

**RESETTLEMENT ISSUES
FOR
REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN**



**FROM
THE 39TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF
THE NEW ZEALAND FEDERATION OF
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN INC**

*2 – 4 MAY 2003
Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre
Mt Wellington*

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Published 2004

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PO Box 28 326, Auckland

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is the result of a series of workshops that were held in Auckland in April 2003 at the annual conference of the New Zealand Federation of Business & Professional Women. Looking to focus on the international theme of “A World of Peace” it was decided to invite representatives of migrant and refugee organizations to facilitate workshops looking at different aspects of migrant women’s integration into New Zealand society.

Over one hundred and fifty women from BPW clubs throughout the country attended these workshops to become informed and consider solutions to the problems faced by migrant women. Having become aware of these issues, attendees have taken this information back to their clubs and initiated projects at their local level. Local migrant groups have been invited to speak to the clubs and we are now seeing the results of this new understanding with many ongoing activities happening around the country to support migrant women.

These workshops broke new ground for our organization and have been most successful in capturing the imagination of our members and instigating new projects. Other benefits are the strong links and resulting ongoing contact that has been made with migrant groups.

Congratulations are due to the dedicated Conference Committee from BPW Clubs Auckland, Franklin, Hibiscus Coast and Tamaki, who instigated, coordinated and put together the results of these workshops. Special mention must be made of the particular contributions of Penny Stevens, who coordinated the participation of refugee and migrant women in the project, Rosalie McKenzie, who organized and coordinated the workshop sessions, and Moira McLean who collated and edited the workshop reports into this booklet.

This booklet contains a wealth of information that will be invaluable to any New Zealander who has contact with ethnic migrant people and is sure to facilitate understanding and co-operation between new and old New Zealanders.

**Anita Devcich
President
BPW New Zealand**

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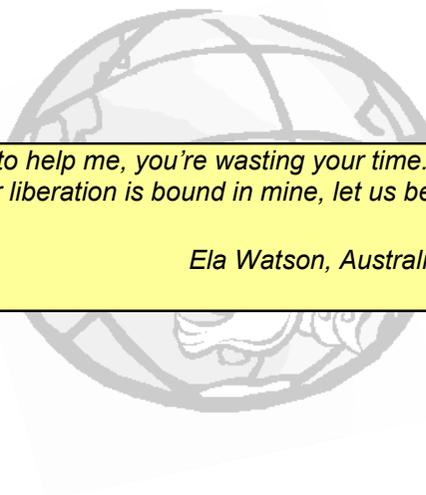
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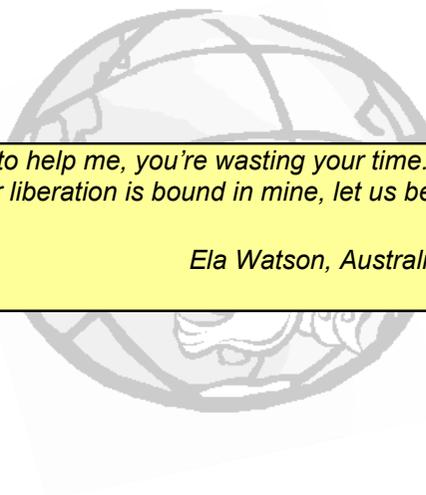
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"If you come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But, if you come here because your liberation is bound in mine, let us begin."

Ela Watson, Australian aboriginal activist



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WORKSHOP CONVENOR REPORT

Participants in the workshops were inspired and enlightened as to the position of refugee and migrant women in New Zealand. Delegates at the 6 conference workshops produced a number of good, positive and practical ideas. These ideas focused very much on BPW clubs making efforts at achieving strong direct connections with refugee and migrant women at a grassroots, community level.

Improvement of the position of refugee and migrant women in New Zealand was not seen so much a matter of lobbying at national level, but on the direct transfer of skills and resources on the part of BPW members at club level. Such transfer of skills and resources, from BPW members to local refugee and migrant women, particularly in relation to employment issues, was seen as very much in keeping with the aims of our organisation.

The methodology set out by Jennifer Janif of the Office of Ethnic Affairs in her workshop was a useful starting point in initiating contact at the local level with refugee and migrant women. This methodology included:

1. Hearing from the community people themselves as to their own needs.
2. Giving them the opportunity to discuss issues in their own language.
3. Providing interpreters so that each community could express themselves in their own language.
4. Acknowledging any tribal and religious differences.
5. Ensuring that any projects should be driven by the people affected, with BPW providing support and transfer of skills and resources to enable those projects to happen.

As Workshop Convener, I suggest that BPW as a national organisation adopt a theme for the coming year through to the May 2004 national conference along the lines of "Act globally, think locally" or similar which aims at promoting direct contact by local BPW clubs with refugee and migrant women. This theme should link in with the 'World of Peace' BPW International theme and that of the May 2003 conference. Each individual BPW Club should be encouraged to adopt at least one of the practical ideas that came out of the workshops, or have as the focus of some of their meetings/activities during the year one of the following suggestions that came out of the workshops.

Rosalie McKenzie

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Rosalie McKenzie

WORKSHOP 1: EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Suggested BPW Projects:

- **Facilitate networking between business and refugee & migrant communities:**

70% of jobs are not advertised, they go to people with connections

Migrants arrive in NZ without an established network. They need help to connect with these unadvertised jobs

Make contact with the local Chamber of Commerce and advise them of local BPW clubs and the networking opportunity they offer to new migrants

Consider giving honorary membership to a migrant or refugee women. This will help them build networks as well as provide mentoring by association

- **Build language skills:**

Lobby for better assessment of migrants as they arrive to identify the type of language support they need. Migrants pay a fee to come to New Zealand. Part of this fee is for English language training, but it is a “one size fits all” solution too often.

If this was done properly we could avoid the situation of a recent immigrant applying for 300 jobs and getting 300 rejections. The rejection is confidence sapping. It may lead the immigrant to retreat into the safety/support of the local immigrant community. This can drive their English skills further backwards. It is better to not apply for any job until the language skill means that they are at least in with a chance.

Encourage BPW members to volunteer as ESOL tutors or serve on committees to raise and administer funds

- **Create a New Zealand CV:**

New Zealanders tend to be generalists, able to multi-task – answer the phone, empty the rubbish and answer customer queries. An immigrant’s CV needs to reflect this bias.

Most NZ businesses have a staff of 5 employees or less, so it’s important that staff are flexible

A NZ CV starts with core competencies and NZ work experience and ends with educational qualifications. A CV that lists 4 PhDs and a very narrowly focused employment history tends to worry the NZ employer. They are concerned that the potential staff member who is a qualified engineer specializing in hydraulics with work experience only in dyke management will not be able to add value to a small agricultural contracting business where the staff need to be able to cope with anything from ditch-digging to large scale mole drainage schemes, etc.

NZ employers value competency over qualifications.

- **NZ employers are risk minimisers:**

Firing staff is almost impossible so they will tend to hire the person they think will fit in best and this

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Most companies have very little time or money for training new staff or familiarization with new procedures they want to feel that the new employee can hit the ground running from first thing Monday morning

Encourage companies to participate in work experience schemes run through the Chamber of Commerce that offers immigrants an opportunity to work for 6-8 weeks and gain NZ experience. A pilot scheme is running in Auckland currently – lobby to have the scheme extended nation wide and funded long term

- **Promote positive examples of successful immigrant employment and promote them as widely as possible:**

Something like 79% of long term unemployed immigrants indicated to the New Kiwis programme that they would travel anywhere in NZ for the right job.

With most businesses employing 5 or fewer staff, the employer worries about the impact of employing someone from a different culture on the workplace dynamics

Immigrants may need support to fit in – local slang, learning the rules of rugby so they can chat in the lunchroom etc

Employers need to be reminded that a successful business reflects its community. If they limit their staff to only New Zealand Europeans, they are missing the growing immigrant market (particularly in Auckland) which is represented by immigrant and refugee groups.

Scribe: Moira McLean

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About the Speakers WORKSHOP 1: EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Facilitator: Colleen Brooker – BPW Auckland

Speakers: Elizabeth Smith and Leah Gates, Auckland Chamber of Commerce and Industry “New Kiwis” Programme

Elizabeth Smith and **Leah Gates** are both employed by the Auckland Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has contracted with both the NZ Immigration Service and Work & Income New Zealand to link the skills of migrants to the needs of New Zealand employers.

In respect of the NZ Immigration Service, the Chamber facilitates and promotes migrant employment on a national basis. The main conduit for that initiative is the New Kiwis website (www.newkiwis.co.nz).

In respect of Work and Income New Zealand, the Auckland Chamber of Commerce arranges for the provision of work experience to migrants who have been specifically nominated to the Chamber.

Elizabeth Smith, New Kiwis Co-ordinator, has overall responsibility for the New Kiwis project.

Her educational background comprises professional human resources studies (Institute of Personnel and Development). She brings a wealth of practical hands-on management experience from undertaking roles in a variety of industries including Executive Recruitment Consulting in both the private and public sector, both in New Zealand and overseas.

Leah Gates, Auckland Chamber Special Projects, designed and developed the New Kiwis project from conception to successful working model.

Leah has employed and managed over 100 staff in New Zealand. She has owned and run three successful SME businesses and brings this practical perspective and focus to assist in identifying the unique needs of New Zealand employers. With 20 years of overseas experience, her empathy and understanding of the challenges facing migrants is highly regarded.

Workshop One Transcript

Leah: Good afternoon, welcome, thank you very much for attending this session on employment. My name is Leah Gates, I'm from the Auckland Chamber of Commerce. I've had a variety of roles

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Leah: Good afternoon, welcome, thank you very much for attending this session on employment. My name is Leah Gates, I'm from the Auckland Chamber of Commerce. I've had a variety of roles

there but New Kiwis has been my major focus for the last two years. The Auckland Chamber of Commerce exists to support business. We have 7,000 members of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and our job is to support them to grow their business. To an extent, we also have a responsibility to the broader business community and the economic viability of Auckland.

Every quarter, the Chamber of Commerce has for many years now done an economic survey that looks at business confidence. One of the questions we ask is, "what is the greatest inhibitor to growth in your business" and consistently for the last three to four years, inability to hire skilled staff has been rated number two. Number one is demand and that's not surprising for a country of 4 million people. now. So inability to hire skilled staff rated is the greatest inhibitor to growth in the Auckland business community.

At the same time, we were aware, as anybody is who lives in Auckland, that our taxi drivers and our shop assistants appear to be incredibly over-qualified to be doing what they are doing. They are engineers, they are brain surgeons, they are architects, and everything but nurses seems to be the one we will accept into our community.

In 2001, with pilot funding from the Immigration Service, we set up a scheme called New Kiwis. The scheme has a twofold purpose; the first aim of the New Kiwis project was to create a medium in which New Zealand employers could hire highly skilled migrant staff. The medium we chose was a recruitment website which we built. The address of that website is www.newkiwis.co.nz. It's a unique website in that it doesn't advertise job vacancies, it advertises the skills of migrants. So as a New Zealand employer we created the simplest and free, so cheapest option, to search for highly skilled staff.

