useful functions. Refugee community organisations become established by groups of refugees and these can fulfil a valuable role in providing emotional support, practical assistance and in raising awareness of the needs of the group. They can help to rebuild and reinforce a sense of belonging for people whose lives have been disrupted by exile and they can play an important role in empowering the members of the community.

- Among refugee groups there is often little group-wide organisation and a typical feature is factionalism and segmentation. There are often divisions within refugee groups based upon differences in class, politics, religion and so forth. This factionalism can inhibit attempts to create a formal association, or where an association is formed it may be unrepresentative.

- Lack of familiarity with the working of a society can hamper attempts at organisation, especially for newly arrived groups. If this is combined with an internally divided and economically disadvantaged situation, then there will often be considerable difficulty in forming and maintaining community-based organisations.

- The author uses the term ‘contingent community’ to describe a group of people who will to some extent conform to the expectations of the host society in order to gain the advantages of a formal community association, but the private face of the group remains unconstituted as a community. What is viewed from the outside as a community may in fact be a construction without the linkages and interdependence associated with communities.

- A contingent community enables members of a group to gain some of the benefits that British society gives to communities, such as financial and practical support, when the internal construction of a community is not present. However, the lack of an internally constructed community means that the continuance of the contingent community is dependant on the presence of a strong leader or leadership and the suppression of differences between members of the group.

Kenny S, Mansouri F, Smiley D and Spratt P (2005) Arabic Communities and Well-Being: Supports and Barriers to Social Connectedness, Geelong: Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights, Deakin University

This research identifies key issues in inter-cultural relations from the perspective of Arab Australians and their willingness and capacity to engage beyond their own community. Strategies conducive to bonding and bridging social capital are identified within Australian-Arabic communities and analysed in terms of their implications for facilitating social connectedness between Arab Australians and members of the wider community. The authors provide policy recommendations regarding specific initiatives that might strengthen the overall integration of Arab Australians into the wider society while at the same time validating the integrity of their culture.

Key findings:

- The study found that the Arab Australian community enjoys high levels of bonding social capital but lower levels of bridging social capital. Bonding social capital is evident in a range of different forms. The Arab Australian community is united by a common language and culture focused on close links with family and friends but exhibits a rich diversity based primarily on national origin but also on ancestry, religion and socio-economic status. Ethnic heritage, whether nationality, religion or kinship network, is a key element of self-concept for Arab Australians and a major focus of their networks of association. Religion is an important form of bonding social capital for Arab Australians and an important avenue for community participation and social connection. Arab Australians also tend to live in close proximity to each other and this is an important source of mutual support.
Social hierarchy and status are important factors underpinning trust between Arab and non-Arab Australians and are important in the promotion of bridging and bonding social capital for Arab communities. Arab Australians place their trust in family and friends, but also in high status community leaders including non-Arabic community leaders. The elderly and religious leaders in particular are granted great respect and ‘trust’.

Trusted community representatives or community workers with knowledge of both Australian and Arabic cultures and available resources, services and participative options are considered important in promoting bridging social capital.

Community-specific (rather than mainstream) service providers were trusted more by Arab Australians as providers of culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery, leading to higher rates of use of services.

Respondents enjoyed high levels of bonding social capital which is important to their wellbeing. They acknowledged participation in family life and religious and community organisations as important in facilitating social connectedness and underpinning personal and community wellbeing.

While the authors identified issues which detract the community from social connectedness including media portrayal and negative stereotypes, they found that Arab Australians sought actively to foster bridging social capital by developing links with the broader community.


This paper contextualises the goals, principles and strategies of services implementing community development initiatives with torture and trauma survivors and describes the process of developing an evaluation framework within a participatory action approach.

Methodology:

In forming an evaluation framework, the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) combined the input of refugee clients and members of a working group made up of community development workers from each agency across Australia.

21 consultations were conducted with 255 people from 20 ethnicities.

Key findings:

The survivor is central to the model which seeks to address the needs of marginalised individuals and communities and also challenge social, personal, political and economic inequalities within the broader system. Individual and family counselling is integrated with group work, community development, research, education and systemic advocacy. Recovery from the impact of torture and trauma is most effective where all aspects of the model inter-relate, bringing together therapeutic work, community development and systemic advocacy.

In harnessing community development as one strategy within an integrated approach to recovery, the authors identify the “link between participation in a strong community and subjective wellbeing” as of “fundamental importance”.

