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Australian Mentoring Programs for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants. **May 2005.**

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1) INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper and the corresponding research is to assess the range and diversity of mentoring programs that have been developed to address the settlement needs of Australian refugee and humanitarian entrants.

a) Mentoring

Mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship that involves a more experienced person (or 'mentor') helping a less experienced person (or 'mentee') achieve their goals.

While in the main, mentoring occurs on a one-to-one basis, elements of mentoring may be present in group situations where, under certain circumstances, a one-to-one relationship emerges organically as the most effective vehicle for growth and development. While most mentors undertake the mentoring role as volunteers, there are circumstances where paid staff can take on the responsibility of mentoring a mentee. This is often the case in companies or organisations that have formal corporate responsibility policies and the resources and impetus to support the involvement of an employee in a formal mentoring relationship.

b) Mentoring vs. Volunteering

It is important to note that mentoring is a specific relationship that often features volunteer involvement. As indicated in the 'Young People and Mentoring: Towards a National Strategy' paper¹ however, it is important to define mentoring independently, as volunteering is a broader term that can refer to a range of activities and can include group work and indirect assistance², whilst mentoring is mostly the development of a personal relationship between two individuals. As this is the key to its strength, it is important to recognise the distinction and ensure it is valued in stakeholder dialogue.

c) Organisational Mentoring

A traditional mentoring relationship can be defined as a 'learning and or counselling relationship between an experienced person who shares his or her professional expertise with a less experienced person in order to develop the skills and abilities of the less experienced person.'³ Elements of this definition can be applied to the development of a mentoring type relationship between organisations. In this instance, an older, more established or more resource-rich organisation can provide practical advice, assistance and leadership to a less established or resource-poor organisation.

Organisational mentoring should be viewed as a valuable organisational development tool in light of the Australian Government's push for the settlement of humanitarian entrants in rural and regional areas. Many of these areas might not have had extensive experience in cross-cultural service delivery or contact with clients from refugee backgrounds. Mentoring by a service delivery agency that has worked extensively with those from refugee backgrounds could potentially prove to be a valuable professional development resource for workers in regional areas.

d) Mentoring of Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants

¹ Smith Family, Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'Young People and Mentoring: Towards a National Strategy', May 2004

² Smith Family, Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'Young People and Mentoring: Towards a National Strategy', May 2004

³ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency at http://www.eowa.gov.au/Developing_a_Workplace_Program/Six_Steps_to_a_Workplace_Program/Step_4/Women_in_Management_Tools/Effective_Mentoring_Programs/What_Do_Mentoring_Programs_Look_Like.asp

Mentoring for refugees and humanitarian entrants⁴ can help entrants develop social networks and English language skills, research education and training options, seek employment or understand cultural customs and norms. Entrants often state the biggest barrier to feeling integrated in new communities as 'building trusting relationships', and not knowing 'who to ask' when feeling isolated⁵. Humanitarian entrants are sometimes members of an isolated community, unaware of their rights and unwilling to ask because of negative media and social perceptions. They often face daunting language barriers, and lack the traditional supports of family, religious affiliation and community which can compound social isolation and elements of post-traumatic stress or depression.

The aim of a mentoring relationship is to equip the mentee with skills by goal setting and partaking in a range of activities. The mentoring relationship can involve the mentor imparting information and cultural knowledge and helping to empower and encourage confidence in the mentee entrant. The benefits to the mentor and the greater community include an enhanced awareness of the complexity of refugee backgrounds and the difficulties associated with the process of adjusting to a new social order. This can lead to greater understanding and social acceptance of those from refugee and humanitarian communities. This can also help to lessen resentment, aggression, cynicism and derision towards these communities and help foster effective community partnerships.

The inclination to live in close proximity to those from similar backgrounds means that refugees who have been living in Australia for a number of years can still experience social and economic isolation. Mentoring therefore should be seen to be of benefit to both recently arrived and long term refugee and humanitarian entrants.

e) Mentoring as an aid to settlement

Mentoring can be a powerful settlement tool in so much as it can provide practical assistance through the development of a personal relationship. Services provided by the Australian Federal Government (Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)) under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme are short term based and focus on assisting with settlement during the first 6 months after arrival. They are also part of a coordinated program in which separate agencies deal with particular settlement concerns, meaning assistance is rarely holistic and case management based. The intimacy of a mentoring relationship means settlement issues can be addressed on a personalised level within a flexible timeframe. The ability of mentoring to provide support that is holistic, informal and personal makes it ideal for assisting humanitarian entrants with settlement concerns.

f) Protecting Mentees

It is important to recognise that mentoring fosters the development of relationships. Australians who are mentoring humanitarian entrants can often be in a position of power due to their relative ease with Australian norms and culture and their possible financial advantage over a refugee mentee who is likely to have considerably less individual and community resources at their disposal. It is imperative that a paternalistic patronising relationship or an abuse of power does not eventuate between mentor and mentee. In this sense, adequate screening processes and police checks are crucial in successful program implementation.

If mentoring programs are poorly managed and lack well-defined protocols, debriefing and exit strategies, they can reinforce in entrants the lack of self-confidence and social dislocation they essentially should be designed to be alleviating. Refugees are likely to be participating in a mentoring program from a point of vulnerability (unemployment, social isolation, economic

⁴ those entering Australia under the humanitarian migration program receive one of a range of visas. Those who enter with a visa other than the 200 Refugee Visa are likely to have come from a refugee like background. In this sense, they have most likely experienced refugee 'like' situations and suffer accordingly on arrival. For the purpose of this paper, 'refugee and humanitarian entrants' will hereafter be used interchangeably with 'humanitarian entrants', unless eligibility for the program is restricted to those on a 200 Refugee Visa.