The second aim of the project was slightly more esoteric and that was to change attitudes, particularly employer attitudes in the recruitment process and to some extent, inform the migrant community about some of the key issues that employers face. Elizabeth and I and various other people in the project spend a great deal of time out in migrant communities doing that, talking about New Zealand business communities and New Zealand business practices.

The project has been incredibly successful, slightly more so than we had anticipated I have to say. In our preparation for the pilot we thought we might get 1,000 migrants who were going to be active job seekers. We got 1,000 in the first three weeks. We've had close to 8,000 registrations in the last two years of highly skilled migrants living in New Zealand, actively seeking employment. I just want to clarify something here – these are not 8,000 unemployed people, these tend to be 8,000 people who are under-employed in that they are working as your shopkeepers, as your forecourt attendants at the service stations, McDonalds, Wendy's. These are all companies that have done extremely well out of the accountants and engineers that we've imported into New Zealand.

At any one time on the database, on the New Kiwis website, there are around 3,500 to 4,000 job seekers actively seeking employment. To date, we have placed 600 of them into meaningful employment. It's a good statistic – if you were a personnel agency, you'd be rich! But, it still leaves 3,500 highly skilled people looking for work.

In the second year we expanded and that's where we are now. The first thing we did in the expansion was to take New Kiwis national. This was an easy decision. 79% of the New Kiwis registered on this site indicated they would move for the right job. A very large number of the employer phone calls, that we were getting, were from Te Puke, Invercargill, Dunedin, New Plymouth – all crying out for highly skilled people in their towns. So there was a definite paradox. While it

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WORKSHOP 1: EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

appears to be an Auckland problem and migrants will tend to move to where their community base might be (which will tend to be Auckland) there is a real opportunity to fulfill the needs of the smaller communities in terms of highly skilled knowledge base. The potential also exists to move a "problem" out of Auckland, or more correctly reduce the over-supply in Auckland in favour of other regions.

The other thing we've done with New Kiwis, and this is really Elizabeth's field of expertise, is a work experience project in conjunction with Work and Income NZ. This project is for migrants who have been in New Zealand for longer than two years and haven't found employment of any kind and found themselves on an unemployment benefit. A very large proportion of them, a surprisingly large proportion of them, are highly skilled migrants. This is not an unskilled group – as many as 12% of the unemployed in Auckland – are accountants, lawyers, teachers and graduates with PhD's.

We have run, and continue to run, a national marketing campaign. I understand there are delegates here from outside Auckland of town - 12% of the people we've placed with New Kiwis have been placed out of Auckland so that in itself has been quite successful.

In this workshop, we're talking about employment for migrant and refugee women particularly. However, I should clarify New Kiwis is not targeted specifically at women, its targeted at migrants in general. We're going to talk about, from an employer perspective, what are the barriers they perceive, what are the barriers that are real, how can we assist migrant women and refugee women to overcome those barriers, both to recognize them and work with them, or work around them.

The first thing I think we need to be really clear on is that it's a buyer's market and any of you as employers sitting here know that if you put a job vacancy in a newspaper, you're probably going to get 50 to 60 responses which is a workload that most employers can't be bothered dealing with as it's a huge cost to deal with that number. What happens in reality is that they get a stack of CV's. Any name they don't recognize they'll put in the "no go" pile. Anybody's whose name is Bill Smith, pretty much ends up at the top of pile. Anybody's whose name is Rajendra Singh will pretty much end up in the "no go" pile and that is an assumption that happens before you've looked at anything else. That's just what happens with the first name and a whole bunch of assumptions are happening around that, and that's a reality.

The other reality, and this is a widely held belief in the migrant community, is that New Zealand employers are racists. You'd be forgiven for thinking that if you are a migrant because every day in our office we meet with people who have been with people who have been here for three or four months, they've sent out 300 applications and CV's and they have received 300 rejection letters. The cost to someone to build back emotionally and mentally, from this sort of experience is huge.

So, there is a widely held belief in the migrant community that New Zealand employers are racist but it's not true. We spend a lot of time speaking to migrants, saying this is not true. I've yet to meet a racist New Zealand employer, I really have. What I do meet every day and what I do recognize is that New Zealand employers are risk minimisers. They have a lot of challenges in their business and when they are employing staff, the risk perception of migrants increases noticeably against somebody whose name is Bill Smith, for example.

A couple of major of things that New Zealand employers deal with. The first one is that 85% of New Zealand companies employ five people or less. These are not big businesses where you can employ a migrant, sit them in the back room and have little or no impact on the business. If you are one person in five, you have a massive impact on that business, particularly culturally. So they're looking for someone who can fit in, who can talk about the rugby on Monday morning, who can swap

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We have run, and continue to run, a national marketing campaign. I understand there are delegates here from outside Auckland of town - 12% of the people we've placed with New Kiwis have been placed out of Auckland so that in itself has been quite successful.

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The first thing I think we need to be really clear on is that it's a buyer's market and any of you as employers sitting here know that if you put a job vacancy in a newspaper, you're probably going to get 50 to 60 responses which is a workload that most employers can't be bothered dealing with as it's a huge cost to deal with that number. What happens in reality is that they get a stack of CV's. Any name they don't recognize they'll put in the "no go" pile. Anybody's whose name is Bill Smith, pretty much ends up at the top of pile. Anybody's whose name is Rajendra Singh will pretty much end up in the "no go" pile and that is an assumption that happens before you've looked at anything else. That's just what happens with the first name and a whole bunch of assumptions are happening around that, and that's a reality.

The other reality, and this is a widely held belief in the migrant community, is that New Zealand employers are racists. You'd be forgiven for thinking that if you are a migrant because every day in our office we meet with people who have been with people who have been here for three or four months, they've sent out 300 applications and CV's and they have received 300 rejection letters. The cost to someone to build back emotionally and mentally, from this sort of experience is huge.

So, there is a widely held belief in the migrant community that New Zealand employers are racist but it's not true. We spend a lot of time speaking to migrants, saying this is not true. I've yet to meet a racist New Zealand employer, I really have. What I do meet every day and what I do recognize is that New Zealand employers are risk minimisers. They have a lot of challenges in their business and when they are employing staff, the risk perception of migrants increases noticeably against somebody whose name is Bill Smith, for example.

A couple of major of things that New Zealand employers deal with. The first one is that 85% of New Zealand companies employ five people or less. These are not big businesses where you can employ a migrant, sit them in the back room and have little or no impact on the business. If you are one person in five, you have a massive impact on that business, particularly culturally. So they're looking for someone who can fit in, who can talk about the rugby on Monday morning, who can swap

stories about Shortland Street, those sort of things. That's a reality.

The other reality is that as businesses are small, nobody has one job. Everybody has to be able to multi-task in a New Zealand company. They have to be able to answer the phone, take a customer enquiry, even if they are the accountant. They have to be prepared to empty the rubbish bins at the end of the day because we're too poor to employ a cleaner. How many of you here have that sort of business or work in that sort of business? We all do. I mean, I run those sorts of businesses. Again, the perception is that somebody who has come from overseas and has worked in a company of 1,000 people in Beijing just isn't going to be able to understand that sort of concept. There is a degree of truth in that.

Those are the some of the constraints that New Zealand business people face. We are under-resourced; we are under-resourced in terms of human-resource, we are under-resourced financially. Therefore, New Zealand businesses have almost zero time for induction and almost zero time for training. They need to know that the person they employ will walk in the door at 8.30 on Monday morning and hit the ground running. The employer wants the new employer to be able to do the job on Monday morning, which means we value competency above qualifications. This is a paradox because our immigration policy rewards qualification, rather than competency and its simply because you can't measure competency in any easy way but you can measure qualifications.

Somebody who has three PhD's is astounded they cannot find a job in New Zealand, but a New Zealand employer is looking at them thinking "boy, three PhD's is really good but at the end of the day, will they be able to do the job at 9 o'clock on Monday morning" and that's their fear.

A recent study rated the factors New Zealand considered when employing migrants. Factor number one – English language skill. There is no way around this. It's priority one for New Zealand employers and its priority one not only because of the job they're doing. I mean you may have employed someone to do data entry, but at the end of the day because of the multi-tasking and the small company, they're going to have to be able to talk to clients and your company is going to need to feel competent that they can do that. So English language skills come up as number one and in truth, and I think we all have admit this, New Zealanders are fairly intolerant of language skills and accents. So English language, priority one.

What happens for many migrants, if they don't find employment, is that they end up in their community groups and their language skills don't improve. In some instances, they actually retrench and the longer they are unemployed and sitting at home with their community group or family, the worse their English gets. What is incredibly noticeable (and this is something that the English language schools won't like me telling you) is that in learning English in the workplace grows the ability to communicate very quickly and it grows much faster than in a structured learning environment.

In this workshop, we're going to talk about strategies and how, I hope, we assist migrant women and refugee women into employment and there are, as you can see, some fairly significant barriers. I'll just raise one other barrier and again we all know this intrinsically but there is data on it. 70% of jobs are never advertised. They don't go through newspapers or on website. 70% of people employed are employed through the "who you know" network and this is part of our small business thing, we don't have time to read 50 CV's, the small business owner. They're going to say to their friend "hey do you know anybody who is a really good credit controller, I'm looking for someone, do you know anybody who is a receptionist, do you know a good accountant?" Looking around this room, how many of you got jobs that you didn't apply for, that you picked up the phone, you knew somebody,

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WORKSHOP 1: EMPLOYMENT AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

most of us. There's a major problem for the migrant community. 70% of jobs are never hitting the public forum. They can't apply for them.

So one of the strategies that New Kiwis doesn't address, but something that this organization could address is how to build the networks for migrant women. At the end of the day, employers are making assumptions based on the CV and often they don't get past the name. If you don't get past the name, you're making an assumption on the English language skill the person may have. Bear in mind, that if you're from Bombay you've been taught in English, you speak better English than most of us. There are a lot of assumptions that go on. Building a network is the best way to get around those assumptions.

Building language skills – how can we do that? Particularly for women who end up in the home, they have less opportunity to build language skills than perhaps their husbands who have found work in some format. There's a particularly stunning organization called ESOL, who in a volunteer way go into homes and teach conversational English.

The other problem or solution or strategy is to create a New Zealand CV. I'm sure all of us who have recruited staff can pick a migrant CV just like that, because usually on the first page they've got nine degrees. So yes, there are some CV strategies and almost all migrant CV's need quite a lot of work to turn it into a New Zealand format.

Work experience is the second greatest inhibitor, or barrier if you like, that employers perceive. In some respects, it is because of culture. There's a sense that if this person has worked in a New Zealand company, they will have a sense of what our corporate culture is, what our Kiwi culture is and again, that's really Elizabeth's field of expertise, work experience.

The other thing that I'd like to talk about and again, as a strategy for this group, is early intervention. We touched on it and again, it's more Elizabeth's field of expertise and she can talk to you about what happens if that settlement outcome, that settlement process gets disrupted by employment for a period much longer than six weeks. You start to develop a whole set of other issues which are harder to overcome.

