

Refugee Youth Resettlement Report

“Then came reality”:
lived experiences
of refugee youth in
their first 12 months
in New Zealand

This report describes the resettlement experiences of refugee youth (aged between 12 and 24 years) in their first 12 months after arrival in New Zealand from the perspective of refugee youth, parents, Red Cross Refugee Services staff and government and non-government organisations.

Report prepared by:
Rachel O'Connor
Waikato Manager, Red Cross Refugee Services
422 Te Rapa Rd, Te Rapa, Hamilton 3200

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This report is dedicated to all the young people, parents and community members who graciously shared their memories from their first year of settlement, to make the path that much easier for those coming behind them.



**Vodafone
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Executive summary

IN 2012 NEW ZEALAND RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES REVIEWED ITS FRAMEWORK AND SERVICES FOR RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEE YOUTH AGES 12-24. INFORMATION WAS GATHERED IN FOCUS GROUPS OR INTERVIEWS WITH 76 PEOPLE INCLUDING YOUTH, PARENTS, RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES' STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. THE REVIEW CONFIRMED STAFF CONCERNS AND INFORMAL FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH AND REFUGEE-BACKGROUND COMMUNITIES THAT EXPERIENCES OF RESETTLING IN NEW ZEALAND DID NOT ALWAYS MEET THE YOUTHS' AND THEIR PARENTS' HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR LIFE IN THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

The final report made recommendations to the New Zealand Red Cross on ways to continue improving the current service ensuring the high commitment to excellent resettlement that encompasses refugee youth and their whanau.

This report is an abridged version for external stakeholders which includes the findings of the review. These findings, though originally aimed solely for NZRC use, captured a picture of the first year of settlement for refugee youth that has not been captured before. This information is shared with stakeholders to build awareness and knowledge within the settlement sector that may be useful for stakeholders and community in adapting current processes and programmes to better support refugee youth and families.

Key findings

As might be expected, youth experienced difficulties understanding New Zealand culture and systems, communicating in English, and establishing social connections to develop friendships, activities and employment opportunities. Often, youth and parents were unaware of options available to them for addressing problems that arose during settlement or from their refugee journey.

The education system provided youth with some of their greatest challenges. Youth and parents did not understand how the New Zealand education system worked and what support was available – particularly with career guidance. Parents often felt disconnected from their children's education because of language difficulties and cultural barriers. Not having access to computers, or knowing how to use them, made it difficult for youth to complete school work and homework.

Finding work was a significant problem for most youth participants. The main difficulties identified were getting career advice and help to overcome barriers to finding work in New Zealand (particularly a first job). Parents did not know how to guide their children. Being unable to find work changed youths' view of themselves, and their dreams for rebuilding their lives in New Zealand. Many youth chose to return to study rather than continue to look for work.

Most youth found it harder than expected to make friends and build social networks with other New Zealanders. Many participants noted a lack of opportunities for youth to mix socially with others. Mentoring and buddy systems were seen as helpful in contributing to social and educational achievement.

Most youth had experienced bullying, mainly at school. Youth identified the reason for the bullying as their ethnicity or religion or "being a refugee". Youth often tried to deal with bullying on their own, for fear of worrying their parents or because they were unable to communicate with their teachers to tell them about the bullying.

Cultural identity was a key concern for youth and parents. Youth felt caught between their traditional culture and their new culture. Parents and ethnic community members expressed concern about youth losing their cultural heritage. The lack of knowledge about refugee issues in the community, along with racial stereotypes, also added to young people's identity issues.

Sport was identified as an important factor in successful social participation. Sport provided both social and physical benefits and good English language skills were not always needed. The two sports-based youth leadership programmes run as part of the review proved to be a great success in building participants' confidence, skill levels and social connections.

Comment

While NZRC does not currently have a youth resettlement strategy, it was evident that a huge amount of work was being done to support youth and their families and that there was a desire to do more. The refugee youth and families who took part in the review showed great inner strength, resilience, humour and creativity in adapting to life in New Zealand. Also evident was parents' hope for a good future for their children and a drive to provide them with opportunities to succeed. Most parents and community members believed that future opportunities outweighed the struggles.

This report identifies provides a 'snapshot' of what the first year of resettlement looks like for refugee youth and their families. This provides an opportunity for those engaging with refugee youth to build awareness around what contributes to successful resettlement and identify what aspects create barriers and challenges that could be avoided. With this information we can, across the sector, continue to improve our support to ensure we are providing appropriate support for refugee youth to achieve their hopes and aspirations.

Key findings relevant to those supporting former refugee youth and their whanau identify:

1. The need for service providers to ensure they have access to cultural information and training on understanding the refugee journey and resettlement experiences.
2. Provision of language support is needed to ensure barriers to participation is reduced.
3. Schools play a central role in education, integration and social participation.
4. Orientation for youth needs to be increased across all priority areas of employment, education, health and wellbeing and social participation.
5. Coordinated approaches across the sector to ensure youths' employment pathways should be supported.

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Refugee resettlement in New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND IS ONE OF A SMALL NUMBER OF COUNTRIES THAT ACCEPT QUOTA REFUGEES REFERRED BY THE UNITED NATIONS. THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) IS THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION RESPONSIBLE FOR PROTECTING THE WORLD'S REFUGEES AND SEEKING DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THEM. UNHCR DECIDES WHICH REFUGEES ARE IN THE GREATEST NEED OF RESETTLEMENT AND ASKS RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES TO CONSIDER ACCEPTING THEM. THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT THEN MAKES THE FINAL DECISION ABOUT WHO WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE QUOTA.