⁵ Time Together UK at <http://www.timebank.org.uk/mentor/>

hardship, lack of cultural understanding), and if issues of 'failure' arise due to poor management or inappropriate mentor 'matching', the experience can lead to negative settlement outcomes.

g) Sourcing mentors

Mentor programs can benefit by recruiting mentors from within previously settled refugee communities, as these mentors will have intimate first hand knowledge of the cross cultural adjustment difficulties associated with settlement. Australian born mentors can also be useful however, especially those who have retired and have the financial security, time availability, and contacts within industries and employment sectors to provide well rounded and accessible support to refugee entrants.

2) RESEARCH ON AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMS

Aim

The aim of the RCOA research was to gain a broad understanding of the general number, range and diversity of current mentoring programs that specifically address the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants in Australia.

Methodology.

Identification

Mentoring programs were identified through:

- word of mouth with settlement workers, state government agencies, and interstate members of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) Board;
- internet based research on mentoring program listings or reports and relevant industry websites (both international and domestic websites);
- access to the Australian National Mentoring e-group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nationalmentors/>;
- documents as contained in Section 7 of this report (Reference Material).

Mode of research

Data was collected by way of a web and document review and by conducting of phone interviews with mentoring program coordinators and facilitators over the period December 2004-May 2005. The interviews were unstructured but focused on questions related to the:

- program length and the regularity of mentor/mentee contact;
- level of professional staff involvement and organisational partnerships in the development, planning and implementation stages of the program;
- length of time spent in formally planning and developing the program before implementation (including any humanitarian community consultation/involvement of community leaders in the process);
- type (if any) of research carried out on formal aspects of mentoring program design (including any kind of communication or cross referencing with other mentoring program coordinators) in the development phase;
- possible cross-cultural issues encountered during program implementation and an analysis of how this might have affected the success of the program;
- the number/cultural backgrounds of participants at beginning/completion of program;
- any formal outcomes/independent project analysis performed or recommendations made at the conclusion of the program;
- issues specific to the refugee experience that hampered/improved outcomes.

Limitation on programs researched

Programs included in the case study analyses were limited to programs that specifically aimed to assist those from a refugee or humanitarian background and featured the active development of mentoring relationships as opposed to general aspects of volunteering.

There exist a range of Australian mentoring/volunteer programs developed to assist those from CALD backgrounds with elements of cross cultural adjustment and settlement. There are aspects of the humanitarian experience however, that make the settlement experience and social/cultural adjustment of humanitarian entrants significantly different to that of migrants and others from CALD communities. Unlike those entering Australia through the mainstream migration program, refugee and humanitarian entrants:

- often have torture/trauma and mental health histories that have been shaped by incidences of persecution and time spent in warfare or conflict situations. This can significantly affect their ability to 'settle' and engage socially;
- have often spent extended periods in flight or transit. For some entrants this stage of transit can have lasted up to thirty years and can mean that elements of their formal education or employment have been disrupted;
- have not played a role in choosing Australia as their country of settlement, as this is determined by UNHCR and the Australian Government;
- humanitarian entrants have often fled home countries as opposed to making an organised and timely departure. This can mean that they might not possess written proof of previous employment or educational qualifications;
- enter Australia through the humanitarian program. Unlike the mainstream skilled migration program, the humanitarian program does not have English language or formal education eligibility requirements. As a result, humanitarian entrants are less likely to be employable immediately on arrival and more likely to have negligible English language skills;
- often arrive from countries where relationships between citizens and their governments, or citizens and law enforcement agencies, is fractured and marred by abuse, corruption or mistrust. Humanitarian entrants are more likely to mistrust the government or government run services of their resettlement country. This can affect their ability to interact in the public sphere and can lead for example, to difficulties in encouraging humanitarian entrants to frequent hospitals, trust police, and confidently advocate on their own behalf.

As a result, humanitarian entrants have very specific settlement and adjustment needs that are not always comprehensively addressed by programs that cater for those from a CALD background. Therefore, only programs which specifically aim to assist refugee and humanitarian entrants have been researched and included in this paper, as they have factored the complexity of the refugee experience into their program planning and development.

The importance of this note can be illustrated by the targeted nature of the training provided by the 'Given the Chance' employment project in Victoria. The cross cultural interview training provided by the Project focuses on encouraging participants to talk confidently about skills developed specific to their personal refugee history (perseverance, tenacity, adaptability, endurance, ability to cope with situations of stress, resourcefulness) as positive attributes that would make them valuable employees. This is an example of how a targeted program can ensure participants who may not possess the traditional employability standards of the Australian workplace, receive assistance in learning how to utilise elements specific to their shared refugee experience in a positive and constructive manner.

Mentoring programs that specifically cater for humanitarian entrants provide opportunities to specifically *address the needs* of refugees and also *utilise* and champion the skills and abilities unique to those from a refugee background.