Elizabeth: I think the key issue is getting a network. People coming into New Zealand aren't prepared for that. It seems to be an Australasian habit to actually say to someone "well I'm sorry but do you have any New Zealand working experience". I don't quite know what New Zealand working experience is that makes it so special. So it's a major deterrent to anybody who has come from another country, of course if they've never been to New Zealand before, of course they won't have any New Zealand work experience. They all sit there and say to us "how do I get New Zealand work experience?"

So that leads us on to one of the initiatives at the Chamber, and it compliments beautifully with the nationwide New Kiwis website, free recruitment service, and that is a work experience programme specifically addressing those very issues. Fortunately, being part of the Chamber, we have a fairly ready network in terms of Chamber members that we lobby, that we market to, that we do presentations to, to encourage a warm reception for migrants.

We also market to the Auckland business community at large and we are just about to commence the third work experience programme and interest and motivation is increasing. I think that's pretty heartening. We have some wonderful successes as a result of the work experience programmes and a large number of the employment opportunities often have a permanent prospect, based on the individual's performance. That's absolutely great and that does happen, they get a permanent opportunity directly from that work experience.

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Other outcomes which are all very pleasing is that they get a reference based on their performance, they get to know more about networking, their confidence increases, their skill and knowledge increases and quite often, they find employment within a very short time of having completed work experience. As I say, that is something we do in conjunction with Work and Income NZ and its going very, very well.



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WORKSHOP 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Suggested BPW Projects

- **Ideas for individual BPW club members:**

Educate yourself on other cultures, through books, the Internet and similar tools.

Talk to other people and raise their awareness.

Offer support and friendship to refugee and migrant women.

Help refugee and migrant women to become socially integrated, perhaps through a hobby or craft group (rather than starting with an English language class).

Locate the migrants and refugees in your community through schools, local Councils or churches.

Become a volunteer Home Tutor.

Support migrant or refugee children to join groups or clubs with your own children.

Help refugee and migrant women to access support services that are available in your community.

- **Ideas for BPW Club projects:**

Lobby for changes to current immigration and resettlement policies.

Work with resettlement centres to support those moving into their local community to live.

Become part of a volunteer home tutor scheme or homework centre mentoring.

Act as a sponsor or referee to enable women to resettle here and gain employment.

Offer scholarships.

Scribe: Catherine Webster

Participants in this workshop offered a challenge to every BPW club in New Zealand to run a club meeting to raise awareness of the challenges these refugee or migrant women face settling into New Zealand and to report back to the BPW Federation within 6 months

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About the Speakers

Facilitator: Gwen Needham – BPW Whangarei

Speaker: Jannie Van Hees, Auckland College of Education lecturer specialising in refugee and migrant issues

Jannie van Hees, Auckland College of Education, for the last 12 years, has dedicated her work to educational, linguistic and societal support for students, families and people generally, from language backgrounds other than English. Such people range from those who are now long-term residents of New Zealand, to those who recent new immigrants. Refugee families / people are a special group as they do not and cannot choose beginning life in a new country. Their needs are both the same and different to other immigrants.

She has years of experience as a classroom teacher at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both in New Zealand and internationally. She has been intensely involved in the professional development of teachers, (and other adults working with migrant and refugee students/families/people), providing in-depth training and in-service, so that students from language backgrounds other than English can access New Zealand education and society as effectively and inclusively as possible.

Jannie has developed numbers of local and national programmes for the Ministry of Education, including the Home-School Partnership programme, the Oracy, Literacy, Learning Initiative, the English Language Assistants programme. These are recognized as highly effective and impacting programmes. Additionally, key resources developed by her, for the Ministry of Education, the Auckland College of Education and privately, are regarded as key difference-making documents, and materials.

Her areas of expertise include: language and linguistics; transition processes; developing cultural understandings; bilingualism; home-school partnerships, refugees and refugee issues; ESOL teaching and learning; oracy, literacy, learning development - assessment, methodologies and practices; whole school professional development; working with disadvantaged community schools and students.

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WORKSHOP 2: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Workshop Two Transcript

You have already heard my name. I'm from Sudan and I came as a refugee from Kenya. Its not easy to come to a new home and establish a home. For some of us, its not easy to establish a new home where you don't have any support from your own people or from others. Its really hard for people to establish homes and its really hard for people who don't have a background in English as New Zealand is an English speaking country.

So for me, although I came with a little bit of English, its still hard for me. What encouraged me is that I have a background of education from where I come from, although its not that good because of the war which troubled my education and my progress in my life.

When I came to New Zealand it's hard, but I don't prepare myself like those who have a background in education and in English. For me, what encouraged me and what made it a little bit easier is that I have a bit of English, but when I came in here I present my papers and it was really hard for me to continue my education. I was told your papers are not recognized so you have to go for English again, so I went for English in six months in Wellington, Upper Hutt up to now. So I did six months English to qualify me for further studies so when I moved down here I went on another course for one year to qualify me to do a little bit of work, keep me busy, adding to my family. So I finish that course and I'm doing a part-time job now in St Johns Hospital.

I encouraged myself to go to MIT to do social work course for two years, but I didn't finish, I did one year. When I go back it was very hard for me, everything is new again, you have to go into computer and look for information and I just look like dumb in front of the class. I managed to finish one year with my assignments, sometimes I write them, sometimes someone type them for me. Then I said, I'm not busy, I have to go back and do a little bit of computer, so I'm doing computer now for three months and then next year I'll finish my diploma.

So its still hard for me because English is my second language and then I have a third language because in Sudan we have our own language, we have Arabic which is our international language for us, that's like national language but international. All Arab speak the same so that's what we do. So for me, that's how I encourage myself to do a little bit of work.

I feel sorry for those ones who have no support from anywhere; they don't have a education so they can do something for themselves or for their kids. Like here in New Zealand the key focus of work for the kids at their school is for the parents to support their kids to do their homework and everything. But if you don't have any language its really hard for those women, to support their kids. Like we have women who have been accepted here in New Zealand who don't have husbands. Some are widows, they don't have husbands and they deal with their kids themselves. Its really hard, they don't have support from anywhere so it's good today to come here and see other women, women who are really isolated from the community. We have, particularly in my community back home, skills like braiding and all sorts of things which, if they are supported and encouraged, allows them do something for themselves such as setting up a business. But they need (English) classes. There are classes but not in every area. In south Auckland there is no support.

The other thing too, with education it is good for someone to have a little bit of education. For example when you go to the hospital you need an interpreter. You need your privacy for yourself when you're sick and an interpreter has to come between you and the Doctor. If you don't take your kids to the Doctor because you need someone to come and translate between you and the Doctor and then there

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is the worry over that, so its really hard.

Women need to speak for themselves, if there's no encouragement there's no language. Or communication is erratic because not everything is understood. Its hard for someone to say "oh, I have this or" when they don't know all the words or where an interpreter has to be there - you need your privacy.

So if those women get a little bit of English, then they get some support, some encouragement, so they can fend for themselves, do something for themselves, learn to do things. Because if there is opportunity out there and you don't know how to go about it, its really hard but if you have someone to support you and show you where are those privileges that are there for you, it makes it easier for you.

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WORKSHOP 3: HEALTH

New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world that does not exclude refugees on the grounds of health, or on medical issues. There is no screening program for refugees prior to their arrival in New Zealand. Full medical and dental examinations are given upon arrival and records are later handed to individuals after completion of their 6-week resettlement programme at the Mangere Refugee and Migrant Centre is completed.

Upon departure from the Refugee Centre, they are sent out into the wider New Zealand community, to fend for themselves. This often presents a rude awakening, where it is much harder to get medical treatment. There are fewer support services readily available and a lack of communication skills about medical issues. In many instances, men are responsible for the children's healthcare and for contraception. There is often limited or no access to a midwife in their own culture. Female genital mutilation is not usually an issue when refugee women first arrive in New Zealand as it is culturally acceptable in their homeland, but during integration into Western thoughts on the practice, this can change.

Refugee and migrant women can often put on considerable weight. Fatty diets prepared by the women in their home countries are more suited to hotter climates and greater physical labour on a daily basis. If diets are not modified and there is also an increase in sugar intake, this causes problems. Privacy and religious issues, including being ridiculed for their national dress, can prevent refugee and migrant women from joining a gym or exercising publicly.

Possible BPW Projects

- Provide help and explanation of how to use New Zealand health systems.
- Read or translate letters to or from medical specialists.
- Help to prevent community isolation by befriending local refugee and migrant women – something as little as a smile in the street does wonders for mental health (even our own!).
- Acknowledge that different cultures have different trigger factors for traumas and mental health

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WORKSHOP 3: HEALTH

New Zealand is one of the few countries in the world that does not exclude refugees on the grounds of health, or on medical issues. There is no screening program for refugees prior to their arrival in New Zealand. Full medical and dental examinations are given upon arrival and records are later handed to individuals after completion of their 6-week resettlement programme at the Mangere Refugee and Migrant Centre is completed.

Upon departure from the Refugee Centre, they are sent out into the wider New Zealand community, to fend for themselves. This often presents a rude awakening, where it is much harder to get medical treatment. There are fewer support services readily available and a lack of communication skills about medical issues. In many instances, men are responsible for the children's healthcare and for contraception. There is often limited or no access to a midwife in their own culture. Female genital mutilation is not usually an issue when refugee women first arrive in New Zealand as it is culturally acceptable in their homeland, but during integration into Western thoughts on the practice, this can change.

Refugee and migrant women can often put on considerable weight. Fatty diets prepared by the women in their home countries are more suited to hotter climates and greater physical labour on a daily basis. If diets are not modified and there is also an increase in sugar intake, this causes problems. Privacy and religious issues, including being ridiculed for their national dress, can prevent refugee and migrant women from joining a gym or exercising publicly.

Possible BPW Projects

- Provide help and explanation of how to use New Zealand health systems.
- Read or translate letters to or from medical specialists.
- Help to prevent community isolation by befriending local refugee and migrant women – something as little as a smile in the street does wonders for mental health (even our own!).
- Acknowledge that different cultures have different trigger factors for traumas and mental health

Scribe: Deborah Lagdon

About the Speakers

Facilitator: Rosh Benjamin – BPW Whangarei

Speakers: Annette Mortensen, Refugee Health Coordinator, Public Health Services, Auckland District Health Board and Dr Alison McLeod, Mangere Refugee & Migrant Resettlement Medical Centre

Annette Mortensen is currently the Refugee Co-ordinator for the Auckland District Health Board and has held this position since November 2000. She completed a Masters of Philosophy (distinction) in Nursing from Massey University in 2001, her thesis topic being the management of sexual health nursing practice in New Zealand. She also holds post-graduate qualifications in clinical supervision, counsellor training and education. She is an honorary clinical lecturer in nursing at the University of Auckland and has been an active member of the Auckland Refugee Network.