All refugees accepted by New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme complete a six-week orientation programme at the Department of Immigration's Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The programme provides the opportunity for families to engage in adult English classes, school for children, and orientation on topics such as safety in NZ, parenting, how to prepare for work and understanding NZ laws. During this time families develop resettlement plans before being resettled in five communities around New Zealand. These areas include: Auckland, Waikato, Manawatu, Greater Wellington and Nelson.

When refugees arrive in their areas of resettlement, they are supported by our qualified social workers, resettlement case workers, cross cultural workers and trained volunteers who help the refugees understand Kiwi culture, learn to manage systems and ultimately find suitable work. Social workers work with the families to identify complex issues such as parenting in a new environment or addressing trauma, and provide appropriate support and referrals. We provide support for a minimum of 12 months¹ including 6 months of volunteer support. High and complex cases may require support for an extended period of time.

¹ Changing to a minimum of 6 months from 1 July 2014 under new contract guidelines

All quota refugees are given permanent resident status upon entering New Zealand and are eligible for a range of benefits and supplementary allowances on arrival. They enjoy the same rights as any other New Zealand permanent resident in the areas of education, health, employment and social welfare. After five years, they may apply for New Zealand citizenship.

Currently the Red Cross resettlement programme is contracted by Government to work solely with quota refugees. However, the Red Cross has made a long-term commitment to work with other refugee groups, including convention refugees and family reunification refugees, by 2020. Convention and family reunification refugees arrive in the country either by seeking asylum or through the sponsorship of their family members who are former refugees in NZ.

Resettlement is a life-changing experience as refugees are often resettled to a country where the society, language and culture are completely different from their own and much is new to them. It is both challenging and rewarding for these individuals. Red Cross are here to help them along their journey to resettlement.

Red Cross Refugee Services refugee youth resettlement review

THIS DOCUMENT REPORTS ON A REVIEW THAT LOOKED INTO RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES' RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEE YOUTH IN THEIR FIRST 12 MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL IN NEW ZEALAND. THE REVIEW WAS FUNDED BY THE VODAFONE FOUNDATION NEW ZEALAND, WHOSE AIM IS TO HELP IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOUNG NEW ZEALANDERS.

Background: Refugee youth face dual challenges of resettlement in new country and transition to adulthood

Informal feedback from youth and their families over several years had identified how stressful and challenging they had found settling in New Zealand. Youth and families struggled, especially with understanding New Zealand culture and the New Zealand education system, making career decisions and building relationships with other New Zealanders. Former refugee communities also felt that youth support and development were pressing issues.

Refugee youth have often faced many hardships in their lives. They may have lost one or both parents to death or separation; some may have witnessed or experienced war, trauma or torture, their education has been disrupted and they have left behind extended family and friends, their culture and customs and familiar environments and supports. As well as adjusting to life in a new country refugee youth also face the challenges of adolescence and becoming adults.

Review participants: Youth, parents, staff, agencies

Four groups of participants took part in the review: refugee youth, parents of refugee youth, Red Cross Refugee Services staff, and representatives from government and non-government settlement agencies. In total 76 people were consulted, with five people contributing to more than one group. See Table 1 for groups, numbers and locations of participants.

Table 1: Groups, numbers, location of refugee youth review participants

| Consultation Group | Number (n=76) | Settlement Location |
|---|---------------|--|
| Refugee youth | 22 | Hamilton, Wellington |
| Parents of refugee youth* | 9 | Hamilton, Auckland |
| Government and non-government agencies (18 agencies, 22 people) | 22 | Hamilton |
| Red Cross Refugee Services staff | 23 | Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson |

* Note: In total, nine people contributed as parents of youth. However, five participants were part of other consultation groups, and have also been counted in those categories.

REFUGEE YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

For the review, youth were identified as those who had arrived through the United Nations Quota Refugee Programme, or Family Support Category, and were between 12 and 24 years of age on arrival in New Zealand.

Twenty two (22) youth took part in the review representing Burmese, Somali, Afar, Congolese, Sudanese, and Colombian ethnicities. Participants had arrived in New Zealand as youth between one year and ten years ago. Two youth participants had acted as parents or caregivers of family members when they arrived in New Zealand. They also contributed to the review as ‘parents’. See Table 2 for ages, locations of youth participants, and time in New Zealand.

Table 2: Refugee youth participants: Time in New Zealand at review, age at time of arrival in New Zealand, and location.

| Characteristics of refugee youth participants | Number (n=22) |
|---|---------------|
| Length of time in New Zealand | |
| Less than 2 years | 5 |
| 2 to 5 years | 9 |
| Over 5 years | 8 |
| Age at time of arrival in New Zealand | |
| 12 to 15 years old | 10 |
| 16 to 20 years old | 7 |
| 21 to 24 years old | 5 |
| Settlement location | |
| Hamilton | 19 |
| Wellington | 3 |

RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES STAFF PARTICIPANTS

Twenty three (23) Red Cross Refugee Services staff in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington and Nelson commented on existing practices and trends they observed over time from seeing young people resettle. Three Red Cross Refugee Services staff member participants had been parents of youth on arrival in New Zealand. They also contributed to those categories. See Table 3 for staff participants’ roles, numbers and locations.

Table 3: Red Cross Refugee Services staff roles, numbers and locations represented in review

| Staff role | Number (n=23) | Locations |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Cross-cultural worker | 10 | Auckland, Hamilton |
| Social worker | 5 | Hamilton, Wellington, Manawatu |
| Area manager | 2 | Hamilton, Manawatu |
| Volunteer programme coordinator | 2 | Hamilton, Nelson |
| Employment advisor | 2 | Hamilton |
| Other | 2 | Hamilton |

PARENTS OF REFUGEE YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

There was some cross-over between categories where parent participants were concerned. In addition to the four ‘parent-only’ participants:

- two participants were themselves youth when they arrived in New Zealand, acting as parents or caregivers of family members
- three Red Cross Refugee Services staff member participants had been parents of youth-aged children on arrival in New Zealand.

