

## **BPW Dunedin Issues Project**

### **Opportunities:**

The Issue: To Address the Isolation and lack of Employment  
Of Migrant Women in our Community

This is a very low-key project as is fitting with the women and their needs. A push for publicity and public meetings would not be appropriate.

We have had activities within club meetings to allow opportunities for non-threatening communication and opportunities.

Externally we have developed links with other organisations working with the Dunedin Multi Ethnic Community and with Red Cross to further assist women, to create relevant projects and appropriate support. Through this we have provided assistance to organise and present a seminar for migrant women seeking employment and we are continuing to meet with some of these women providing continuing support and encouragement and knowledge of our community and working strategies. Language assistance was then provided following this as participants were interviewed for the local media.

Other matters linked together to strengthen the project:  
Encouragement of women to attend our BPW meetings providing conversation, networking, involvement in the community activities, and encouragement to attend an upcoming business seminar on financial matters.  
Mentoring  
Nominations for scholarships and assistance for funding

We have been able to provide business contacts for these women, and provided suitable links for other members seeking particular skills and services.

Assistance in formally writing curriculum vitae, job interview skills and assisting them to gain employment. A successful seminar on meeting procedures developed skills and confidence in participating in the community. Going with women for interviews with immigration and potential employers  
Social gatherings to interact with the women working and benefiting both ways.

Lobbying to make access to assistance from Immigration and Internal Affairs more user-friendly and appropriate. Meeting with appropriate local government people to improve services and assistance to new migrant particularly women  
Use of new restaurant for our club meetings but also to support a new business set up by migrant women  
Started with the international night held at Ali's place – to enable conversation, set in a place of safety and reassurance, and encouragement. The evening resulted in mutual respect with the sharing of food and ideas.

In order to understand more fully the problems facing migrants to the city and in particular women, Fi McKay, the Dunedin City Council Settlement Support Coordinator spoke to us, providing us with ideas and enabling us to offer reciprocal assistance. Some of the difficulties faced by the women are language, employment and isolation. One of the significant reasons that families leave is that the women are unhappy.

A typical scenario is that women arrive with their families; they support their husbands as they go to work, and their children at school, but the nature of this support increases their isolation and their lack of contact with the English language. The rest of the family becomes fluent in English, settled and independent, they become less dependent on her and her isolation and dissatisfaction increases.

Although this may not seem a high profile nor spectacular project it has made a significant difference in our community for these women and provided us as a club with opportunities to link with the migrant community and to benefit from their expertise and experience.

Our community and our BPW club are stronger for these links and we are proud of the quiet and gentle way this project has proceeded.

This has been a very positive and quiet project that has made significant changes in the lives of some of these women.

All club members have been involved not in a contrived way but quietly and effectively welcoming and supporting these women often following up by invitations to share meals at their own homes. This has been a great experience for our members as well as our newcomers.

Publicity has been word of mouth. We have six new members joined this year and more visitors and intending members at each meeting. These people tend to be those who need links into the community either because they have just moved here, or that they were lacking the network, social contact and links with the local women's community.

This has been an extraordinarily successful on-going, cost-effective and productive project addressing the issue of migrant women settling into our community.