Annette has presented and co-authored a number of academic papers over the past 5 years on refugee health issues including the following:

Mortensen A.C & Birukila, G. (Nov 2002) '*Sexual and reproductive health in refugee communities in New Zealand*'

Mortensen, A.C & Young, N. (24 May 2002) 'Refugees and asylum seekers in the emergency department: Providing culturally competent and effective care'

Mortensen, A & Mendelsohn, E (March 2001) '*Post traumatic Stress Disorder and Women from refugee backgrounds in New Zealand*'

Dr Alison McLeod practiced as a house surgeon in various Auckland hospitals and in England over the past 25 years. She is currently a part-time Medical Officer at the Mangere Refugee & Resettlement Centre. At the Centre, she helps to administer a comprehensive medical screening programme for incoming refugees to New Zealand.

She is also a part time doctor for the Family Planning Association in the South Auckland area. She has a particularly strong interest in sexual health issues. For 10 years she worked as a doctor in the Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care organisation and has also worked as a Medical Officer in schools and homes with Public Health nurses located in the South Auckland area

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WORKSHOP 3: HEALTH

Workshop Three Transcript

Alison: I work for the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre which is in Massey Road, Mangere and I thought I'd give you a wee bit of background about my work there and then Annette will tell you what happens in the community.

The New Zealand Immigration Service bring in 750 refugees every year into New Zealand and those are the people that I normally deal with. The 750 don't arrive all at once. They arrive in intakes of around 120 to 130 at a time and they stay with us at the Refugee Centre in Mangere for six weeks until before being re-housed into the community.

Mangere is a residential centre and there are five organisations, or at least five, who work there. Obviously first of all there is the New Zealand Immigration Service ("NZIS") who run the facility and services there. This is what the facility looks like. It's an old army camp and these are some of the office buildings there. You can basically see what it looks like. These are the offices and these are the accommodation areas.

One of the other organisations that work at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre is the Refugee & Migrant Service and they are known as "R&M" and they have a very difficult role, the issue of resettling all the refugees. It can be quite a struggle finding accommodation for them. A lot of people want to remain in Auckland but as you are aware, accommodation is increasingly difficult to find in Auckland. There are some other communities in Christchurch and a lot of other ethnic resettlement areas in Wellington, Hamilton and also in Napier now. So they have quite a difficult time dealing with the resettlement issues.

The next agency that works there is AUT, the Auckland University of Technology and they run a centre for education and I'll just show you some of the classrooms. These classrooms are quite old and AUT are currently bringing in new classrooms there. So that's some of the classrooms, the volley ball court and the playground for the children.

AUT assess everyone for their language capabilities, that's in their own mother tongue and also, they assess them for the English language skills. A lot of people, particularly the women of course, have never had any access to any education and are illiterate in their own language but this is all determined by the AUT staff,

They run school facilities ranging from an early childhood centre where all the under fives attend, to primary school classes, college classes and education classes, particularly English language for the adults and all the people are expected to attend.

In the afternoons they run classes, teaching people how New Zealand services and systems work.

Another organisation in the building next to us, is Refugees And Survivors ("RAS") who are a counselling service for refugees and then there's us. We are funded by the Auckland District Health Board and that's a picture of our facilities there.

At the medical clinic, we run a comprehensive medical screening programme. Don't worry about all that, it doesn't fit on there, but this is a flow chart as to what happens when the refugees arrive at our centre. They are welcomed. Well first of all, let me tell you who runs the centre. We have a part-time clerk, a full-time nurse and another nurse who has recently joined us who works part-time, myself and I just work half a day a week and another Doctor, Dr Martin Reeve, whose there part-time

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as well.

So when the refugees arrive, they are welcomed and informed about the medical screening services that are available and over the next weeks they have an initial screening which is their height and weight and ask if there's any problems, particularly if they are sick or on medication or are pregnant. They are tested, we have a mandatory test for tuberculosis. They then have a battery of blood tests taken and are asked for three faeces samples and a urine tests. Those adults over the age of 15 have a chest x-ray.

So that happens all in the first few days of their arrival. Then each refugee has a medical examination, either by myself, I deal with the women, the girls and the babies, and Martin deals with the men. Obviously we see any acute illness from day to day and that's dealt with and then they undergo a full medical screening and the other services we have there are the dentists that come in once a week and deal with any acute dental problems.

When the refugees leave they are handed a complete copy of all their medical records, that's everything, all the medical notes we have taken plus a copy of all their laboratory screening tests. They are advised, with the help of their sponsor, to take it to a local GP near where they have been resettled. Referrals are made obviously if they are acutely ill or unwell, or if there is an acute problem, referrals are made to the local hospital, either Middlemore or Auckland. Any non-urgent referrals are posted once they've left.

So that's basically a summary of what we do at the medical clinic and then they go out into the community and Annette will tell you what happens in the community.

Interlude – various people introduced themselves, said where they were from and what they did (job-wise).

Annette: Thank you for that. I'm a nurse too, like Alison, and I have a particular interest in sexual and reproductive health, having come from nine years of being nurse manager at Regional Sexual Health Services. While, when I applied for this job I didn't think that would be hugely relevant, it has turned out to be and I will explain why it is, that sexual and reproductive health issues particularly for refugee women are problematic.

I apologise if I'm going over issues that you already know, but I'm going to start with what is the definition of a refugee. I'm not sure if its been covered in the conference but as somebody mentioned in the back, mental health issues are first up, when we're talking about the health issues for refugee populations, because the definition of being a refugee is being mentally unwell. To be defined as someone whose been persecuted because of our colour, the company we keep, the race we are, the family we come from, the social group we come from, and to have to had fled our country or have to move from our village or town to somewhere safer within our country, is enough to make anyone mentally unwell.

This definition applies whether people have come as part of the United Nations quota or whether they've come as spontaneous refugees or asylum seekers. Everyone has to meet this definition.

(inaudible question from the floor)

Good question. If people come as the United Nations quota, they'll be interviewed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in the refugee camp and will be given that determination by the officials. If somebody has come as an asylum seeker, like they've come to Auckland airport, they'll be interviewed initially by border control staff, they will them pretty much mostly be detained at Mangere

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which is the centre Alison just showed you. Then, usually within a month or so they'll be interviewed by the refugee status branch of the NZIS and that branch has a whole research team who will be looking at what's going on in the country of origin. Getting refugee status is very hard. Only around 20% to 25% of people who apply for refugee status will get that first up. So, 80% to 85% of people, while life may have been incredibly difficult and they have been through a great deal of hardship, 85% won't be given refugee status.

(further inaudible question from the floor)

Technically yes, but in fact we know that Australia for instance has a whole different set of rules and processes to what we have. Even though the definition might be technically the same, the treatment and entitlements for asylum seekers in different countries vary dramatically. Asylum seekers in Australia who do manage to land in Australia and are able to make an application are called temporary visa holders which means they can't bring their family and often they're in that state for years and years and years. They are certainly many detained in the camps we have talked about for long periods of time and when they are in the community, they're often not entitled to the health services that people are here. It varies from country to country.

While we're on that point, in terms of eligibility for New Zealand public health services, whether people have come as quota, in which case they're resident on arrival, or whether they are asylum seekers who've made application but may not yet have been approved, everyone is entitled to New Zealand health services. There are some exceptions. Some people don't get work permits and that presents difficulties. Some people are declined and appeal their cases, in which case their community services cards are cut off and its particularly problematic providing services for those people who you can imagine are incredibly stressed. Eleanor can probably tell you a lot more about managing refugees as survivors.

Angela mentioned New Zealand's role in terms of our obligations as a signatory to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees convention about refugee resettlement. We have a long history of a high level of humanitarianism that is quite different to other countries. We haven't had the same restrictions and the same selectiveness towards resettlement that other countries so we haven't, until relatively recently, screened people on the grounds of health conditions. If you are trying to get into Canada or the United States or Australia, you will have to be in refugee camps. You'll be seen by a Doctor and if you're found to have HIV, you won't be selected. We don't do that.

We also have categories for people who have health difficulties that other countries won't select. For instance, we have 10% of our quota for people who have disabilities or medical conditions. Another 10% are called "women at risk" and that means women who have been in refugee camps without husbands or brothers or uncles or the people that you actually need to protect you in the unsafe situations that happen in refugee camps. What being a woman on your own, with your children frequently, means is that you are prey to sexual assault, its difficult to get food and water for your children, you're constantly at risk and under threat so obviously, women who have been in that situation are vulnerable, have mental health issues and often aren't wanted by resettlement countries because they pose long term mental health issues.

In terms of the numbers of people who are coming to New Zealand as refugees, as Alison said annually 753 through the quota, and on top of that roughly another 1,000 to 1,500 will come as asylum seekers, of whom 300 to 400 might get refugees status. But, people can be here for quite a long period of time before they're definitely declined. In addition to that, once people do get residence they can apply for their immediate family to come and those people arrive through the

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migrant stream and are classified as migrants but in fact might have come from the same refugee camp in the country as obviously their partner has been, so they're refugees but they're defined as migrants.

As I said, asylum seekers need to meet the same criteria before being classified as a refugee, as do quota refugees.

Again, I'm going to go back to Angela. You quite rightly said we have a high level of humanitarianism in terms of the people that we select and the fact we don't have any barriers on the grounds of health conditions. However, we have the poorest support systems once people get here. We have far fewer services for ethnic communities generally. Alison outlined the hub of the support services that are available at Mangere, but they're very small agencies with a huge job. Most of the support that we have is on arrival and once people come out of Mangere and are settled in the community, pretty much its left to mainstream agencies and the kindness of people like you as neighbours, as ESOL tutors, as citizens, to orient and befriend and help. Really, we don't really have a lot of support services in place at all.

Looking at the communities that have got established here over the last 20 years, I am also mindful that people often say "well, how long do people go on being refugees?". Are you still calling south-east Asian people who came from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam refugees? Surely, they are now well integrated? Initially when I first started this job two and a half years ago, those communities weren't so obvious to me and I had assumed that everyone was employed and getting on with their lives. Then I discovered that when I looked at it, we had in fact been talking about the Vietnamese community, that one third of that community were still not speaking English, there was twice the rate of unemployment than any other community in New Zealand, we had a large injection drug using community.

So, people ask me how long do people go on being refugees? I say you know, forever really, because it's a mix of things. The trauma stays with people and New Zealand has really been somewhat I think a little neglectful in terms of the support that's needed and how little there is.

Most people, sorry that's looking at sizes of communities, and currently and this is looking only at quota refugees but is also reflective of asylum seekers, the biggest communities are Iraqis followed by Somalians who are the biggest African community. I think somebody here is from Hamilton and Hamilton has around 800 people from Somalia, Auckland 2000. The next biggest are Ethiopians, the next biggest are Vietnamese.

Most people do stay in Auckland and even when people have been resettled in other places, they tend to come back to Auckland because of a sense of community, because if you're Muslim there's a Mosque here, there are Halal butchers, there are facilities here that aren't available in other places.

However, day by day its getting more difficult. What's happening is that people wishing to be housed in Auckland, increasingly they go far south to Manurewa or west to Ranui or needing resettle in Hamilton or Napier or Wellington or Christchurch. There is quite a lot of pressure because of our housing difficulties, to resettle outside of Auckland. That's certainly not the choice of many families.