These five participants each contributed to two consultation groups.

GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT AGENCY PARTICIPANTS

Twenty two (22) representatives from 18 external organisations in Hamilton, Auckland and Wellington provided their views of the work of Red Cross Refugee Services and their observations about youth resettlement both in the first year and where long-term trends emerged. Sectors represented included social services, education, mental health, youth development and refugee support. See **Appendix 1** for a list of organisations consulted.

Review methods: Focus groups, individual interviews

Red Cross Refugee Service's Waikato Manager, Rachel O'Connor, led the review. Rachel is studying towards her Masters of Social Practice at Unitec. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Victoria University, Wellington, a certificate in child and adolescent psychology from The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and a certificate in youthwork from Praxis, Wellington.

The report's conclusions and recommendations are based on the researcher's analysis of the findings.

Review activities

- 1. Staff consultations – review of Pathways to Settlement programme:** DBZ Consultancy Ltd was engaged to run a focus group with Red Cross Refugee Services Hamilton staff. Rachel O'Connor consulted staff in Palmerston North, Auckland and Wellington by telephone. Rachel ran a focus group with cross-cultural workers from Red Cross Refugee Services Auckland. Participating staff were asked about their experiences and insights as people supporting youth during their first 12 months in New Zealand.
- 2. External consultations:** Rachel O'Connor, supported by Hamilton office staff, ran group workshops or interviews with representatives from government and non-government organisations. See **Appendix 2**. Participants were asked about their experiences and insights as people supporting refugee youth during their first 12 months in New Zealand.
- 3. Youth consultations:** Small-group and/or individual consultations with refugee youth living in Hamilton were carried out by Rachel O'Connor and Hamilton office staff. Hamilton staff cross-cultural workers and interpreters ensured that participants had the opportunity to speak in their first language, if desired. ChangeMakers Refugee Forum ran a youth focus group with three young people and a second focus group with members of Refugee Youth Action Network (RYAN) in Wellington, and reported on the findings. Youth were encouraged to talk about and reflect on their experiences of living in New Zealand in the first 12 months after arrival. Sessions with youth were informal, using games and activities to encourage participation. Facilitators or interviewers prompted participants if needed. The aim was to get as broad a view as possible without imposing a formal questioning structure.
- 4. Parent consultations:** Rachel O'Connor and Hamilton staff cross-cultural workers ran small-group consultations with parents of refugee youth. Parents were asked about their experiences and insights supporting their teenage or young adult children during their first 12 months in New Zealand.
- 5. Collation of results:** Rachel O'Connor and Hamilton administration staff collated the notes taken at each interview or workshop/consultation session. In some cases audio-recordings were made and transcribed. Findings were collated, analysed and themes identified.

Findings of the refugee youth resettlement review 2012

THE REVIEW CONFIRMED STAFF CONCERNS AND INFORMAL FEEDBACK FROM YOUTH AND REFUGEE-BACKGROUND COMMUNITIES THAT EXPERIENCES OF RESETTLING IN NEW ZEALAND DID NOT ALWAYS MEET YOUTHS' HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS FOR LIFE IN THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

The findings of the review are presented in sections:

- **Section 1** briefly describes youths' and parents' hopes and expectations for their life in New Zealand and some initial impressions after arriving here.
- **Section 2** reports on the findings of the review of Red Cross Refugee Services' settlement programme and processes for youth resettlement. Findings described include: snapshots of youth casework statistics for 2012-2013 (Waikato only); staff views on resettlement casework with youth; participants' views on the volunteer programme and activities provided for youth.
- **Sections 3, 4, 5 and 6** report on Red Cross Refugee Services' processes for, and participants' experiences of; education, employment, finances and housing. These categories are presented under the Pathways to Settlement indicator of 'economic participation'.
- **Sections 7,8,9, 10 and 11** report on Red Cross Refugee Services' processes for, and participants' experiences of; social connections, culture and identity, language, transport and family. These categories are presented under the Pathways to Settlement indicator of 'social participation'.
- **Sections 12, 13 and 14** report on Red Cross Refugee Services' processes and participants' experiences of mental health, sexual health and physical safety. These categories are presented under the Pathways to Settlement indicator of 'good health and well-being'.

1. Youth and families' expectations and reflections on life in New Zealand

Parents hoped for a good future for their children

Parents' expectations of a good life for their children were a driving force for resettlement.

"When we arrived in New Zealand we felt we had stability for our children, a future for their life. Here they can study and receive training and become someone for their families and for the country" – parent

Parents wanted their children to get a good education. This was central to their hopes for their new life in New Zealand.

"I knew New Zealand was the best place for children. They could study, and everything would be ok. I was happy and I was not here yet" – parent

All groups interviewed saw the opportunity to study at a tertiary level as the best way for families to rebuild their lives and make steps towards achieving their goals.

"I like in New Zealand, any kind of age – whether married or not – you can study, go to uni. In my country only single people, not married people, can study. If you're married, that's it" – youth

Reality of life in New Zealand different than expected

All the young people consulted said that their actual experience of life in New Zealand was quite different from what they expected.

"In my mind, it was going to be like fairy tales. I was scared but excited at the same time. Then came reality" – youth

"Thought it would be a good life, but it was not a good life. It's very hard. All the changes, the life changes, everything changes" – youth

"Imagined something big, like paradise – big, flash life" – youth

Some of the parents' and youths' first impressions and experiences of New Zealand:

Lots of milk and sheep

A good place but cold

A tranquil and peaceful place

Money, the economy was different.