3) MENTORING PROGRAM CASE STUDIES

The programs listed have been chosen to reflect the diversity in applicability of mentoring as a settlement tool. Because of the specificity of needs associated with the humanitarian experience and the skills gained from it, only programs that are structured around the needs of refugees as opposed to the needs of refugees and migrants have been listed. Contact details for similar programs addressing the needs of those generally from CALD communities are listed in each case study heading. Overseas programs have also been included for reference in the appropriate categories, but have not been comprehensively researched⁶.

It should be noted that the programs listed are in various stages of development. Some are still running, others have been completed, others reformed and others have not yet received funding. The research conducted aimed to canvas the most relevant and current programs, despite their level of development. Not all programs researched were specifically catering for humanitarian entrants with mentoring elements. The programs that weren't, have not been included below.

a) Youth

IDENTIFIED GAP: Refugee youth struggle with barriers to language and employment, inter-generational conflict, racism, violence, cross-cultural dislocation, social isolation and problems with police and transit authorities. The ability of mentoring to provide a personal relationship can be especially important for refugee youth, as it can signal a less rule based exchange to the variety of other relationships refugee youth might have with teachers, counsellors, police and social workers. In situations of mistrust and disengagement, mentoring can also signal an explicit action from someone choosing to be involved with the youth, rather than an encounter with an adult relating to the entrant in a professional capacity. This statement of interest enables the development of an environment of trust which makes mentoring particularly pertinent for refugee youth.

The Ynomrah (Harmony) Sudanese Refugee Mentoring Program Pilot, Tasmania

The Ynomrah (Harmony) Sudanese Refugee Mentoring Program Pilot was run by the Duke of Edinburgh Tasmanian Award Authority in Hobart began in September 2004. The aim of the program was to provide a 'buddy' system to promote friendships and networks and assist with the cultural orientation of newly arrived Sudanese youth.

The program:

- featured a core group of twelve mentors sourced from the Australian Defence Force Cadets and 20 young Sudanese humanitarian entrants living in Hobart;
- received support and guidance from Sheila Banks and other staff at the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) Southern Tasmania in the planning stage of the pilot;
- aimed to operate over twelve months on a budget of \$11,300 which covered the salary of a Development Officer, an Administrative Support Officer, information and meeting/communication expenses.

During the planning stages of development, the Development Officer extensively researched the Sudanese community living in Hobart and received advice and information from the MRC Southern Tasmania. Considerable time was given to engaging the assistance of 7 local Sudanese community leaders who were briefed and consulted at each stage of development.

⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of a range of international mentoring programs addressing the employment needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants that have not been covered by this paper, see J.Carr, Refugee Employment Programs in Some European Union Countries, Churchill Fellowship Summary Report at http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Churchill_Summary.pdf

Despite these efforts to comprehensively engage community leaders and tailor a program that was culturally appropriate, the program experienced a range of difficulties.

Outcomes

The project experienced structural problems because:

- the relationships between mentors and mentees were tainted by the military nature of the mentors' backgrounds. More appropriate sourcing and screening of mentors without defence force or military backgrounds might have prevented this;
- despite efforts to prepare mentees for the program, there were substantial problems with mentees operating on 'African time', and failing to keep appointments with mentors. This created frustration and relationship tension between mentors and mentees, and after 3 months the number of participants had dropped to 4. More comprehensive briefing of mentees on their responsibilities and program commitments and briefing to mentors on the cultural differences of the Sudanese could have prevented this high drop out rate;
- the kinds of activities chosen for group work were inappropriate; cadets at one stage took mentees out 'bush hunting' at night. The sounds of gunshots meant mentees fled into surrounding bush areas (reflection of torture/trauma past), and the activity had to be disbanded;
- during the first few months the direction of the program changed. Young female Sudanese participants had shown more commitment to the program than the male youths, and activities were altered to be more structured and group focused, with sewing classes, bead making and jewellery design emerging as popular activities.

As yet, there have been no formal project assessments made which is a reflection of the informal nature of the programs structure, but the project remains as an example of the difficulties in ensuring mentoring programs are sensitive to cross-cultural issues despite efforts to the contrary.

Contact: Janice Roberts, Development Officer, Duke of Edinburgh Tasmanian Award Authority ph 03) 6224110

General Information: Ynomrah (Harmony) Pilot Sudanese Refugee Mentoring Program (Duke of Edinburgh Awards) http://www.dukeofed.org.au/documents/charter_for_business_newsletter.pdf

Centre Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) MC Voice Raiser Program

This is a program catering for youth from CALD communities and is structured to address the needs of those from refugee and migrant backgrounds. In contrast to the Ynomrah project, the CMYI MC program is formally coordinated and features post project analysis and reporting. As it caters to those from CALD backgrounds however, it was not extensively covered in this report.

Contact: Kate O'Sullivan, CMYI, Leadership Training Coordinator kateos@cmyi.net.au

General Information: http://www.cmyi.net.au/news/news_pdfs/MentoringInfo.pdf

Refugee Youth Mentoring Project (in development)

This project is currently in the planning stages and is yet to receive funding. It hopes to be able to assist young refugees in the Sydney area who have failed to access those centres providing services under the JPET funding scheme.

Contact: Ethnic Communities Council, ph. (02) 9319 0288

United Nations Association Queensland, Tertiary Assistance Scheme

This project aims to assist those from refugee and CALD background acclimatise to university life at the University of Queensland by holding informal meetings between more established students, and those entering university for the first time.