I think what I want to do now is to bring the issues to life in terms of how it is for communities. I want to focus particularly on a Somali group, only because there has been quite a lot written about the Somali community.

I want to have a look at a community initiative. This one was started by some academics at Waikato University. It was a project that any one of us could have started if we wanted to. The project was, started out at looking at health and well-being among Somali women and the Somali community in

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Hamilton. The people who started this project had all sorts of ideas about what they were going to do and when they went and talked to Somali women, Somali women said they're biggest issues was that they were putting on weight, they couldn't get out of their houses and they wanted to work out basically, get fit, get out of the house and have some time for themselves and not put on weight.

I'm just going to work through some of the issues that came up in this study. What had been happening, and this has escalated since September 11th, is that harassment in the street had increased, women were being spat at and yelled at from cars, some had been physically attacked. People in Hamilton had been screaming at them to go back home. They weren't coming out of their houses and obviously, any one of us stuck at home are going to go quietly mad so mental health issues were certainly starting to become an issue.

The solutions this group came up with are quite interesting and quite contrary to what you would intuitively think. The issues were that these women hadn't been able to basically sort of adjust to New Zealand lifestyle because what many women had come from were rural lifestyles where you were walking to a well, walking to the market, walking to your farming plot so daily activity involved a lot of exercise. So, you didn't really need to think about going to the gym or anything like that because during your daily activities, you were getting a lot of exercise.

When this group looked at the traditional diet of Somali people it was really fatty meat and quite high in carbohydrates. If you are getting a lot of exercise, you can cope with it. As the Somali women said, when we went to market we would pick the fattiest meat because when we're walking around in the heat, it just dissolves. But eating the same diet here, we're all getting fat.

Obviously, if that activity goes on then along with enormous amounts of sugar, and if anyone has had the hospitality of the Somali community, there is loads of sugar in your tea. So diabetes and cardiovascular disease are a risk. Also, people weren't aware of how to use and how to cook vegetables in New Zealand. Carrots were not commonly used. Tomatoes were. Potatoes weren't common used. I've found this when talking to Plunket nurses too, that women have needed information about actually how to cook and prepare those foods, not just for adults but for babies. People can spend a lot of the household budget on prepared baby foods as they are really expensive.

Anyway, the women got together and what they decided to do was, the people organizing the group, decided they would approach a gym, a women's gym, to see if they could get a concession, which they managed to do. In order to meet the privacy requirements of the women, space was made available and the gym painted out all the glass on the doors so the women couldn't be seen, because that would have been quite embarrassing. There was a long period of negotiation about dress because Somali women wear the head-dress and obviously, its somewhat dangerous if your trying to do vigorous exercise when you're so close. There was a long period of negotiation about what would be a safe level of clothing which involved their Mullah at the Mosque, in terms of was this okay in terms of the Koran. All of this negotiation went on and so one group went off and did that and that was successful.

Another group didn't want to go to the gym but they did want to run around a rugby field. So after dark, this group came at 8 o'clock at night and ran around the rugby field, but if the car headlights shone on them, they went out of the spotlight.

I guess what I'm trying to convey is just how damn hard it is, if you're wearing colourful long clothing, you've got your head covered and you're trying to get some exercise in New Zealand society.

WORKSHOP 3: HEALTH

Hamilton. The people who started this project had all sorts of ideas about what they were going to do and when they went and talked to Somali women, Somali women said they're biggest issues was that they were putting on weight, they couldn't get out of their houses and they wanted to work out basically, get fit, get out of the house and have some time for themselves and not put on weight.

I'm just going to work through some of the issues that came up in this study. What had been happening, and this has escalated since September 11th, is that harassment in the street had increased, women were being spat at and yelled at from cars, some had been physically attacked. People in Hamilton had been screaming at them to go back home. They weren't coming out of their houses and obviously, any one of us stuck at home are going to go quietly mad so mental health issues were certainly starting to become an issue.

The solutions this group came up with are quite interesting and quite contrary to what you would intuitively think. The issues were that these women hadn't been able to basically sort of adjust to New Zealand lifestyle because what many women had come from were rural lifestyles where you were walking to a well, walking to the market, walking to your farming plot so daily activity involved a lot of exercise. So, you didn't really need to think about going to the gym or anything like that because during your daily activities, you were getting a lot of exercise.

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Anyway, this group is still going and the spin-off I guess is the people who ran the gym have sort of befriended the women and have also started getting involved in teaching women the English language, through the mechanism of explaining gym activities. Community members have been able to get together in a way that they haven't been able to before. The women feel now, because the men go off to Mosque on Fridays and they never get out of the house and now they have their time when they can have some space from the kids.

So that was just a small example of one group of people with hardly any money managed to achieve and I think its certainly a kind of project that people could take on, if they wanted to.

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WORKSHOP 4: RE-SETTLEMENT ISSUES – CHANGE, LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Suggested BPW Projects

Making initial contacts through Jennifer Janif of the Office of Ethnic Affairs, local schools, local authorities or the heads of refugee and migrant communities in each area. The Refugee and Migrant Service, together with the newly established Migrant Resource Centre in Mt Roskill, Auckland were also possible sources.

Utilise our business and professional women skills to act as mentors and provide work experience for refugee and migrant women to better help the employment prospects.

Follow the lead of BPW Australia, who had initiated two projects. In Canberra, Knit and Natter sessions had taken place with ethnic communities. In Victoria, BPW groups had made contact with isolated communities and provided them with free work experience and clothing.

Provide paid subscriptions to local BPW clubs for say, 2 years, to local women from refugee and migrant communities.

Utilise our new corporate membership to link refugee and migrant women and BPW members and organisations with similar skills.

Offer a “total immersion” programme whereby a refugee or migrant woman would stay in a BPW members’ household for say, three months, to provide New Zealand experience.

Offer 1 or 2 hours each week for English language conversation practice and sharing of skills, for example during informal cooking lessons or trips to the local supermarket. This also helped to prevent loneliness, which was a common problem when refugee and migrant women were stuck at home all day while their husbands were out at work.

Passing on advice about consumer laws in New Zealand to prevent refugee and migrant women from being ripped off by unscrupulous business people.

Scribe: Rosalie McKenzie

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About the Speakers

Facilitator: Colleen Edwards – BPW Hibiscus Coast

Speaker: Jennifer Janif, Office of Ethnic Affairs, Department of Internal Affairs

Jennifer Janif is a New Zealander of both Fijian Indian and Solomon Islands descent. She is a highly motivated Community Advisor, with a strong commitment to effectiveness for ethnic communities. She established and has operated the Office of Ethnic Affairs within the Department of Internal Affairs, NZ Government since September 2000. She developed this office whilst on a six months secondment from the Community Development, Identity Services Section of the Auckland Regional Office, Department of Internal Affairs.

She has been the Public Service Association union delegate for the Department for Internal Affairs since 1999. In 2002 she was granted a study award by the Department of Internal Affairs which enabled her to travel to Australia to study specific initiatives for ethnic communities and settlement programmes within that jurisdiction.

Jennifer is presently completing a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Sociology through Auckland University. In 2002, she completed the National Certificate in Public Sector Services, focusing on the customer services area. She is also a justice of the peace. Her personal interests include listening to Hindi music and reading.

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WORKSHOP 4: RE-SETTLEMENT ISSUES—CHANGE, LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS Script

Jennifer: Thank you Colleen, tena koutou katoa, warm pacific greetings and good afternoon to you all. A warm welcome to the delegates from overseas and outside the Auckland region and a warm welcome to you Patricia and Emily.

This afternoon I'll be doing a presentation on the Office Of Ethnic Affairs and also a community development project that I did with the Auckland Somalia Association here in Auckland.

The Office Of Ethnic Affairs is a stand alone unit within the Department of Internal Affairs. The position of the Office Of Ethnic Affairs is to help ethnic people to be seen, heard, included and accepted. As you all are aware in New Zealand, the ethnic sector is a growing sector among the New Zealand society. We do this through providing policy advice to Government and Government agencies and we do community development with the settling communities in New Zealand, and we also provide information to the ethnic sector and anybody else such as the NGO's or mainstream agencies that do need information about the ethnic sector.

I just want to touch on the word "ethnic". We use the word ethnic because it encompasses all the different communities within the ethnic sector. Within the ethnic communities, as the other transparencies will show, we have the migrant community, we have the refugee community and then we have the long term settled communities such as the Chinese, the Indians and people from the former Yugoslav. They were our earlier settlers and now we have the new communities settling. We are trying to be inclusive, so sometimes you hear the word "Asian" out there. Because people are not aware that Asian doesn't include all communities, for example I'm a Fiji Indian, but I'm categorized as a pacific islander, so I wouldn't fit in that box.

So who are the ethnic people? Ethnic people are focused from the offices on people whose ethnic heritage, culture and tradition distinguishes them from the majority in New Zealand. Some of you may be aware of Te Puni Kokere on the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, so "TPK" is there to provide a service to the Tangata Whenua or Maori people. The Minister of Pacific Island Affairs is there to provide services to the pacific island people. The Office Of Ethnic Affairs focuses on the migrant, refugee and long term settled communities.

So as an organisation, we report to the Minister for Ethnic Affairs who is His Honourable Chris Carter and as I mentioned earlier, we are a stand alone unit within the Department of Internal Affairs. Internal Affairs has a diversity of business units, such as processing of New Zealand passports, citizenship, community development, gaming and censorship.

The Office was established in 2001. We are a very small team and classed as community advisers and those of you who are Aucklanders know it's a huge area, so three of us are covering Auckland. There's a community adviser in Wellington, one in Christchurch and those two policy analysts and a small project team and they are all based in Wellington where our head office is.

As mentioned earlier on, we work with migrants, refugees, long term settled communities and New Zealand born descendants. We work with ethnic communities, which is made up of migrant communities and refugee communities. I know it's a bit confusing and I think what I'll do is elaborate a bit more on the differences between the migrant and refugee communities.

In the room here we have Emily who is a migrant woman and then we have Patricia, who came to New Zealand as a refugee. So the difference is Emily at some stage must have made a choice of

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In the room here we have Emily who is a migrant woman and then we have Patricia, who came to New Zealand as a refugee. So the difference is Emily at some stage must have made a choice of

coming to New Zealand, it's a choice factor and you migrate at a time when it is convenient to you and your family. Patricia, you probably didn't have a choice because of the circumstances, because of the war or whatever civil unrest in the country, you just have to flee for your life so most times, refugee people leave from their own home country into a second country of residence, sometimes a third country of residence. They can spend years in refugee camps waiting to be resettled and so they are at the mercy of United Nations who then chooses the resettlement country, I don't know how the processes work. Patricia can probably speak of it later on.

It is so particular, that whatever policies are written or whatever projects you do, please include everybody in the work that you do. When you use the word "migrants" we are missing the refugee community. When you talk about refugee communities, you are missing off the migrant community and long term settled communities. The priority needs will also be different and correct me if I'm wrong here Patricia, for the migrant community, a priority could be employment Emily? For the refugee community, a priority could be ongoing support in terms of health, housing and English language and so forth.