Started to earn money

Friendly people

Things were more modern, more use of technology

Not as social as I expected to be, with lots of people and lots of things to do

*Everything was green and lots of unoccupied land
Not many people and noisy like Africa*

Lots of blonde pale-skin people

Very small and quiet place

Didn't expect to see so many farms

2. Red Cross Refugee Services' settlement programme and processes for youth

RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES' PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME IS A RESETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE REFUGEE FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL IN NEW ZEALAND AND INTO THE LONG TERM. SEE APPENDIX 2 FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAMME.

Pathways to Settlement statistics

SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH RESETTLEMENT STATISTICS 2012-2013

Pathways to Settlement reports for the 2012/2013 settlement year showed that out of 750 quota refugees who arrived, 188 (20%) were youth ages 12-24. See Table 4 for ages, settlement locations and percentages of youth resettled per region.

Table 4: Youth resettlement statistics for 2012/213 (region, ages of youth)

| Settlement region | Youth aged 12 to 18 years (n=86) | Youth aged 19 to 24 years (n=102) | Total youth resettled by region (%) (n=188) |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Auckland | 25 | 21 | 46 (25%) |
| Greater Wellington | 32 | 27 | 59 (31%) |
| Manawatu | 18 | 22 | 40 (21%) |
| Nelson | 9 | 13 | 22 (12%) |
| Waikato | 2 | 19 | 21 (11%) |

SNAPSHOT OF PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT CASEWORK REPORTS, WAIKATO 2012 TO 2013

The review looked at casework reports for the Waikato settlement region for 2012-2013. See Table 5 for the number and relevant percentages of total arrivals, youth resettled, client interactions, complex interactions, school enrolments and special needs support provided.

Table 5: Pathways to Settlement casework statistics, Waikato 2012/2013

| Waikato, 2012-2013 | Number | Analysis |
|--------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|
| Total arrivals | 120 | 16% of national quota |
| Youth | 21 | 18% of arrivals |
| Client interactions/supports (total) | 2,217 | Average of 18 interactions per person |
| High and complex interactions | 611 | 28% of total interactions |
| School enrolments | 40 | |
| Special needs support | 5 | 13% of school enrolments |

Source: Red Cross Refugee Services Pathways to Settlement Waikato report 12 Months, 15/8/2012 – 15/8/2013

The number of interactions highlights the huge amount of work Red Cross Refugee Services staff did with youth and their families. Most interactions were in the areas of housing, health, education and social connections.

Review of Red Cross resettlement work with refugee youth

STAFF FOCUSED ON SUPPORTING FAMILY TO ACHIEVE SETTLEMENT GOALS

Staff saw their role as supporting the whole family to achieve their settlement goals. Some staff identified a need to support the parents to support their children, rather than working directly with the youth and risk disempowering the parent. One-to-one support with youth occurred only when complex issues arose resulting in interactions with schools, counsellors or sometimes family mediation.

STAFF WOULD LIKE TO DO MORE FOR REFUGEE YOUTH

All staff said they would like to do more for young people, either by providing activities for youth or contributing to youth-focused settlement planning. Staff felt high caseloads and time pressures presented a challenge to developing more meaningful settlement plans specifically for youth.

Some staff felt caseworkers and cross-cultural workers were particularly well-placed to organise programmes and speakers to inspire and guide young people. One example was given of a caseworker creating a workshop to support youth around bullying, based on the caseworker's own experiences. Some staff saw a role for younger staff – particularly social workers, caseworkers and cross-cultural workers – to encourage youth not to give up.

STAFF LACKED YOUTH ASSESSMENT TOOLS, RESOURCES AND YOUTHWORK TRAINING

Many client services staff were unaware of psycho-social assessment tools for working with youth and agreed that training in youthwork would be useful. Social workers, in particular, identified a need for specific training in youth resettlement and for youth assessment tools. Suggestions included:

- Implementing HEADS assessment framework for refugee youth, covering: **H**ome, **E**ducation and employment, **E**ating and body image, **A**ctivities, **D**rugs and alcohol, **S**exual health and sexuality, **S**uicidality and mood.
- Developing youth-related cultural resources such as how the concept of 'youth' is viewed by different cultures and best practice for working with culturally diverse youth.

Staff also thought it would be helpful to identify other staff with youthwork experience so their expertise could be shared. Some staff used previous experience working with youth, or from having their own children.

STAFF RECOMMENDED ADJUSTING PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT PLANS FOR YOUTH

Staff noted Pathways to Settlement plans included progress indicators for youth support. However, it was felt that minor changes could be made to prompt those working with the family to help youth make connections and settlement progress. Staff also felt it was more feasible to adapt the current Pathways to Settlement programme than to create a separate assessment for youth.

Review of Red Cross activities for refugee youth

Staff have run and trialled many youth activities outside of Pathways to Settlement. Most activities were funded by different funders as one-off events only. Some examples follow:

- From the funding provided by The Vodafone Foundation New Zealand, Red Cross Refugee Services Waikato was able to run two pilot leadership programmes for 47 refugee youth in the Waikato. The programmes gave participants an opportunity to make friends, build social networks, develop their physical and/or sporting skills, and boost self-esteem. See **Appendix 3** for more information about these programmes.
- Manawatu staff worked with the Mid-Central District Health Board and Evolve Lions Club to organise a youth camp for a group of 20–25 year old refugee youth. The aims of the camp were to help the youth with leadership and decision-making skills, build their self-esteem, and give them a Kiwi experience.
- Hamilton staff worked with an outdoor education provider to organise activities focused on connecting to the land and overcoming challenges. This included experiences such as rock climbing, abseiling, archery, river walks and caving.
- Hamilton staff worked with the New Zealand Police to enrol youth on a 5-day leadership programme run by the New Zealand Defence Force.
- Wellington staff worked with a youth development provider to run leadership programmes. Using sport as the medium; young people explored concepts of leadership, character and team building.