Four goals were identified as crucial to achieving a strong community and within each goal, there were community and agency priorities. In contributing to the strength of the community, consultation with client groups suggested that communities’ goals were to (i) develop a more cohesive community (‘where differences are accepted and there is respect, trust, cooperation and compassion between people in their daily interactions’, said one client); (ii) integrate with the wider Australian community (‘we need increased connection with the Australian community, an understanding and knowledge of Australian history, culture, values, rules and laws, a smoother cultural integration’, said another client); (iii) increase the level of education and employment of community members (‘community leaders and other key community members need a better understanding of the Australian systems – the social system, the legal system, the education system, the health system and the family support system’, stated another client);
and (iv) develop a more autonomous community (‘community is a group of people inspired by daily life issues who come together and solve problems in an organised way with goals for the future and community members will have the resources and power to make changes in their lives’, said another client). Agency’s goals were complementary but might be expressed in different ways. For example, the agency aims to increase the community’s (i) internal social capital (bonding); (ii) external social capital (bridging); (iii) strengths and capacities; and (iv) self-reliance.

Pittaway E and Muli C (2009) “We have a voice – hear us”: The settlement experiences of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa, Sydney: Horn of Africa Relief and Development Association and UNSW Centre for Refugee Research

This report tables the findings of a research project that sought to hear directly from refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa (HoA) of their experiences of resettlement and integration in Australia, as well as their concrete recommendations for how to better support their resettlement and integration.

Methodology:

- Community consultations and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 83 people, 37 men and 46 women, representing all countries in the HoA except Djibouti. The majority of participants live in metropolitan Sydney.
- Secondary data from parallel projects of the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research with refugees and migrants from the HoA also informed the report.

Key findings:

- The research found that the welcome refugees and migrants received from members of their own community when they initially arrive and the support they continued to receive was “undoubtedly one of the key factors in successful settlement and integration”.
- Family connections and community support were identified as critical in dealing with the loneliness that many encounter on arrival in Australia. Support from community members who understood and had survived similar refugee experiences themselves was seen as fundamental to the settlement and integration of many participants.
- The importance of communication between African communities and the wider Australian community was widely acknowledged. People talked with great sadness about the fact that they often did not feel welcome in Australia.
- Huge expectations are placed on community based organisations. They receive little funding and are often only staffed on a part time basis or by volunteers. Community organisations are expected to be the media face of their community, to respond to requests for information from a range of government departments, politicians and large non governmental organisations. They are asked to represent their communities on committees and at meetings. They also have to complete funding proposals and monitoring reports and they are expected to organise community events.
- More support needs to be made available to community based organisations to enable them to both support and represent their communities. This must include resources such as spaces to meet, funding for core functions and capacity building to allow the development of groups of confident and articulate people who can take part in debate about issues critical to their well being and the contributions that their communities can make to the broader society.
- The voices of the communities should be increasingly included in the decision making process in a significant and meaningful way, through broad based community consultation and through the appointment of additional community members to key advisory committees.

The purpose of this project and resulting report was to review the literature concerning the delivery of community aged care services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Methodology:

• Consultation with an advisory group to devise a description of the content to be included in the review.
• A systematic search of the key databases to obtain a preliminary list of relevant literature.
• Consultations with key informants to identify further literature and to highlight key themes.
• Literature review.

Key findings:

• A fundamental principle for service delivery is that a blanket approach, or single model of service delivery, may be inappropriate to meet the diversity and dynamic nature of CALD people’s needs.
• While multiple service systems and agencies do enhance consumer choice, they may also present challenges to the ease of access to services and administrative challenges.
• Mainstream services alone do not currently meet many older CALD people’s needs.
• Ethno-specific services are a vital component of service delivery models but may not be able to meet the diversity of smaller CALD groups’ needs.
• It’s not an ‘either or’: Ethno-specific, multicultural and mainstream services are all required to work in partnership to deliver a responsive and effective community aged care system.


This article reports research findings from a qualitative study of social support for immigrants and refugees in Canada, focusing on the challenges from the perspectives of service providers and policymakers in health and immigrant settlement.

Methodology:

• A multidisciplinary national research team conducted the study from 2000 to 2003 in three cities selected because of their sizable multicultural populations: Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; and Edmonton, Alberta.
• Phase 1: in-depth interviews with 60 service providers and policy makers (20 in each site); Phase 2: in-depth interviews with 120 Chinese immigrants (from Mainland China and Hong Kong) and Somali refugees (40 total in each site); and Phase 3: six focus groups with service providers and policy makers to solicit policy and program recommendations.
• Census information and settlement service reports served as a triangulation on the data collected in interviews with different participants (immigrants, refugees, service providers and policymakers). Methodological triangulation was achieved by collecting data from focus groups as well as individual interviews.