Then you have the New Zealanders, the early settlers. For them the priority may be language maintenance because they've been here so long that they've lost their language. We work with the ethnic communities and then Government and local authorities as well for resettlement of these communities.

What do we do at Ethnic Affairs? We advise Government about issues affecting ethnic people. My next slide will show what some of the issues are:

- Provide a point of contact between Government and ethnic people and communities. In my role as a community adviser, I spend a lot of time in the community working with the different communities, trying to establish that community, trying to find out from them what the issues are, what their needs area.
- We offer an information service for NGO's – Government agencies and ethnic communities and individuals as well so they can then get access to Government services.
- Promoting inter-cultural awareness in New Zealand. As we are all aware, we come to New Zealand with our traditions and our cultures and so now New Zealand society is now becoming very diverse and if we don't have understanding of one another's cultures, it creates problems for us. So I say it's a two way street where we see New Zealand as our host society, as a home we have chosen or has been chosen for us, so we have to learn the culture of the host society and also for better integration, the host society has to know about us as well.

So some of the issues affecting ethnic people – more responsive Government policies and services, especially in the area of education, employment, housing, health, policing settlement and resettlement. So ethnic people want to be accepted and included and they want to participate fully in the economic, social and political life in New Zealand, have equal access to services and have their cultures respected and valued as well.

We have some statistics from the 2001 Census. As you will see, the ethnic sector is 10% and the Asian community alone, is 6.7% and we have overtaken the pacific people, especially in Auckland where most of our Asian communities are settled. Its projected, I don't know by when, but in times to come the New Zealand Europeans will become a minority.

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WORKSHOP 4: RE-SETTLEMENT ISSUES—CHANGE, LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

So that was my presentation on the function of our office. My next presentation is on the community development project that I did with the Somalia Association here in Auckland. We've got the definition of community development, which is a process whereby the efforts of Government are united with those of the people, to improve the social, cultural and economic conditions in communities.

A bit of background about the Somali community. The Somali community is a refugee community by the way. So the Somali state collapsed in early 1991 leading to a catastrophic civil war that claimed the lives of thousands of Somalis. As mentioned earlier on, most refugee people do spend time in refugee camps so they too have spent time living in Kenya, years spent. New Zealand is one of the 10 resettlement countries. Some of the others are Australia, Canada and Sweden.

An interesting factor here in terms of settlement, or resettlement for refugee communities is that the Somali community as my next slide will show, in Auckland was settled in 1993 and it was not until like Ethnic Affairs and other agencies that began addressing the issues for the community in 2000, that they have been successfully integrating into communities. It just highlights that support is not there for the newer communities and it makes it very difficult for settlement.

The Somali community was established in 1992 and most of the members live in Mt Albert, Owairaka and Mt Roskill. There is also a Somali community in Christchurch, Hamilton, Hastings and Wellington.

The Office Of Ethnic Affairs in Auckland was established in 2001 and I have the privilege of establishing the office in Auckland. At that time, when I was doing my rounds of introduction with Government agencies, some of the key Government stakeholders expressed concerns that were faced by the Somali community. They still had issues around resettlement in terms of health, housing, employment and education.

I decided that unlike the other Government agencies, I wasn't going to sit around the table with the others and listen to what they had to say, I wanted to go into the community, I was going to go into the community and find out what the issue was directly from the affected community. That's why we call it the community development approach, which is to listen to the communities themselves, instead of sitting at our desks and assuming what the issues are.

There's a business unit within the Department of Internal Affairs called Community Development. Together with a colleague from Community Development we organized a visioning and strategic planning session. The Executive of the Somali community attended this, included both male and female because most times you hear that is males that take the lead roles, but I have to say working with the Somali community that's not it, everyone both male and female took part in the process.

The Executive were wonderful. They had identified their main issues as housing, education, health, employment and sport. The priority was they needed a centre that would be a hub for the activities such as adult literacy classes, information services and so forth. Since they had identified that's what their need is, I was in the facilitation role, working with them to find the centre.

Some of you may or may not have heard of the Shakti Migrant Trust. Already in the area of Three Kings is Shakti, an African and Asian women's centre. What we did was we worked with the board of trustees for Shakti and came to an agreement that there could be a possible partnership between the two organisations. That was achieved successfully since most of the refugee communities live in the Owairaka/Mt Roskill area, that location was an ideal place.

Once the partnership deal was completed, the centre keys were handed over to the Executive in April 2002 and the agreement, for which I applaud the Somali community, was they knew the difficulty in

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obtaining resources and Patricia, you can relate to that in terms of funding and community centres. So they very kindly agreed, to other refugee communities in the area, sharing that centre. In that area we have the Ethiopian community, the Congolese community, Afghani communities and some Kurds and some Sudanese and they are all refugees. Some migrant communities are also using that centre so its just great – a sharing of the resources.

Some of the current service provision at the centre is information and advocacy, parenting skills, TB awareness which is run by Public Health and education on child-birth, adult literacy programmes funded by the Ministry of Education. From Monday to Thursday, from 6pm to 9pm, the classes conducted there are basic English, basic computers and basic maths. The outcomes, once this project was completed, was that it created some employment opportunities for the community members. The adult literacy programme itself has a project leader, an administrator, computers and for the parenting skills and TB awareness and education on child-birth, Marama (who was here earlier, but has moved on) works as a facilitator and interpreter for Public Health and Well Women's Group. So it has provided some job opportunities for community members.

With the health issues, its enabled those agencies to work in an appropriately cultural framework. Also it has led to better integration into New Zealand society through enhancing through the adult literacy programme and also through sports. I was told by an elder of the Somali community this morning, that I mustn't forget sports because most of the Somali youth love their soccer so one of the youngsters has made it to the Junior All Whites, which is just great. That's some of the outcomes.

The conclusion to this project has been that hearing directly from those communities, the migrant and refugee communities as to what they need, is going into those communities for Government officials or NGO's, not sitting behind our desks and assuming what the issue is. Most times, they know what the issue is, what the solution is, so our role is basically to facilitate the process. Also during this process, we brought in interpreters from the Somali community. One would say, "now we're in New Zealand, we should learn to speak the language". I agree. We have to learn the language, but for people coming from a non-English speaking background, it takes a bit of time. If we give them the opportunity to express themselves in their own language then one of the issues highlighted will probably be English classes. We can work towards that.

At the same time, with all migrant and refugee communities, we come with our culture and tradition. So there are differences there. We worked with a very positive manner. Within the Somali community you have different tribes and clans, so we worked positively with them to develop a cohesive unit and most of the work was done by them and at the end of the day, the projects got to be driven by those communities affected. People like myself and others who do work with the communities, like Patricia who does wonderful work, we are there only to facilitate the process.

During that time, we as workers spend working with the community, what it enables is the upskilling and transferring of skills to those community workers. By the time I completed this project, the community leader had moved into full-time employment with Public Health and a few other of the Executive had either gone on to work in supermarkets or were driving taxis. So I thought that was wonderful, to see two or three having gone into employment. Those are some of the keys to success.

For those of you hear from Australia, you may have heard of this woman. I just wanted to sum up my presentation with a statement made by Ela Watson, who is an Australian aboriginal activist:

"If you come here to help me, you're wasting your time. But, if you come here because your liberation is bound in mine, let us begin."

obtaining resources and Patricia, you can relate to that in terms of funding and community centres. So they very kindly agreed, to other refugee communities in the area, sharing that centre. In that area we have the Ethiopian community, the Congolese community, Afghani communities and some Kurds and some Sudanese and they are all refugees. Some migrant communities are also using that centre so its just great – a sharing of the resources.

Some of the current service provision at the centre is information and advocacy, parenting skills, TB awareness which is run by Public Health and education on child-birth, adult literacy programmes funded by the Ministry of Education. From Monday to Thursday, from 6pm to 9pm, the classes conducted there are basic English, basic computers and basic maths. The outcomes, once this project was completed, was that it created some employment opportunities for the community members. The adult literacy programme itself has a project leader, an administrator, computers and for the parenting skills and TB awareness and education on child-birth, Marama (who was here earlier, but has moved on) works as a facilitator and interpreter for Public Health and Well Women's Group. So it has provided some job opportunities for community members.

With the health issues, its enabled those agencies to work in an appropriately cultural framework. Also it has led to better integration into New Zealand society through enhancing through the adult literacy programme and also through sports. I was told by an elder of the Somali community this morning, that I mustn't forget sports because most of the Somali youth love their soccer so one of the youngsters has made it to the Junior All Whites, which is just great. That's some of the outcomes.

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WORKSHOP 4: RE-SETTLEMENT ISSUES—CHANGE, LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

And that's the process of community development. Thank you. Colleen just mentioned – I'm a migrant woman myself. I came to New Zealand in 1989. I do speak English. English is my second language, I'm bilingual but there are times when I still process information in my own language and then reprocess it into English. That's what I'm trying to demonstrate, the importance of using interpreters and even I go to University sometimes, I struggle, I have to admit, its not an easy process. I believe in walking my talk, I've been through the process and that's why I enjoy my role as a community advisor and helping other people from those communities, my ethnic communities. Thank you.



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WORKSHOP 5: DISCRIMINATION AND BELONGING – COPING WITH CULTURAL CHANGE

Lana Hart commented that in her work at the Human Rights Commission there were many examples of migrants being discriminated against, but not so many made formal complaints. There was little direct evidence available in relation to refugee women. Some of the difficulty in such reporting may stem from a perception that it may not be in their culture or knowledge that their human rights were being violated. She noted that employment-related issues affected migrant women in at least 70% of the cases referred to them. Many migrant women had to take jobs in non-professional areas such as growers, hospitality (non-interface) and textiles.

Suggested BPW Projects

- **Educating NZ employers into employing refugee and migrant women – making opportunities happen for them.**
- **Mentoring and buddying refugee and migrant women to provide support and professional development.**
- **Sponsoring two migrant women into local BPW Clubs for say 2 years, including buddying and networking with these women to work and supporting them once they find work, at the same time giving them knowledge outside their own community.**
- **Arranging meetings with local refugee and migrant women during the daytime if possible – evenings were family time.**

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About the Speakers

Facilitator: Pauline Edwards – BPW Wellington

Speaker: Lana Hart, Human Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Unit and Woman's Advocate

Lana Hart has worked at the Women's Advocate for the Human Rights Commission since 2000, acting as the Commission's focal point for women's human rights activities. In January this year, she became manager of the Commission's new Equal Opportunities Unit, which works on employment issues for vulnerable sectors of the community, including women.

Originally from the United States, Lana received a Bachelor's degree in English and Philosophy from Illinois Wesleyan University. She obtained a Masters degree in Women's Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

Lana has worked for a number of overseas agencies focused on human rights issues, including the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Women Employed and Planned Parenthood. During a period of overseas travel, Lana lived in a small Ugandan village that was suffering from an AIDS epidemic. Within this community, she worked on disease prevention and sex education with local schools and groups of women, and taught general subjects to the students.