Some staff were concerned that Red Cross Refugee Services did not run any personal development programmes or social activities for youth and felt there was an opportunity for Red Cross Refugee Services to lead the way. Staff also saw opportunities to support ethnic communities to run their own holiday or youth programmes. Red Cross Refugee Services Nelson had helped the Bhutanese community in Nelson run a holiday programme during one school holiday.

One suggestion was that NZRC investigate how electronic and social media might be used to connect young people with each other and their community.

Staff noted that refugee-focused agencies offering youth programmes were more likely to be able to provide appropriate language and cultural support for refugee youth. These agencies were also more likely to involve refugee youth in developing and leading programmes. However, the programmes were often specific to settlement areas.

Review of Red Cross volunteer programme for refugee youth resettlement

Staff, parents, community members and youth were asked for their views on how Red Cross volunteers currently support youth and how support might be improved. Key findings and suggestions are listed below.

1. Volunteers were seen in an overwhelmingly positive light by youth and parents.
“I told my sister they are angels coming from the sky” – parent
2. Some staff and community members were keen to see more youth volunteering or being available as mentors – both from the ethnic communities and the host community.
3. Placing younger volunteers with teams who had youth arriving was seen as a positive option to create a relevant person of connection for a newly arrived youth.
4. Some youth thought that volunteers should support families for longer than six months.
5. Red Cross Refugee Services training for volunteers includes only a brief discussion of the educational and employment challenges for youth. Staff suggested adapting the current training to raise volunteers’ awareness of youth issues and ways of supporting families with young people in them.
6. The need for strong male role models could be addressed through good volunteer placements.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

3. Education

“I avoided school for 2 months until they dragged me down to enrol. I didn’t want to go to school. I went through so many schools after so many moves, with so many gaps. I didn’t want that feeling that you are a ‘newbie’” – youth

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around education

The role of Red Cross in refugee clients’ education is largely focused on school enrolments: identifying schools; facilitating the enrolment; working with schools and Ministry of Education staff; providing orientation to the families about schooling; helping source school uniforms and school equipment and being a contact for issues that arise. Auckland University of Technology (AUT) staff at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre give education assessments and reports to families who share them with schools.

Key findings

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL CULTURE DIFFERENT FROM COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

For most youth, the New Zealand education system was completely different from their previous experiences. Youth found it challenging to adapt to a different educational culture.

“[here] we have to call [teachers] their name. It’s a little bit hard to call them their name because if I call them straight to their name I feel not polite and very rude. When we explain them the teacher don’t understand” – youth

One staff member commented that some parents from cultures with rote-learning styles had been surprised how schools taught students. The parents sometimes saw the teaching style as playing with the children instead of teaching them.

“If you compare the education here to Africa it is very high. The way you are taught – not just rote teaching style. Here, even if you don’t know what a banana is they will get a banana – bring it and show you” – youth

INADEQUATE ORIENTATION TO NEW ZEALAND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Youth found it very challenging having to get used to a new school at the same time as learning a new way of ‘doing school’. Orientation often covered only basic things (such as the location of the toilets and cafeteria) and failed to cover many other aspects of how the school worked. Youth worried a lot about getting lost at school.

“...not realising classes change. Home, everyone stays in one place and the teachers move. Here it is opposite – a real surprise when first going to school” – youth

“People would say ‘go to B block’. What’s B Block? I don’t even know what ‘B’ is!” – youth

Many youth who arrived at tertiary level felt they had not been given an orientation on how the tertiary education system works. Examples given included how to write essays, avoid plagiarism, use a computer, use the library and talk to teachers.

“The basics are often not known – searching for a book, for an essay – how and why? Told to do an assignment but have no idea how to even start an ‘assignment’ let alone the topic of the assignment. No one teaches you how to research” – youth

“Was I told about plagiarism from the beginning? No. So you get a fail because I wasn’t taught from the beginning” – youth

One student who started beginner English at tertiary level stated that progression up the English levels created a sense of home and security. It was where she learnt about New Zealand customs, met with other refugees – and others new to New Zealand – and was coached on how to study in New Zealand.

Some staff noted that providing schooling orientation for parents was currently ‘ad hoc’. Staff suggested Red Cross Refugee Services could organise orientation sessions to the school system.

Community members raised concerns that a lack of information for parents about their children’s education made it harder to support their children’s future university decisions.

YOUTH PLACED IN CLASSES INAPPROPRIATE FOR ACTUAL AGE

All groups of participants commented on the difficulties experienced where the youth's age stated in their New Zealand Certificate of Identity document was different to the youth's actual age. The result was that students were placed in schooling years that were not educationally or socially appropriate for them.

Some youth preferred being put in classes according to their education level at school, rather than their age level. They wanted the opportunity to catch up on what they had missed from their own schooling.

"They should test how you are, what you know, how good you are, in your level, not straightway..you're this age you need to be on this [level]" – youth

"Until now, I'm still feeling like I'm way behind because I didn't learn what people has learnt, for example, the study from primary, intermediate and then high school" – youth

"Where I came from sometimes people don't think about their age. If I am 16 years old and I want to learn and I haven't been to school they will say go back to the beginning" – youth

Several community members and staff noted that for some refugee communities, age and schooling are treated differently in their country of origin. Most commonly a student would only progress through to the next schooling year when they had passed the previous year's work.

SCHOOLS LACKED AWARENESS OF REFUGEE CULTURES

Community members, service providers, and educational providers themselves expressed concern about the lack of cultural awareness in schools. This impacted on schools' ability to support a refugee student well.

"Teachers lack understanding of the refugee background/journeys of their students. They are uninformed, so students become disengaged and disconnected by the way they are taught"
– community member

Most schools were willing to support newly-enrolled refugee families. However, some staff identified limited resources, most notably bilingual tutor support.