Key findings:

• “Social support is a basic determinant of health, as vital to maintaining well being as food, shelter, income and access to health care and social opportunities.”
• Most desirable for immigrants and refugees may be social support that functions as a “springboard,” not just a “safety net”, working directly in terms of social relations and indirectly by facilitating access to employment, education and other basic needs.
• Many newcomers to Canada rely on friends and family for support to overcome settlement difficulties, rather than formal health and social service organisations. During settlement, familiar sources of support such as friends and family, the existence of a like-ethnic community and a strong sense of belonging may enable newcomers to gradually enlarge their social networks and lead to help-seeking and opportunity within the wider society.
• The importance of informal supports in no way abrogates the necessity of effective formal services, which serve complimentary purposes and ensure access and equity in health care and social services.
• Emotional support is important for those experiencing isolation, enduring family separation and facing family crises. Affirmation from other immigrants is significant for giving guidance, sharing experiences and empowering newcomers to meet challenges.
• Despite the challenges and inadequacy of social supports, respondents noted that many immigrants and refugees demonstrate remarkable resilience and willingness to retrain, to share information and support with other newcomers, to work collaboratively to identify common needs and to create programs to fill service gaps.


This paper argues that for the vast majority of survivors, post-traumatic stress is a pseudo-condition, a reframing of the understandable suffering of war as a technical problem to which short-term technical solutions like counselling are applicable. There is no evidence that war-affected populations are seeking these imported approaches, which appear to ignore their own traditions, meaning systems and active priorities. One basic question in humanitarian operations is: whose knowledge is privileged and who has the power to define the problem? What is fundamental is the role of a social world, invariably targeted in today’s ‘total’ war and yet still embodying the collective capacity of survivor populations to mourn, endure and rebuild.

Key findings:
• A venerable body of literature, not least from anthropology, has shown that uprooted peoples do well or not as a function of their capacity to rebuild these sociocultural networks and a sense of community.
• The humanitarian field should go where the concerns of survivor groups direct them, towards their devastated communities and ways of life and urgent questions about rights and justice. The core issue is the role of a social world, invariably targeted in today’s ‘total’ war and yet still embodying the capacity of survivors to manage their suffering, adapt and recover on a collective basis.


This article, derived from the experiences at the University of Massachusetts Lowell’s Center for Family, Work and Community explores: (1) What innovative infrastructure developments in the newcomer community have taken place in the Massachusetts Merrimack Valley? (2) What strengths of newcomer communities typically go unrecognised by traditional approaches to community economic development? (3) What clashes in models of community economic development emerge between immigrants and planners engaging in traditional practices?
Key findings:

- The authors argue that the strengths of newcomer communities “often go unrecognised by local business and economic development professionals”. The strong family and social bonds that make possible the generation of financial capital within ethnic communities are often unacknowledged. For example, immigrants often pool their savings into an informal “rotating credit association” that is used to finance entrepreneurial members of newcomer communities.

- The concepts of social capital and newcomer communities fail to capture the nature of the struggles in these communities. For example, the difficulties of language loss, wherein elders have difficulty offering support if they speak a language that children in the family do not speak and are not learning.

- An innovative way that immigrant communities have promoted economic development is through cultural celebrations. In the case of festivals, the underlying themes of small business and economic development animate these events.

- Other examples of economic development in immigrant and refugees communities emphasise alternative ways that area immigrants access capital. Money sharing and the development of informal loan funds have propelled small business development. In addition, this small business development forges strong commercial links with suppliers from native countries. As a result, potential export links with native countries provide additional economic development opportunities.

- The concept of transnationalism is used to describe the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. While it is clear that transnational economic activities usually provide important financial support to the sending country, these same immigrants also share their economic resources, time and loyalty with their host country.

- Political conflict from the homeland can negatively impact community development efforts among immigrant communities within host cities.


This article presents research evidence in relation to a range of community and cultural questions which arise from social work practice with immigrants and refugees in Finland.

Key findings

- Strong mutual assistance and interdependence is one sociocultural phenomenon that can easily go unrecognised as one of the chief coping mechanisms of resettling persons, since such activities take place in informal circles. The diverse forms of social support which are generated in community circles provide an invaluable dimension of integration resources.

- An important and sometimes hidden function of ethnic communities is the buttressing of wider community relations. Data show that the experience of ethnic group members accumulates over time and the range of perspectives on resettlement grows more ‘rich’. The pooling of experience and perspectives across a group can also positively reinforce individual members’ outward view of the new home society. “The experience of the ethnic collectivity, when tapped, proves to be an important asset for understanding and developing inter-community relations.”

- In addition to cultural information, ethnic communities can possess important stocks of integration information.