Contact: Virginia Balmain, ph (07) 3254 1096

b) Employment

IDENTIFIED GAP: Refugee entrants experience serious settlement issues in relation to finding adequate and suitable employment. They lack local work experience, social networks and knowledge of workplace practise, have difficulty in having their qualifications recognised and struggle with language barriers⁷. Recent arrivals are less likely to have worked in skilled occupations in their former countries and to have worked in the year before arrival⁸. The Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) indicates that for refugee entrants in the 1999-2000 program year, labour force participation rates six months after arrival were 15%, whilst for the 1993-95 program year, labour force participation six months after arrival stood at 41%⁹. Employment for humanitarian entrants is increasingly becoming a priority settlement issue.

Given the Chance project, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Melbourne.

The Given the Chance program run by the Ecumenical Migration Centre in Melbourne is an example of how targeted assistance programs can have significant employment benefits for humanitarian entrants. The successful Pilot began in September 2002. The Project received funding beyond the pilot and has continued to flourish. In October 2004 there were 72 refugees, 84 volunteer mentors, 10 volunteer tutors and 28 workplaces offering work experience placements involved in the Project. Recruitment is generally by word of mouth, and government agency referrals are increasingly common. Project Coordinator Jill Carr recently completed a study tour in Northern Europe as part of her 2004-2005 Churchill Scholarship on employment programs for refugees.

The Project is structured around a case management model.

Mentees receive:

- the development of individual career case plans created in consultation with the volunteer coordinator and the mentor;
- an intensive 12 week labour market program focusing on 'selling' the skills and qualities of refugees (perseverance, resourcefulness, cross cultural experience);
- on the job work experience in their mentor's employment agency with formal briefing and debriefing by the volunteer coordinator;
- personal assistance in learning to network, present in an interview situation, and 'sell' themselves.

The structure of the program includes:

- separate induction programs for refugee mentees and mentors with a heavy emphasis on cross-cultural issues;
- screening of mentors to ensure sufficient professional and life experience to be capable of resourcing a mentee. Mentors are also given information on referral services, visa classes and general information on their mentees country;

⁷ P.Waxman. 'Service provision and the needs of newly arrived refugees in Sydney, Australia: a descriptive analysis', *The International Migration Review* vol. 32, no. 3, 1998

⁸ *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants*, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), 2003, Canberra.

⁹ *ibid*

- sensitive and considered matching of refugee mentee and mentor on the basis of refugee's career goals and the mentor's professional experience. The matching process aims to match a mentor and mentee of the same gender and age range in an effort to avoid cultural taboos;
- the signing by both mentor and mentee of a 'Participation Contract' to prove commitment to the program and an understanding of the expectations on them to engage;
- fortnightly meetings between mentor and mentee as a minimum commitment in the 'Participation Contract'. Overall both mentor and mentee are expected to make a minimum 1 year commitment which is outlined in this contract;
- monthly group debriefing and best practise information share meetings between mentors and the volunteer coordinator to provide ongoing support and reassessment of needs.

The key to the success of the Project is that it caters specifically for humanitarian entrants and recognises that employment is only one of a range of settlement issues for this group. It is structured holistically and the referral of mentees to other settlement agencies is common. The Project also recognises the differences in refugee backgrounds and aims to carefully assess individual needs from a case management perspective as opposed to applying a blanket approach.

Outcomes

In the initial intake of 17 refugees during 2002, the majority of participants were unemployed before joining the project and most had been for more than a year. In follow up research of this group, 54% of participants at 13 weeks out of the project were in paid employment or promising education or training courses. At 52 weeks out, this figure had risen to 73%. The same figures for the most disadvantaged Job Network Intensive Assistance participants during the same year showed that 25% were involved in employment and vocational training at 13 weeks out and 50% of participants were involved in employment and vocational training at 52 weeks¹⁰.

The Given the Chance Project provides a structured and effective mentoring program with significant employment results for participants. The employment figures above show that the personalised, informal assistance provided by mentoring programs can prove to be more effective as a settlement tool than services provided by Government departments.

Contact: Jill Carr, Program Coordinator, jcarr@bsl.org.au

General Information on the Given the Chance Program, Ecumenical Migration Centre, Brotherhood of St Lawrence, Melbourne.

<http://www.bsl.org.au/main.asp?PageId=565>

Jewish Care, Mentoring for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants, Sydney.

With an already established extensive network of formal and informal contacts and a history of refugee movement in the Jewish community, Jewishcare has been well equipped to help new humanitarian entrants navigate aspects of their settlement.

The program run by Jewishcare functioned throughout 2001-02 and:

- utilised the large amount of volunteerism within the Sydney Jewish community. The program featured the assistance of two well established psychologists who assisted with job placement character checks and general counselling, and the assistance of the School of Languages at the University of Sydney with language and literacy programs;

¹⁰ J.Carr, 'Given The Chance: Creating Employment and Education Pathways for Refugees', Migration Action, Vol XXVI, Number 1, 2004.

- received funding from the City of South Sydney to run training for those wishing to find employment as carers and general funding from the NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission (now the Community Relations Commission) for program management. Implementation involved the participation of a CSSS worker (DIMIA funded).
- provided personalised case management assistance and secured niche informal employment and training opportunities. Program participants were generally from a Non English Speaking Background (NESB) and in feedback, commented the services provided by an agency with workers from a NESB were far more appropriate than the services provided by mainstream Australian agencies.