On coming to New Zealand, Lana joined the Women's Refuge movement. Until recently, she served on its Auckland Collective, helped staff the Refuge's crisis line and headed their Employment Committee.

Lana and her partner have two children, aged 4 and 6 months.

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Workshop Five Transcript

Tena Koutou and especially to the migrant women in the room. It's wonderful to see some fresh faces here.

My name is Lana Hart. I'm from the Equal Employment Opportunities Unit of the Human Rights Commission ("HRC").

The EEO Unit (Equal Employment Opportunities) is a new unit at the HRC. I've been working at the HRC for three years as a women's advocate and that position ended just recently and now we're moving a lot of our women over to the EEO unit, which I'm a part of.

We've only been at work for about three months on employment equity issues, so a lot of the work we've done for the past three to four years has been around women's employment issues. In my role as women's advocate, as well as working with women's refugees, we had a bit of interface with migrant women.

Some of you might be aware that the HRC has a dispute resolution function, so we hear complaints about human rights violations and we try to mediate those complaints. A lot of what I'm going to talk to you about, really briefly in this first section, is what we're hearing from migrant women about what the problems are. I think I'm just going to bypass my first little section here, in the interests of time, and go straight for the problems because basically in a word, the main problem that we hear about is employment. Access to work for migrant women is a key issue and the issue is the types of discrimination faced when they come to New Zealand.

Even so, we don't hear so much from migrants as we do from other groups who are vulnerable, who are protected under the Human Rights Act ("the Act") like the disabled, older workers, women, people of colour, Maori, a whole range of groups are protected under the Act but the migrant community are not actually that vocal in our dispute resolution process. The reason for that is concerning because it has to do with accessing information and what rights do our migrants know about and where they go to resolve problems that they might confront in the workplace. Getting a job to begin with is also a problem of language, the command of language and there is the confidence that is required actually in the marketplace. Imagine what its like coming from a culture where you don't have a culture of complaint, you don't want to rock the boat, you don't want to do anything to make waves, yet people are asking you to complain about the behaviour your confronted with in a new country.

There are lots of difficulties in migrants coming to us with their complaints about violations of human rights. Migrant women of course are doubly disadvantaged because they are not only having problems getting jobs because their migrants, but also because their women. That sort of infra-section between the groups makes it very complex to deal with, and we see that particularly around the issue of Muslim women because of the way they dress, the problems they might have at work are different to the ones we hear from migrant men.

Getting a job in the first place, as I said, is the first sort of battle they are going to run into when they first come to New Zealand. There was a university study that came out very recently – 76 employment agencies were interviewed and the researcher in that survey said sometimes being able to speak English but not in our accent is keeping people out. Getting a face-to-face interview, or getting past the telephone stage is difficult because you've got the wrong accent. You can hear that

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WORKSHOP 5: DISCRIMINATION AND BELONGING – COPING WITH CULTURAL CHANGE

I've got an accent as well, but mine falls into the "acceptable accent categories", American and British accents according to this study are alright and non-western accents aren't, in terms of employment agencies.

Sometimes, just being proficient in the language of English isn't enough and we saw that in the EEO survey a few years ago when they put the immigrant community of Sri Lankans, who are very skilled immigrants coming to New Zealand. 96% of immigrants from Sri Lanka have tertiary qualifications, 75% had professional jobs back home and 92% were proficient in the English language. So, we are talking about an immigrant group who are highly skilled and highly employable, but over half of them were taking jobs that were significantly less than what they had done back home.

One side of that says, well over 40% would be getting jobs that were alright and contingent with their qualifications, but there was a huge part of the Sri Lankan population that were under-employed because of discrimination.

I'll tell you a bit about professional standards. There are often jobs that are ear-marked as okay for immigrants to have and they are usually in the textile industry, some in hospitality and growers in the vegetable and fruit growing industry. Those are the sorts of stories we hear about at the HRC. Immigrants find themselves competing with other groups of immigrants for those jobs and sometimes we'll hear a suggestion that there's a feeling that all the good jobs are going to the Indians, or we hear that there are different immigrant groups who are sort of vying for the same, very small pool of "immigrant okay" jobs. I think that demonstrates that migrant communities are not one, big homogenous group of people looking for work, in fact there's lots of different, diverse sectors within that group of the migrant community that needs to be taken into account. So, its coming in with different skill sets, different language capabilities, different cultures of course and very, very different backgrounds. You can't just regard migrants as one big group of common people.

I just want to take a moment to differentiate between migrants and refugees. I'm not talking about refugees in this session. We don't actually hear from refugees at the HRC and that's mostly because the numbers are very, very small in New Zealand and also once again, they probably don't know how to ask, I mean the problems are much bigger when they come, often unwillingly, to New Zealand. They are coming from a crisis situation, their problems are profound and the problems are getting work are very far down the line, if you know what I mean. So, I'm talking about migrants, not refugees.

Once migrants get a job, and it happens, there's all sorts of problems that we would hear about - about trying to practice their culture within the workplace and sometimes it's as simple as dress codes. One of the most common complaints we get are that Muslim women don't want to wear the uniform that's required, for example at grocery stores or receptionist jobs and the employer says "you have to wear that to work here". So we would work, for example, with the employer and try and find more flexibility around what's required on the job. I mean, how important is it that a skirt ends at the knee, why can't the skirt go right down to the ankles, what's the problem with wearing a head dress to work, is that affecting the customers, is that turning people off? So we work with employers at changing their behaviour to try and accommodate the cultural needs of the complainant.

After 11 September 2002, we had a lot of complaints about harassment of Muslim women and that's because Muslim women are the most obviously Muslim, compared to Muslim men. They had lots of problems, particularly the schoolgirls and women at work who were being treated very unfairly, being ostracized and harassed because of their dress, because people put them in the sort of terrorist bracket.

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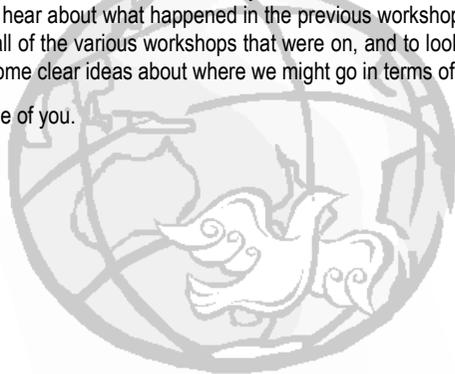
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Finally, once we get a job, we know that race is a key part of the problem of getting fair pay. It might be well known that there's a pay gap between men and women in New Zealand compared to other western countries. We know that gender is a huge component in how much we get paid for our work, plus it is known that race has a huge impact on your wages as well.

Recently we learned of a clothing factory in south Auckland that illustrated this point really well. All the workers were doing the same work, they were sewing, they were machinists in the factory, but the Pakeha worker was paid above the minimum wage, the Maori worker was paid at the minimum wage, the Tongan, Hong Kong and mainland Chinese workers were paid well below the minimum wage. So we see there it wasn't just gender, all of these workers were women, influencing the pay packet of the workers was in fact their race as well. Yes it is illegal but it happens a lot and it has to do with discrimination and the value of you.

I have very little more to add. Last time we started talking about ways we might address these issues and I was still to find out, before this workshop at our briefing, that we're really interested in some practical project ideas with which we can take to the larger BPW body and look at developing some national projects. It would be nice to hear your stories and the issues that you might be familiar with and also to hear about what happened in the previous workshop, because it sounds like it was very interesting, all of the various workshops that were on, and to look again at the end of the session at developing some clear ideas about where we might go in terms of project ideas.

So, I'll hand it over to one of you.



WORKSHOP 6: COMMUNICATING WITH SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

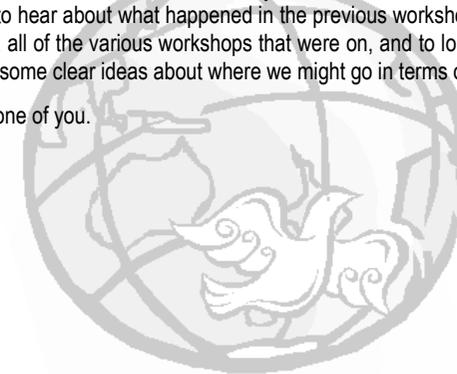
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Julia Castles identified six key issues and encouraged discussion on keys projects:

Suggested BPW Projects

- **Lack of Volunteers**

Her ESOL Home Tutoring service needed tutors to make a long-term commitment, for at least 12 months. This perceived need could be presented at BPW club meetings with a speaker, who would be a volunteer in the scheme herself. Emotional value could be added if a migrant accompanied the speaker. BPW clubs could seek out a migrant to match to volunteer, using a buddy system. Alternatively, BPW clubs could sponsor a migrant for BPW membership.

- **Cultural Differences**

Each BPW club could target a particular refugee or migrant's culture to learn about.

- **Reality of one hour a week available for tuition**

This limited the adequate learning of English as a second language. BPW clubs could volunteer to assist migrant women using the buddy system rather than professional tutoring, for example by shopping or outings. It was useful to learn a little of the migrant's language, in order to promote goodwill.

- **Harder for women to access tutoring**

Funding tends to assist men towards gaining employment. BPW clubs could encourage members to bond with migrant women to assist them in speaking English more confidently, or offer transport. However, fundraising is not a focus for BPW. Loneliness and isolation of women at home as a barrier to mastering English is what BPW can help best to overcome.

- **Lack of experienced committee members to manage needs of migrants**

BPW may be able to assist by networking with local service organisations. BPW clubs could approach older people's networks such as Probus and tap into their experience in this regard.

- **Lack of awareness by NZer's to learn about migrant's needs**

BPW could encourage neighbours to offer friendship to migrants. BPW Club activities could include progressive dinners, which involved other cultures and meant those members would meet refugee and ethnic women in their own homes and to share food. BPW could hold a market day and encourage migrants to display their culture.

Scribe: Hannah Cook

About the Speakers

Facilitator: Robin Lieferring – BPW Whangarei

Speaker: Julia Castles, South Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service, Inc.

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Speaker: Julia Castles, South Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service, Inc.

Julia Castles is the Regional Co-ordinator for the South Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service Inc. Julia brings to this workshop a passion for enhancing the English literacy skills of refugee and migrant women in New Zealand by providing direct tuition within their own home base. This utilises the skills of local volunteers.

Her professional qualifications include a Bachelor of Education degree, a Diploma in Teaching and a Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language.

Julia spent seven years as a primary school teacher. She is currently a part-time lecturer at the Manukau Institute of Technology. She is also a member of the Manukau Literacy Task Force and a member of the Family Literacy Reference Group.



Julia Castles is the Regional Co-ordinator for the South Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service Inc. Julia brings to this workshop a passion for enhancing the English literacy skills of refugee and migrant women in New Zealand by providing direct tuition within their own home base. This utilises the skills of local volunteers.