- In ethnic groups, informal sub-structures developed spontaneously many years before formal organisation. When the circumstances of flight are still fresh, the question of ‘trust’ is uppermost. Circles must be gradually built up. In informal social circles interaction and mutual assistance invariably seem to be high. Subjects attributed this vigour of social interaction to the folk ways of their own culture. Some felt a type of solidarity with those in the same situation. It is possible that social circles of fellow countrymen gain deeper significance because of their psychosocial function.
• Social interaction moderates acculturation stress. A collective lifestyle can help individuals to cope with stress in demanding and difficult situations arising during the resettlement period.

• Relationships with countrymen extend more readily to reciprocity and interdependence of a comprehensive nature, partly because of the strong collective culture in the resettling groups.

• The vigour and stamina of organisational activity depends on a dedicated, trusted and able core, as well as a support circle of participants. The activity hinges on interests and goals that are common and compelling. The heterogeneous nature of ethnocultural communities has generally led to the founding of several organisations reflecting the diversity or divisions within the wider collectivity. This is the rule, rather than the exception, in resettling communities in other countries as well.

• Located outside of the informal circles of family and friends, ethnic organisations are concerned with aspects of resettlement and integration on behalf of the wider group and see themselves as serving a bridging function for their constituencies. Organisations can have highly pragmatic functions, for example, assistance with paper work, interpreting and so on. Education and instruction programs run by organisations include community seminars on childcare/child abuse, racism, drug abuse and unemployment themes, which require an approach from the immigrant community perspective. Likewise organisations have arranged children’s’ mother tongue classes and occasionally held collective discussion on entrepreneurial ideas.

• Immigrant ethnic communities are a repository of culture and an important site for stable identity development in the second generation.


Extensive Salvadoran diasporas in the United States, Canada, Italy and other countries today can be largely traced back to the mass exodus that resulted from El Salvador’s civil war and the economic troubles left in its aftermath. After the signing of peace agreements in 1992, Salvadoran migrants began actively re-engaging in their hometowns via diaspora networks and have assumed a greater voice in the life of their homeland. This article examines the roles, patterns and mechanisms underlying diasporas’ intervention as governance actors and aims to reframe the debate about the implications of diasporas for development.

Methodology:
World Bank Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure Global Practice analysis using interview and archival data from migrant hometown associations (HTAs) and their respective municipal governments and hometown communities in El Salvador.

Key findings:
• Dense Salvadoran social networks, which formed during the migration process, have given rise to a particularly tight-knit and active diaspora.

• In recent years, diasporas have gained increased attention in international development circles, lauded for injecting new actors, fresh perspectives and supplemental resources into development agendas.

• Diasporas remittances have a vital impact on development in migrants’ hometowns. Remittances provide vital cash inflows for migrants’ relatives and households, as well as for communities that benefit from collective donations towards projects such as infrastructure, education and cultural ventures.

A refugee's greatest need for guidance is during the initial stages of resettlement, with service providers playing a key role during this period of the refugee experience. This study examines the factors influencing the level of awareness of and access to available services by recently arrived refugees to Sydney, as well as the major concerns/issues of key service providers in meeting the special needs of their clients.

**Methodology:**

- A survey of 45 key service providers in metropolitan Sydney was undertaken from May 1995 to January 1996.
- A comprehensive questionnaire was developed and administered covering the many aspects of refugee settlement in Sydney: factors affecting resettlement; initial problems; socioeconomic status in country of origin; English language skills; local barriers to economic independence; mental and physical status of refugees; their use and assessment of medical facilities and available services and respective delivery.

**Key findings:**

- Consultation and cooperation between government agencies, mainstream non-government organisations (NGOs) and ethno-specific organisations both prior and subsequent to the refugees' arrival will minimise the risk of misguided and inadequate service provision and duplication of services.
- The tendency of client groups to rely on their families and the informal support network for provision of advice and assistance often covered by NGOs and/or government agencies was identified by respondents as a significant factor explaining problems of service access. The information provided by the family or informal support group may be less than accurate, further causing anxiety and stress among clients needing to access particular services.
- Ethnic service providers continue to receive inquiries from new clients resident in Australia for many years yet still unaware of service options.
- A database listing service providers and the services they offer in the languages of client groups is a basic information tool for new arrivals.
- To ensure that service providers are meeting real rather than perceived needs, there must be close and frequent contact through, perhaps, forums engaging individuals at the policymaking level. Without ethno-specific community involvement in such discussions, there is a threat of misguided and ineffectual services being available while the clients' genuine needs remain unheralded.