Outcomes

The program:

- provided advice on writing CVs and attending interviews through individual and group work assistance;
- provided assistance to anyone from a NESB and was not limited to assisting those of the Jewish faith. The program also aimed to assist anyone regardless of previous qualifications gained or employment;
- mostly assisted those from Russian, Israeli, Lebanese, and former Yugoslavian backgrounds (in order of largest number of clients assisted);
- operated reasonably informally, with mentors and mentees developing a relationship basically in isolation from the organisation, apart from an initial briefing of the mentor by Jewishcare staff on the particular background and current situation of the mentee.

The program functioned in partnership with other programs run by Jewishcare at the time including the Family to Family Program. Operating during 2001-02, the program was discontinued after an internal review in April 2003 concluded that the assistance provided by mainstream employment agencies was sufficient to assist the targeted clients, and the program was no longer needed.

Contact: Ilan Buchman, Manager of Children, Family and Community Team, Jewishcare, i.buchman@jewishcare.com.au

Australian Catholic University, Mentoring for students from a humanitarian background enrolled in the Bachelor of Education Degree, Sydney.

With the assistance of the Catholic Education Office (CEO), the Australian Catholic University has provided a number of places for those from a refugee background in the 2004 Bachelor of Education degree course in recognition of the difficulties humanitarian entrants face gaining local work experience and entering tertiary institutions. The CEO plans to implement a mentoring program for these particular students to guide their university experience and to provide support on their entrance into preliminary teaching positions. At this stage the program has not been developed and no students have been approached to participate. It has been recognised by the Education Office, however, that mentoring could provide a worthwhile support structure for those humanitarian entrants enrolled in the Bachelor of Education degree at the Australian Catholic University.

Contact, Barbara Yee, Parramatta Catholic Education Office, Sydney. 02) 9840 5600, Barbara.Yee@parra.catholic.edu.au

c) Health

IDENTIFIED GAP: Humanitarian entrants often arrive in Australia after extended periods spent in camps. They are likely to have previously experienced torture, war or civil unrest, the loss of close family members and prolonged periods of deprivation. Humanitarian communities are also likely to have poor dental health, an increased vulnerability to infectious diseases, and to feature the under-immunisation of children. This can place pressure on health service providers and disrupt aspects of settlement.

Men's Health Pilot Mentoring Program, NSW Refugee Health Service, Sydney

Male humanitarian entrants suffer from a myriad of particular mental and physical health issues. They are likely to have been previously imprisoned and/or tortured because of their role as community leaders, activists or professionals and a small number of boys have been child soldiers or have arrived as unaccompanied minors. Many suffer from issues associated with loss of status, interpersonal parenting conflicts, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Existing models of health care delivery suggest that a holistic response to the physical and mental health of refugee men and boys is the most appropriate way to improve the health outcomes of the group. In this sense, mentoring could provide an ongoing structured relationship to improve the life skills and cultural adjustment of refugee men in NSW.

The Men's Health Mentoring Program is in the tender stage of development, and as such does not have formal outcomes. The instigation of a program specifically addressing the mental and physical health outcomes for refugee men is an example of the range of refugee settlement situations in which mentoring is considered to be of assistance.

The Program will aim to focus on assisting with the holistic health of refugee men by addressing:

- **family and community:** working to reduce the incidence of substance abuse, problem gambling, domestic violence, and family breakdown in refugee communities;
- **competence in the field of refugee men's health:** to develop an innovative and sustainable model for working with refugee men that can be applied across disciplines which could contribute to the academic body of information on refugee men's health;
- **promotion of needs:** to promote the importance of assessing health and well being issues for refugee men, and recognising that issues of torture/trauma, family breakdown and cultural readjustment can be compounded as refugee men often suffer disproportionately from issues of lack of confidence and self esteem and depression on arrival.

If it receives funding, the project:

- will be available to recently arrived refugee men from eastern and western Africa (who will need to enter the project less than one year after arrival);
- will feature ongoing monitoring and debriefing for mentor volunteers from the project coordinator in monthly meetings;
- feature guest speakers on health and related issues, as well as outings and weekly one-on-one meetings between mentor and mentee;
- will source mentors from a range of Australian-born men of various backgrounds and/or established and respected men from appropriate communities.

The project stands to be conducted formally, and:

- will feature collaboration with the Mercy Refugee Service in terms of volunteer selection and client contact, mentor training and project support. This will assist in the development

of awareness in other organisations on the issues refugee men face, and promote best practise by utilising the resources of already established volunteer coordination organisations;

- will be formally monitored and assessed by the Men's Health Information and Resource Centre at the University of New South Wales. This will ensure independent evaluation and the development of recommendations and outcomes;
- complies with four Key Focus Areas (KFA) of the Department of Health, ensuring it is relevant and topical. It also promises to foster close communication with IHSS providers, and Adult Migrant English Service Providers. In this sense, the initial planning stage has ensured that if the project is granted funding, it will be indirectly promoting the needs of refugee men to other service provider agencies.

If successful, the project could have wide ranging benefits for participants themselves, their families and academic facilitators researching the mental and physical health of refugee men of which there is little established literature¹¹.

In this particular project, mentoring has been chosen as the most effective method for addressing the settlement needs of refugee men. This is in recognition of the inability, either through lack of training or resources, of mainstream agencies and existing services to address these settlement needs through generic methods of assistance. The outcomes of the project will benefit those working in refugee men's health, and research into the nature of mentoring to assist in a diverse range of settlement circumstances.