"[Red Cross Refugee Services] cross-cultural workers support parents with school appointments. Some schools are fantastic and provide interpreters but most schools don't have the dollars to do this" – staff

A staff member believed the attitude and climate of the school was the key to getting a "right- school -for-right-kid" fit. Good teacher aides could make a big difference. For example, one teacher aide organised for a young former refugee to go on the Spirit of Adventure.

PARENTS STRUGGLED TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN WITH SCHOOLING

Some participants reported that parents of refugee youth were often unaware of what was happening at school or with their child's behaviour. Not understanding the New Zealand school system, or not having English language skills, made it difficult for parents to support their children in their education.

The main difficulties parents raised were: understanding school newsletters and school reports, communicating at parent-teacher interviews, and helping their children with homework.

"School hard – send us letters 'doesn't have lunch'. We found it hard – we didn't know how to do it" – parent

However, other parents reported they had positive experiences of being supported by the schools to be more involved.

"The opportunities we receive in New Zealand, the education received is excellent. We receive help to help the kids. The kids feel they have freedom to express their opinions" – parent

Agencies commented that youth become interpreters for their parents. Feedback showed that the young person could use this to their advantage. One example given was of a child who translated a note from school as saying the child required a cellphone for classroom work.

Education providers and staff commented on how difficult it was to get parents involved in the schooling process. However, a staff member commented that schools tended to assume that parents were engaging because they were **not** making contact.

"Teachers state parents not engaging at school is defined by the fact they are not asking questions" – staff

Schools did not always realise parents were unable to make contact because of either language difficulties, or a lack of awareness of how to make contact with the school (and who with). One suggestion was to nominate a teacher that the parent trusts to engage with the parents using bilingual assistants to facilitate the process.

One educational provider suggested a community approach was needed to ensure parents were engaged in their child's education. This required the school to go to the parents if the parents were not coming to the school. This approach was endorsed by another participant.

"If [the parents are] not knocking on the door it doesn't mean they don't need help. Go to the community" – community member

Sometimes, a child or youth who spoke the best English in the family was withdrawn from school to assist parents with appointments. Service providers and staff commented on the negative impact this had on the youth's education.

ESOL SUPPORT VALUED BY YOUTH, QUERIED BY STAFF AND TEACHERS

How well students understood what was going on and engaged in study seemed largely dependent on their access to bilingual support. Youth considered ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes as necessary and very positive. As well as providing language support, classes provided a place for youth to connect with others in a similar situation.

Many youth said they felt 'dumb' or 'stupid' when in mainstream classes with New Zealand students.

"Each class they ask 'do you understand?' And I just kept saying 'yes'. But I didn't know what they were saying – only when people laughed when I used yes or no at the wrong time" – youth

"They [teachers] are speaking to us but we can't understand them" – youth

Some stated they relied on other students or teachers to translate for them. Youth reported feeling frustrated at not being at the same educational level as their New Zealand classmates, and felt this affected their motivation.

Staff and teachers expressed concern that succeeding in ESOL classes created a "false sense of success", because students' educational levels were still well behind the mainstream classes.

"NCEA year they are devastated when realising how far away they are from succeeding. If they are not in class with peers they may not understand what level they are at, so it is hard to gauge if they are succeeding or failing" – teacher

Some commented that the time spent in ESOL classes was why refugee youth may have missed out on key information, such as CV preparation, sex education, and career planning.

Students pre-literate in their own language needed greater support from schools. One education provider stated that the younger a person from a refugee background started school in New Zealand the faster they learnt English and adapted to the school system.

YOUTH DISADVANTAGED BY LACK OF ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

Most youth spoke of struggling to do homework that needed to be done on a computer and of not knowing how to use a computer.

"...don't even know how to turn computer on let alone how to do all the assignments on it – but they want you to use a computer for everything" – youth

Access to computers was seen as a key to succeeding in study. Youth and parents believed the Ministry of Education's Computers in Homes programme to be of great benefit. Where there were delays in the family getting a computer youth had experienced problems completing school work.

BILINGUAL TUTORS PROVIDED SUPPORT BUT ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO REFUGEE YOUTH

Most youth who had had bilingual tutors were able to engage more easily in mainstream classes. One youth suggested having a bilingual tutor who was closer to their age (for example, a university student) would make youth feel more comfortable about asking for help.

"The older people [bilingual assistants] sitting next to you, it's almost like your parents are sitting next to you. It's not always translation. They are telling you what to do and not what to do. It's another form of parenting" – youth

However, two young people stated that having a bilingual tutor at school was another factor that identified refugee youth as different.

YOUTH AND PARENTS DID NOT KNOW WHO TO ASK FOR HELP WITH SCHOOLING PROBLEMS

Youth and parents felt they had no-one to ask for help with problems youth had adjusting to school in New Zealand. Most youth recommended that secondary schools and tertiary organisations establish buddy systems where new students could be matched with other students who could help them.

Staff had seen examples of the buddy system working positively but observed that it often depended on the match. Some schools matched ethnicities without understanding the cultural mismatch that may occur, for example, matching a Burmese refugee student with a Thai student.

YOUTH NEED SUCCESSFUL ROLE MODELS FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

Community and parent representatives believed that youth need positive role models of refugees who had succeeded in tertiary education and employment. An example given was the Somali Graduate Journal, which profiles members of the Somali community who have completed their tertiary study (somaligraduatejournal.org/).

“After being at the first Somali Graduate Journal launch he [community member and father] went home and sat his kids down and said, ‘what do we need to do to make sure you all end up in that journal?’” – staff

“Identify success stories to inspire them. They are eager to follow those who inspire them – for example the Somali Journal” – community member

They hoped using such role models would motivate youth, and help address the inequality youth experienced competing with New Zealand students.