This article presents an approach to community development when working with refugee groups within a resettlement context. The dimensions of privileging *emic* perspectives (the insider perspectives of Sudanese refugees in contrast to *etic* or outsider professional perspectives), using a dialogical method (the creation of a safe space to make sense of the new settlement context), taking an elicitive stance (whereby the community development worker orients themselves towards facilitation and discovery) and focusing on the resources of culture, community and power are outlined.

**Methodology:**

- The study used elicitive research as a way of incorporating both learning and action dimensions. The learning dimension focused on orthodox research processes of participant
observation, interviews and data analysis. The action dimension involved workshops in which data were generated from a dialogical process between Southern Sudanese refugees and the researcher.

- While doing participant observation work from 2002 to 2005, 20 interviews were conducted with Southern Sudanese refugees and nine with practitioners and policy makers working with Southern Sudanese refugees.
- As part of the ongoing action research and validation process, three facilitated workshops each attended by approximately 20 Sudanese were conducted on consecutive Saturdays. Each lasted four hours and included a celebration meal.

**Key findings:**

- Both the literature and Sudanese refugees themselves highlight refugee recovery as primarily a social process. Within post-war and humanitarian contexts this social process involved supporting refugees in rebuilding their physical (homes, schools), economic (jobs, livelihoods), social (relationships, networks) and moral worlds (justice, rights).
- The author outlines five ways that refugee communities can be a resource in terms of community development practice:
  1. **Community through enabling bonding social capital:** Identifies how community development supports refugees to create social capital through activities and actions with one another – that is, within (intra) the cultural community.
  2. **Community through enabling bridging social capital:** Explores how to support refugee groups in their interactions with ‘others’ (inter) (other cultural groups, including groups from the dominant cultural communities).
  3. **Community through cultivating an ethos modelled and guided by effective and ethical leadership:** The emergence of new leadership and governance is posited as a key part of the community development process.
  4. **Community through engaging in conflict negotiation processes:** Considers the role of community conflict negotiation within newly arrived refugee groups positing that an increased ability to negotiate conflict (inter/intra tribal, communal, generational, gender) in the new settling context is central to community development.
  5. **Community through experiencing the communalisation of distress:** Community development as processes that support and nurture the sociality of refugees and people from the host society to ‘move closer’ to one another. This moving closer facilitates the socialisation of suffering through ‘sharing pain’.

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**Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) (2008) Rebuilding Social Support Networks in Small & Emerging Refugee Communities, Melbourne: WCC**

This research aimed to identify community strengths and skills that have enabled the re-establishment of refugee support networks in order to enhance the strength-base of emerging refugee communities and to transfer this learning to other communities. The research explores the way in which social infrastructures are impacted by the settlement experience.

**Methodology:**

- Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted with 82 community members living in the cities of Whittlesea, Darebin, Maribyrnong and Dandenong in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Communities represented in the research included the Burundian, Rwandan, Liberian, Sierra Leonean, Sudanese and Iraqi communities.

**Key findings:**

- Independent community structures are the social fabric of communities providing strength, social interaction and contributing to identity and place within the broader community. Support networks act as key coping and survival mechanisms particularly during times of hardship.
A range of support networks had been established within the settlement context which were fluid, gave voice to women and young people, developed appropriate governance structures, encouraged volunteering and developed financial supports independent of government contributions, indicating that refugee communities have a high level of diverse skills.

Re-establishing community structures during the settlement process can be complex, impacted by factors such as loss of community members, dispersed settlement across Australia and lack of resources.

Refugees from small and emerging communities travel widely and across municipal borders in order to connect with other community members. This indicates that small and emerging refugee communities undertake great efforts to maintain community links and the need to do this is made more acute exactly because of their size. The fact that emerging communities have re-established structures despite obstacles highlights their inherent strength. This rebuilding is integral to managing the settlement process.

To improve the sustainability and long-term outcomes for small and isolated refugee communities, greater support is needed to strengthen internal structures and develop connections across communities.

Establishing internal community connections provides a key coping and survival mechanism for small and emerging communities, particularly when language, cultural and religious barriers are apparent. These networks contribute to the social, cultural and political make-up of communities, helping to form identity and place within the wider mainstream community.

The study found that there was “a focus on democratic processes and community consultation in the development of community leadership. Most community leaders had been elected and elections were held on a regular basis”.

Authors identified some issues of unity in some communities which is more evident in smaller communities that had split over tribal differences and identities.

Building links with other communities connecting with diverse migrant and refugee communities; engaging with the wider and mainstream community was seen as important for integrating and further developing skills and knowledge through joint initiatives and programs.

Developing internal strength and sustainability rather than remaining dependent on governments and organisations was a desired and stated community outcome.