Contact: Mitchell Smith, NSW Refugee Health Service.

Mitchell.Smith@swhs.nsw.gov.au

General Information: <http://www.refugeehealth.org.au/>

British Medical Association, Refugee Doctor Mentoring Program.

This mentoring program aims to address employment issues for health professionals seeking support and guidance in navigating the British medical profession. It does cater specifically for refugee entrants and serves as an example of the benefits of engaging professional employment bodies in mentoring initiatives for refugee and humanitarian entrants in a health service delivery environment.

<http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/refugeedocsmentoring>

e) General Assistance

IDENTIFIED GAP: Whilst most mentoring programs aim to address a particular settlement concern, some programs catering for humanitarian entrants aim to holistically address a range of settlement issues. In these cases, programs tend to focus on addressing the immediate cross-cultural adjustment needs of entrants.

Sudalog Project Inc, Carlton, Melbourne

The Sudalog program was initiated by a number of students attending Trinity College at the University of Melbourne after the Trinity College Theological School began providing homework assistance for Sudanese students attending the Foundation Studies program within the College grounds. An initial Trinity College Community Service Grant of \$2500 was the genesis for the

¹¹ NSW Refugee Health Service, Executive Summary, Expression of Interest, Men and Boy's Health Projects, to Department of Health and Ageing, 2004-2005.

program but current administrative costs are covered by fundraising initiatives and private donors. The program has been in the pilot stage since March 2004, is currently running and aims to provide 'empowerment' assistance so that local Sudanese families do not remain dependent on services provided by charities.

The commencement of the program was preceded by consultation with local Sudanese communities in the Footscray area of Melbourne. This was facilitated through networks with the local Anglican Parish in West Footscray which has well-established links with Sudanese community leaders.

The program:

- aims to assist entrants from families who are not recently arrived;
- takes referrals through the local parish church and has good links with Anglicare and the New Hope Foundation;
- features the involvement of up to 40 volunteers but at a core level, has 12 mentors who are heavily committed to the program;

The program has aimed to base aspects of its governance procedures on public service management principles. The organisation is run by young university students but has aimed for 100% transparency, and has already initiated an independent review and feasibility study of their pilot activities by the Oak Tree Foundation. This is currently being implemented.

During the pilot stage, mentors were matched in pairs with 5 different families. In the future, Sudalog assistance will most probably be extended to up twenty families.

Mentoring assistance is provided by mentors visiting families on a weekly basis and completing 'assignments' with them. These assignments provide information on cultural and political aspects of Australian society and are repeated three times over separate visits to ensure the information has been understood. Subjects covered by the assignments are grouped into the areas of:

- finance and budgeting;
- employment and training options;
- communication (English conversation practise and an explanation of Australian colloquialisms);
- general organisation (being prompt for appointments, how to file things in folders, importance of retaining receipts);
- 'The Australian Context' (explanation of postcodes, information on Australian political systems).

Outcomes

Informal analysis of the pilot (pre comprehensive independent review by the Oak Tree Foundation) has concluded that:

- aspects of the material covered have been too advanced, even for entrants who have been living in Australia for a number of years;
- the assistance provided is appreciated by entrants, but not necessarily adhered to;
- mentors need more than 3-4 hours a week to build a reasonable bond with a family;
- the tendency of Sudanese clients to be late or forget appointments has resulted in significant discouragement for mentors.

More formal outcomes will be addressed in the impending formal review.

Contact Tim Molesworth, 03) 9348 7281 or tmoleswo@trinity.unimelb.edu.au or Trinity College on 03) 9348 7000

'Unity' Program, City of Kingston, Victoria

The City of Kingston Council was approached in 2003 by women from the local Cook Islander migrant community who were interested in mentoring women from newly emerging African communities living in the local area. The Cook Islander women felt that they could relate strongly to the cultural dislocation being experienced by the newly arrived women and were keen to provide mentoring and support. The program received funding from the City of Kingston and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

The program aimed to bring the two groups of women together through a shared activity. After consultation with the local Migrant Resource Centre and the Kingston Council Access and Equity Committee, the Unity program was implemented with the establishment of a choral group as the initial aim. The first three meetings based on this activity however, were poorly attended. The City of Kingston Diversity Officer then consulted with the local community on possible alternatives. The women from the Horn of Africa stated that they had difficulty in finding well fitting and appropriate clothing for themselves and their families, and were keen to learn sewing and haberdashery skills with a look to producing clothes on a commercial basis. Program participants then chose the creation of a 'Unity' quilt as the central focus of their meetings.

The program benefited from the assistance of:

- a volunteer interpreter who attended meetings and ensured communication between participants;
- a sewing instructor employed by the Council to teach sewing and haberdashery skills;
- settlement service providers in the local area who used took the opportunity to make presentations and provide informal settlement service advice to participants at the beginning of classes. This meant participants had the chance to meet workers in local service provider agencies in a non-threatening environment;
- a volunteer run crèche;
- the attendance of a elder Cook Islander woman who made herself available for informal English conversation practise during classes.

The women met one day a week, and the classes were flexibly structured, running from 10am-3pm with no official starting or finishing time. The women worked on a quilt using traditional motifs and designs from their respective cultural backgrounds.