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WORKSHOP 6: COMMUNICATING WITH SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES Transcript

Good afternoon BPW members. I'm Robyn Lieferring and I'm the facilitator and I thought I'd just run through for you what we have to achieve and I'll be introducing our speaker in a moment, but what we're aiming for this afternoon is to identify some key issues, and those are then going to be reported on in a later session and then BPW will look at which of those issues they think they want to take up and have some outcomes from the sessions.

I have just a sad tale to tell before I introduce our speaker. Recently I traveled down to Taupo, to Wellington, stopped off at a bed and breakfast in Taupo where the hosts told us about an incident they'd had to deal with the night before. They'd had a gentleman; a kiwi gentleman had booked in for a couple to stay overnight. When they arrived he explained that he'd just picked up a Russian woman from the Auckland airport and was taking her down to wherever he came from and he'd booked for this overnight stay. The Russian lady had almost no English. When they were shown the rooms they could choose to stay in, she indicated a room with twin beds in it. He indicated the double bed and she was in the position where only the look in her eye to the hosts was explaining the predicament that she now found herself in. They said they spent a terrible night being very conscious of the fact that it was out of their hands to do anything about it and they wondered what had happened under their roof. So, it was a very good example of where language and communication had failed that lady on her first night in New Zealand.

Our speaker is Julia Castles from South Auckland ESOL Home Tutor Service.

Julia:

I want you to just close your eyes for a minute and I want you to think we've just been told New Zealand is no longer a safe place to live. We've got a fault-line running through New Zealand and it's going to have a devastating effect on our country very shortly. We don't know when, but we all know we have to get out of this country as soon as possible. There's going to be a shortage of boats, planes are not flying, so you're all going to use a lot of your money trying to get out of the country, paying exorbitant amounts of money to people who own boats, to take you to another place.

Most of you have arrived at a place called Sherpa. You're not particularly wanted there, but their government has kindly accepted us. I want you to think that you don't speak the language at all; you have very little money to re-establish yourself. I want you to think about that for a minute – what would it be like? You have very little money, you don't speak the language, and you're not particularly wanted by the country you have arrived in.

ESOL stands for English For Speakers of Other Languages. The term is used because a lot of the migrants speak more than one language. They have their own language and they may speak a couple of other languages, so one way of acknowledging this is to call it "speakers for other languages".

We provide language support for these immigrants and resettlement support, to help them settle in New Zealand. So if you were newly arrived in Sherpa, an organization like ours would be wonderful, because we're going to give you the language support, and an idea of the culture that immigrants need when they come to a new country.

We work mainly with women. The women are usually at home. They don't have a lot of money. If there's any money for an ESOL provision it usually goes to the men, simply because their the breadwinners and in most cultures, it is more appropriate for the men to be given an education, before the women. So the women usually miss out initially. Our service is very good at picking up the women,

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children ... **note: speaker moved away from microphone at this point** ... and refugees are people who come to New Zealand under the general skills category. We also work with some of the business migrants who have come to New Zealand on a temporary basis and now the government policy is that they have to establish themselves before they're given residency. They come here, they put all their money into the business they are trying to establish and then they may exist in fairly harsh conditions, poor conditions. Often we find they don't have the language to help ensure their business success, so we do help some of those people, certainly not the wealthy. Our service is generally speaking for the people that cannot go to the polytechs, that cannot go into organizations where there are fees attached.

The background of this scheme – it started in the seventies when Samoans were brought out here to work in the factories and when the refugees started arriving. These were the boat people mainly, Vietnamese people started coming from Vietnam during the Vietnamese war. It was the churches and social services that first helped these people. Classes were held in garages and church halls to try and get people language support. These people were usually volunteers, they didn't necessarily have an ESOL background but they were very willing to help meet a need.

The government gave their first grant to the ESOL Home Tutor Service in 1980, when it officially started to get underway. People made funding applications, were able to get funding, to provide more support. The ESOL Home Tutor Service has now been going for over 25 years.

What do we do? First of all we train volunteers. They do an ESOL Home Tutor training course which is 20 hours and that's facilitated, they're then matched with a student and they work with their learner for 12 sessions. It's an NZUA accredited course and they then meet with the coordinator and they go through what they've done and an assessment is done, in a very informal way. Once they have passed the assessment the volunteer is given their qualification, a certificate to teach at ESOL. We are looking to ensure that standards are met, that the students are getting as professional help as possible.

The ESOL training course is a part time course. The classes is for two hours once a week, usually in the evening, but we also run weekend courses, so we can get a variety of people.

ESOL operates nationwide from Whangarei down to Invercargill. There are 26 schemes throughout the country so most of you will find there are centers in your area. The bigger schemes of course are in Auckland. ESOL South Auckland is one of the bigger schemes, we put through over 1000 students per year. We are desperately, desperately short of volunteers. We have 230 volunteers at the moment and when you're putting through 1000 students a year, it is nowhere near enough people. Part of my job is trying to meet the shortage of volunteers and I spend a lot of my time fundraising to try and get ESOL teachers to take classes. It's the only way. Where there's a need in the community, we try and get classes together but once again, its finding people who will pay salaries and that can be a problem when you're getting ESOL teachers.

(inaudible question from the floor) Yes, we have to meet three quarters of our budget. They pay salaries for coordinators. We pay our own rent from funding applications and obviously, they do measure up our costs. We do help more students than we're funded for. In south Auckland there's a huge need. We never advertise for students because the need is so great. It's word of mouth. I've had people come with my name on a piece of paper from China and its people that just hear about the service. Volunteer tutors are generally women, although we do have men. They give an hour of their time each week to go and work with a learner one on one, in their home, usually because learners don't have transport. There's preparation, there's travel time. A lot of the migrants that come in through the refugee quote have very limited education in their own language because they've been living in countries which have been in civil war for years and their education has been interrupted. A lot of them

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have had about four years education and of course, to learn another language is very difficult. They just haven't got the hooks to pick up another language quickly so it is difficult for them and those people need a lot of extra support to learn another language. The government, two years ago, was involved in a pilot research programme and the government did fund two of our classes to have 10 hours a week support and language and we did see huge gains being maintained, you know students with very little literacy in their own language and no literacy in English of course, did make great gains in that programme.

At the moment we're running two programmes and we're just starting a third programme for people with very low literacy levels. Of course, its not meeting everybody, because not all women can give 10 hours a week to a class, so there is that part of it.

Another area where we really struggle is to get a people to work on our governing committee; to manage the money given to us. It's really difficult in south Auckland and in other areas to get people who are prepared to be responsible for the money, a fairly large amount of money with some of the bigger schemes, and to help to administer the running of these schemes. It's a big commitment; committee members have to meet monthly or six weekly, they have to work fairly closely with the coordinator to find out what the needs of the organization are, where we're headed and are we meeting our commitments. So that is another area where I know that schemes are certainly struggling to get people who have the ability to organize a committee, do a bit of fundraising and take responsibility. It's a bit like, on a smaller scale, running a school with the board of trustees, with a similar level of support is needed.

We're not the only people who provide English but our English support is provided at no charge, so any one can access it. But unfortunately, generally speaking, it is only one hour a week and that's not enough. The research shows that people need classes two or three times a week to make progress. What some of our tutors do is they teach the culture, they know the environment and they're able to empower their students with little things like "bring a plate". An immigrant new to the country would bring an empty plate along and wonder what's going to happen to it. There are millions of things that are part of our culture that we don't even think about. Our language is fairly colourful with all the expressions we use and a home tutor can explain all those expressions that we use and don't even think about.

An example of this cultural training might be if someone has an interview with a schoolteacher, they can role model and perhaps practice the interview and how it might proceed which in turn gives the parent some confidence when it comes to actually going to the school interview. It's all the little things; teaching people how to fill out forms. Every form is different and there are just so many things to learn.

ESOL can make a huge difference to migrant women who are basically at home all the time and severely isolated. I've always thought that Kiwis are really friendly and we are on the surface but today, how many of us know our neighbours well? There are migrants living in the community and nobody speaks to them because we're all busy, we're all working and its just finding the time. It's not that we're not meaning to get to know our neighbours. We have migrants who never speak to their neighbours.

You're all women and if your hearts go out to women, there's one thing you can do for other women and that is to work for a service like ours. We are not even touching the surface. I'm the only full-time coordinator. There are meant to be more coordinators for a scheme as big as ours but I've structured it differently. It's probably not totally approved of, but I'm not going to have a bureaucratic system with lots of coordinators. Instead the funding goes into class teachers so we can get more funding out to the people. That's the best way, the only way I've been able to make this funding stretch. I'm not asking BPW for funding, but I'm asking if you can help in any way. Be prepared to help a migrant settle, to learn English. It's just taking an interest in that person, caring about them and finding out the gaps in their lives where they need support and where they need language.

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Appendix One:

Advancing the Integration of Migrant and Refugee Women into New Zealand Society – some BPW Club / Community Group Project Ideas

BPW NZ Conference 2003 workshops looked at the issues facing refugee and migrant women trying to settle into New Zealand.

A follow up workshop with BPW members and women from local refugee and migrant communities was held in Auckland in September to review the Conference workshop reports and discuss “where to from here?”

The group identified some ideas for projects that Clubs and community groups might consider taking up.

1. Undertake a local audit to identify what migrant and refugee groups exist in your community.
2. Invite a guest speaker from a local migrant/refugee group
3. Arrange joint activities with local ethnic groups, e.g. cooking lessons, to develop communication networks and to teach English through everyday activities.
4. Develop a “Buddy” network of women who would be willing to assist a refugee/migrant woman on an ad hoc basis to attend interviews, meetings, deal with officials and bureaucracy, shop in the supermarket, go to appointments, etc. Would need a volunteer to channel contacts. Promote to local refugee/migrant groups, place in public areas, etc.
5. Develop a list of local people who can act as interpreters for new migrants/refugees with limited English.
6. Undertake a review of what is available in the local community and develop a pamphlet of local information about the banks, housing, schools & education, health services, community support groups & systems. Place in local library, CAB, doctors rooms, .etc.
7. Provide short, practical sessions for small groups (2-4) on specific everyday topics for those with limited English – basic computer skills, office administration, shopping and cooking, English conversation for mothers, etc. .Link course with practical experience – see 8.
8. Provide unpaid work experience through BPW / group contacts. This would be really helpful in eliminating the “catch 22” of needing experience to get a job, but cannot get a job to get the experience.
9. Lobby local employers to provide unpaid work experience for local migrants / refugees.
10. Provide short term scholarships for migrants / refugees to assist them in upgrading / bridging their qualifications
11. Develop a “Buddy” support network to provide volunteers who can help new migrants and refugees to format their CVs for NZ employers.

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12. Provide sponsored Club / group membership for migrant / refugee women.
13. Provide business mentoring for migrants / refugees who had a small business in their own country but need advice re NZ conditions and guidance to start their own small business here.
14. Develop your own project based on the needs of the migrant and refugee women in your local community.

If you would like more information or help with setting up your project, please contact Faye Gardiner at f.gardiner@clear.net.nz or Mobile 021 522 404.

Faye Gardiner
BPW NZ Vice President—Issues



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