RED CROSS RELATIONSHIPS WITH EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Education providers were generally positive about the Red Cross’s involvement in student enrolments and ongoing support. However, one provider stated they would like to be able to contact a staff member responsible for liaising with the school after the student’s initial enrolment.

Some staff were concerned about the lack of information received before enrolling a student in school.

“We don’t see the reports. It can be a challenge when it’s our role to find an appropriate school but you haven’t seen the assessment and you’re taking guesses. With the more complex cases, if we had known ahead of time we could have prepared the school better and ensured better support was there for when the family arrived” – staff

Staff felt it was important to work closely with the Ministry of Education to coordinate education support for refugee youth. Service providers and parents considered that homework clubs (funded by the Ministry of Education) were very important for supporting refugee youth in their education.

TRUANCY A LONGER-TERM TREND?

Truancy was not identified as a common issue in the first year of settlement. However, it was raised by some staff and education providers as a longer-term trend. This was attributed to:

- there being fewer people involved in supporting the students (the Red Cross resettlement programme focuses on the first year of resettlement)
- parents being ‘busy’ after the first year
- students not adapting to the education system in the first year.

Staff and community members identified the students most at risk of truancy as those 17 and 18 year olds who went to high school after arrival. Community members thought youth needed to be advised early about the consequences of truancy, for example, being expelled from school.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR TEEN PARENTS VALUED

Several parents whose children had had babies while still at school spoke positively about teen parent units. The units were considered a valuable part of resettling by enabling the young girls to continue education and learn parenting skills.

“... daughters who are mothers receive information and opportunities to study. They receive a lot of support. My daughter is happy as she can share things with her daughter while having the opportunity to study and have a life as a teenager” – parent

Discussion: Education findings

The education system (secondary or tertiary) was the main environment in which all youth experienced their first year of resettlement. While many schools taught international students, there was a perception that schools did not fully understand just how different young refugee people's previous educational experiences had been. This resulted in orientation failing to cover important information such as how to study, how to use a computer or how to find their way around school.

Parents' involvement in their children's education was limited by English language difficulties and a lack of knowledge of the New Zealand education system. It is important that parents understand how the New Zealand education system works at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Orientation for parents, youth and schools would make for more positive educational experiences for all parties.

Schools were open to helping refugee youth students but were limited in their ability to provide adequate language support for financial reasons. Bilingual support was seen as critical in engaging refugee youth students in the school system and should be available from the time the student enrolls. This could be monitored under Pathways to Settlement. Schools employing young, bilingual teaching assistants would be one way of providing both language support and a role model for the student.

Participants thought buddy systems were important for helping refugee youth understand the New Zealand school system. Schools should be encouraged to assign a buddy to each refugee youth after enrolment so that the student has someone to go to for help. There is also potential for parents to benefit from a school-parent buddy system.

Red Cross volunteers did not always understand the difficulties youth had in getting to and from school, obtaining school uniforms, and joining sports teams or other school activities. Ensuring volunteers followed up on these tasks would help young people and could be covered in the volunteer training programme.

A coordinated approach between the Ministry of Education and NZRC was also seen to be essential. This included ensuring that:

- youth received the necessary language and social support from the time they enrolled at school, and
- computer access and training was provided as soon as possible after the student's enrolment (via the Computers in Homes Programme).

4. Employment

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around employment

At the time of the report Pathways to Employment (described in **Appendix 2**) was running only in the Waikato and Wellington. Participants had to be aged 18 years and over and were referred by Work and Income. The project provided participants with career counselling and guidance, skills to prepare them for entering the New Zealand workforce and help with finding work experience and paid work.

Update: We are pleased to confirm that in May 2014, the Ministry of Social Development has contracted the Red Cross to roll out the Pathways to Employment programme in all settlement locations. Eligibility will be former refugees who are in receipt of a main Work and Income benefit.

Key findings

FINDING WORK IN NEW ZEALAND WAS HARDER THAN EXPECTED

All youth interviewed about their experiences of finding employment in New Zealand said their expectations were not met. Youth believed having a job as being critical for rebuilding their life and their family's life. When they found it difficult to find work here, the reality of life not being perfect in New Zealand came as a shock.

“When I came I thought there would be a list of jobs and I would pick one and work full time” – youth

“They took you from your country where you have problem. We think they are going to do everything for you but we found it was different. I thought I'd get a job direct – your mind is on a job. You need money to rebuild your future” – youth

Many youth felt that being able to find work experience was the key to getting a start on their long term employment pathway. Youth who arrived in New Zealand between 17–24 years of age were seen as the most disadvantaged in finding employment. Many had not been able to complete their secondary education before arriving in New Zealand, and they struggled to cope at university or polytechnic.

“In Africa I thought, ‘I will work like a slave [in NZ]; never any rest, I need money.’ But the first time when I migrate... we said to our community who were here, ‘we need to work.’ [They said], ‘you guys don’t know here.’ They started laughing at us. It’s hard to find a job” – youth

Some service providers, including teachers, noted that many youth were very motivated to find work. There was concern that the youth themselves often had too high expectations of what career they could realistically achieve.

“They all come in thinking they will be doctors. It takes a long time to understand they will have a longer pathway for employment than others, and they need to understand this” – teacher

LANGUAGE AND LACK OF NETWORKS WERE BARRIERS TO WORK EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYMENT

Poor English language skills and a lack of social connections were seen as barriers to gaining work experience. Youth also believed having an accent was a disadvantage, even for those who spoke good English.

“Our English not good. But you need to work on your English so you can work with Kiwis, because sometimes they don’t understand you. That’s the worst thing – no English. Even if they call you for interview they can’t understand your accent” – youth

One youth commented on the lack of ethnic diversity of New Zealand’s workforce, compared with overseas workforces.