The pilot program was successful for a number of reasons. Primarily, Kingston Council had recently employed a generalist community worker who was a young female from a well-respected family in the local Sudanese community. She provided crucial cross-cultural mediation, and her support for the program ensured attendance from the women in her community.

Outcomes

The program:

- continues to run at time of printing but is now administered by the South Central Migrant Resource Centre as the City of Kingston Council worker initially involved is now committed to other projects. Some of the original women involved with the quilt pilot of the program are still regular attendees;

- has been formally documented in a report titled, 'Unity: A Sharing of Cultures' that was produced by the City of Kingston Council. This report documents the development of the program and provides useful recommendations for future projects;
- helped the City of Kingston Council develop community links with newly emerging groups within the Horn of Africa communities. Cook Islander communities have been established in the area since the 1980's, but the Council had not developed links within the Horn of Africa communities before the initiation of the project. The project gave the Council the opportunity to develop strong community partnerships;
- the project won the DIMIA National Strength in Diversity award which is an award recognising local initiatives that respond to issues arising from migration, settlement, Australian citizenship and cultural diversity;
- continues to provide appropriate settlement information, a safe forum to network and develop relationships, and a worthwhile skill. It was noted by the Diversity Officer, that there are a rising number of single women arriving in the current humanitarian migrant entry program with young children. The development of a skill for women that could be used for commercial purposes is seen by communities as increasingly important.

Contact Janice Raux, Diversity Officer, City of Kingston, Janice.raux@kingston.vic.gov.au, 03) 9581 4734

4) RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS ON AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMS

The research conducted into mentoring programs for humanitarian entrants in Australia illustrated in this paper indicated that:

- the number of programs that have been/are being run in Australia that strictly adhered to formal mentoring principles and specifically addressed the needs of refugee and humanitarian entrants is small. Informal research into overseas programs in other resettlement countries however, showed that the development of programs that do strictly adhere to the stated objectives have been recognised as substantial aids in the settlement of refugee and humanitarian entrants;
- refugee and humanitarian entrants are often participants in programs targeting CALD communities, but don't necessarily have their particular needs addressed by these programs;
- mentoring programs have been run for humanitarian and refugee entrants by a diverse range of organisations across Australian government, non-government, religious and community based sectors;
- the programs varied widely in terms of their formality, structure, reporting and accountability standards and the sources of their funding;
- the theoretical line between volunteering and mentoring remains blurred in project planning and development. Many programs researched attested to having a 'mentoring' structure, but were essentially using the term interchangeably with 'volunteering' without comprehensively understanding the differences between the two terms as illustrated in Section 1b) of this paper;
- programs that aim to cater for refugee and humanitarian entrants often experience complex difficulties in implementation. This can be the result of cross-cultural differences (understanding of social norms, differences in the understanding of time management) and means that programs often dramatically change direction midway through implementation, remained incomplete, have been disbanded, or more importantly, failed to feature formal post program analysis and reportage (due to disbandment). This hindered elements of the research carried out, as programs without formal outcomes are more difficult to document;
- in terms of settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants, mentoring is most often used in the planning of programs that target employment and pathway outcomes as opposed to other settlement concerns. This is perhaps directly linked to the fact that refugee and humanitarian entrants often identify securing employment and gaining Australian workplace experience as the most important and immediate settlement obstacle they face;
- when community run mentoring programs are effectively planned and implemented, they can feature outcomes that compare favourably to programs run by government agencies and government sponsored service providers. (This is most clearly evident in the cost benefit analysis of the 'Given the Chance' program in comparison to DEWR Job Network outcomes);
- in some cases, mentoring forms one subset of a program that has a single aim, but a variety of program structures. For example, the 'Unity' project aimed to teach Sudanese women sewing and haberdashery skills. The mentoring relationship between the Cook Islander women (mentors) and the Sudanese women (mentees) was structured to be of secondary importance to the provision of sewing skills education. Mentoring can be used as the primary structure of a program, or as one part of a larger and more comprehensive set of programs with a common aim.

5) GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Mentoring programs need to be well designed with cross-cultural difference as the key guiding principle to their approach and implementation. The difficulties experienced by the Ynomah program in Tasmania are a good example of the problems cross-cultural issues can pose to mentoring programs.

The differences between mentoring and volunteering should also be considered in the planning stages of any program. Mentoring is a particular skill and should not be confused with programs that use volunteers in a less structured fashion and don't focus on the development of a personalised relationship.

There exists a large range of informal mentoring programs (homework assistance, community and church outreach programs) that often don't feature cost benefit analysis and post program documentation. The best practise recommendations set out below have therefore been gathered from the formal analysis of programs¹² that have positive settlement outcomes for refugees, have featured post program analysis in their program brief, proved to be sustainable and continued to attract funding beyond one program cycle.

a) Program Research, Design and Development

Mentoring programs designed for refugee and humanitarian entrants should feature:

- the involvement of an experienced volunteer coordinator with the ability to be available for support to both mentors and mentees;
- thorough research on core client groups before program establishment. Social taboos, social norms and torture and trauma histories need to be thoroughly researched and made available to the mentor and incorporated into training sessions in a sensitive manner. This will ensure the delivery of culturally appropriate support and also avoid cultural embarrassment or humiliation between mentor and mentee;
- adequate screening and assessment of clients' needs to ensure the mentor/mentee 'match' is made sensitively and appropriately. This also prevents insubstantial or inaccurate analysis of entrants needs;
- screening of mentors including police checks, to assess they have the needed skills, financial capacity, available time, commitment and maturity to provide real assistance beyond a well-intentioned desire to help;
- the development of a support agreement between the mentor and mentee that clearly sets out the expectations of both parties about the mentoring relationship and its parameters (duration, time commitment, expected outcomes etc);
- a long-term commitment from mentors volunteering their time. This enables the development of trust within the mentoring relationship;
- a thorough briefing for mentors on the emotional and financial costs of establishing a relationship with someone from a refugee background. For example, volunteers need to be emotionally equipped to deal with a mentee being refused refugee status, suffering post traumatic stress syndrome or losing family members overseas in traumatic circumstances;
- briefing structures that ensure mentors, mentees and agencies that may be referring clients to the program have realistic expectations of what it can provide;

¹² These recommendations have been sourced from research on both overseas and domestic refugee and humanitarian mentoring programs.

- a holistic approach and work in conjunction with other settlement agencies to address settlement issues from a range of angles. This requires volunteer coordinators to have strong contacts and a working knowledge of settlement service provider agencies and mainstream government departments;
- structured goal setting and regular communication with both mentors and mentees on the attainment and continuous restructuring of goals;
- adequate protocols on confidentiality, security and conflict of interest including signed agreements between mentor, mentees and program coordinators;
- guidelines for clear communication between mentor/mentee (ensuring contact details are passed on when moving) and mentors/program coordinator (debriefing, complaints resolution processes);
- flexible approach to time limits of the program as some mentees will need ongoing assistance. In some situations the complexity of mentee problems might not be immediately apparent and volunteer mentors need to be able to commit to a reasonable time frame (1-2 years) in the eventuation of a mentee with considerable settlement needs;
- protocols and contingency plans for emergency requests of support from mentors (situations of self harm or law breaking from mentee);
- structured debriefing for participants;
- adequate exit plans for participants to reduce the trauma of unfulfilled obligations.

b) Incorporating Refugee and Humanitarian Concerns

Those developing mentoring programs for refugee and humanitarian entrants need to consider that:

- refugees may be dealing with a range of complicated issues even after an extended period of time has lapsed after initial resettlement (torture/trauma histories, loss of family members or distance from family members). These can be traumatic and prevent refugees from being able to completely engage despite their desire to be part of the program;
- refugees generally arrive in Australia after an extended period of time in which authorities have been the cause of violence, or complicit in acts of violence. They are therefore likely to mistrust authority figures and may be reticent to approach them for assistance;
- refugees can suffer from depression/loneliness/social isolation during settlement and this can cause anti-social behaviour and a lack of confidence;
- young refugees often find themselves caught up in inter-generational conflict, or in a struggle to take on adult roles (translating for and supporting traumatised or ill-equipped parents). The social stage of development of entrants needs to be considered in planning.

c) Cross-cultural understanding

In mentoring programs researched, considerable expense and mentor relationship breakdown has resulted from a lack of cultural understanding as to:

- **gender roles:** the cultural expectations and limitations on male and female roles within a community can restrict activities undertaken and the way mentees can interact socially;

- **family norms and hierarchy:** in some refugee communities, movement outside the home and mixing socially is subject to elements of parental approval. The value and importance of elder community members needs to be considered. When working with refugee youth, older family members may need to be extensively briefed before younger members can be admitted to a program;
- **community harmony:** the degree of community cohesion within a refugee community can determine the ability of a mentee to be involved. If communities are fractured and prone to disagreement, involvement may cause jealousy and/or resentment;
- **community politics:** the political structure and position of the refugee entrant will affect their community responsibilities and roles.
- **the size of the refugee community:** if the number of people in the mentee's community in Australia is small, they are less likely to have a large body of other emotional supports, might have a larger number of settlement issues and are likely to be more reliant on a mentor;
- **cultural norms:** types of offensive body language, way of asking questions, ways of asking to be given something, respect for religious or spiritual beliefs, appropriate types of communication between male and females, offensive words, and bodily connotations can all affect the range of activities and entrants mode of participation in arranged activities;
- **basic understanding of type of torture/trauma experienced:** mentors need to have a clear understanding as to how torture trauma histories can affect psycho-social interactions (was the torture/trauma perpetrated by police/rebel forces? What type of conflict were they involved in? Ethnic/religious? Social stigmatism and shame associated with injuries inflicted?).

Refugee communities also need to be briefed in order to stem resentment and facilitate community engagement. These elements are crucial to the success of any program as community disengagement can cause individuals from those communities to cease their involvement in the program.

6) CONCLUSION

Mentoring can be beneficial to refugees navigating the settlement process. In areas of health, employment and youth, the informal and individualised assistance provided by mentoring programs can provide positive employment outcomes. Mentoring programs addressing the needs of refugees need to be well designed and based on a strong understanding and incorporation of cross-cultural differences.

The types of programs researched indicate the range of settlement issues mentoring can be of assistance with. The development of trust within mentoring relationships have proven to be especially valuable to refugee and humanitarian entrants who are likely to have come from unstable backgrounds and have been separated from family members and traditional support networks. Refugee and humanitarian entrants often lack the confidence, social understanding and networks to successfully navigate elements of their own settlement. Mentoring can assist in the provision of a personalised and tailored approach to addressing issues encountered during settlement.

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