“In Aus there are areas where every shop, every person, even banks, all females with scarves on. I was shocked and it was all normal. But in New Zealand you hardly see a different ethnicity person working” – youth

REFUGEE COMMUNITIES DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW TO FIND WORK IN NEW ZEALAND

Participants commented that refugee communities did not understand how to go about finding work in New Zealand.

“Selling yourself is hard. Back at home you don’t compliment yourself – you would be seen as proud” – youth

Several youth commented that their parents did not understand enough about New Zealand schooling or jobs to be able to help them. As a result the parents had, at times, put unrealistic expectations on their children.

“Dad thinks I’m going to be a pilot – where is that \$100,000 gonna come from?!” – youth

“Because of my culture my dad wanted me to do something the husband will approve of later on” – youth

Again, community and parent participants believed that youth need positive role models of refugees who had succeeded in finding employment. Taking youth to see different industries and “shopping around” for job opportunities were suggested as ways of supporting youth to find work or work experience.

YOUTH AND FAMILIES UNAWARE OF CAREER ADVICE AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE

Many participants said youth and their families did not know where to go for career advice.

“...when I first came to New Zealand, I approached Refugee Services in [location]. When I asked them for some advice as to what should I study, or which direction I should follow, all they asked me were what were the things that I was interested in doing back there in my country. So I mention that, and they just said, ‘that’s what you should do, maybe.’ So they sent me to what I was interested in doing, but that’s not really [how it works]...” – youth

Parents themselves recognised they did not have enough information about the New Zealand labour market.

“As parents we don’t know where to get career advice for our children. If our children want to be an engineer we don’t know how to look for what courses they should take or where to get information”

Most young people interviewed had not used career support at school, even when they knew it was available. Schools can apply to the Ministry of Education for funding for refugee students to receive career guidance though no staff and youth were aware of this.

“At school there was a career service I never went to. At home you can take line streams: there isn’t as much variety there as here. So, knowing what courses to take in relation to that would be good. I went to uni for the sake of going to uni because I didn’t know what I wanted to do” – youth

Service providers also commented that refugee youth were unaware of the many career options available to them. The youth may not have had such a wide choice of careers in their country of origin. Having so many choices complicated the decision process but also provided opportunities, if the person was guided correctly.

“Refugee background youth don’t have a broader understanding of the work range and options available for them, especially young women. They think of being a nurse or teacher, but wouldn’t think about being an occupational therapist, as an example” – service provider

Some youth felt there was a lack of encouragement, especially from schools. They believed it was because teachers thought the youth’s English wasn’t good enough.

“At school I wanted to take a science/PE qualification but the lady was like, ‘nah I don’t think you can handle it.’ A guy who was Kiwi, but was on same level as me in class, got let in” – youth

A youth participant found the Pathways to Employment programme very helpful.

“I think that they were very helpful if we can get some [career guidance]. But lately I’ve met Pathways to Employment [person]. She is very good, they’ve improved a lot by having that Pathways to Employment” – youth

Community members were concerned that youth were not being encouraged to “dream big” and were instead “settling”.

YOUTH RETURNED TO STUDY WHEN UNABLE TO FIND WORK

Some youth found themselves studying because they could not find work. Most said they would rather have worked than studied on arrival.

“I thought I was coming to New Zealand to work, not to study. I went to study because of no jobs. If you have me a list of jobs or study I would choose jobs. First job – you can study later” – youth

Some youth reported feeling frustrated by spending a long time taking English classes in the belief that the higher your English level is the easier it will be to find work.

“More, more study. Even if you depart studying English you will never talk like a Kiwi” – youth

Some youth had had to return to study because their educational qualification obtained overseas was not recognised in New Zealand.

“I got my commerce degree at home, but I got here and they told me business was different” – youth

Discussion: Employment findings

Many youth identified work as being the way to rebuild their lives. The gap created by high expectations of finding work and the reality in doing so also created identity and social problems for young people. Parents did not know how to help their children find work. Some youth also had financial responsibilities in their families, which placed further stress on them. Being unable to find work changed youths’ views of themselves and their dreams for rebuilding their lives in New Zealand. It made it harder for youth to settle well. Many chose to return to study rather than continue to look for work.

Youth in the 18 to 24 year old age group are at high risk of not achieving settlement milestones, including finding work. This was attributed to youth having inadequate English to find work, or being too old to go through the secondary schooling system to complete their education. This group is most in need of employment support to ensure short term goals are met while working towards long term aspirations.

Pathways to Employment was found to be very helpful, where offered, and should be extended to all settlement areas.² Several staff and service providers stated that youth aged between 14 and 17 years old would benefit from taking part in Pathways to Employment. The programme enabled youth to gain career guidance and personal support for their study and job search. The programme could make young people in this age group aware of their career options and ensure they are on the right educational pathway while still at school.

School age youth (12 to 18 years) did not know how to make career decisions or which subjects to study when considering careers. Again, parents did not know how to guide their children. This was of concern, given the amount of careers information available both in school and the careers sector. The Ministry of Education provides career guidance for former refugee youth which also involves the parents. It is important that the Ministry of Education and Red Cross Refugee Services staff work together to ensure young people and their families have access to career support and resources.

² See update, above

5. Finances

“Money is quite a problem. Sometimes we find it is not enough. If you don’t have part-time work, the benefit is not enough” – youth

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around finance

ORIENTATION TO MANAGING MONEY IN NEW ZEALAND

Social workers, case workers, cross cultural workers and volunteers help families to set and manage their budgets. Support is also provided through budgeting workshops and casework. Families and individuals are also referred to community budgeting services when necessary. Youth who have not previously had their own income are shown how to pay bills, use ATMs and banks and understand their financial obligations.

SUPPORT WITH WORK AND INCOME AND STUDYLINK APPLICATIONS

Youth aged 18 to 24 years are eligible for Work and Income benefits. Staff help youth apply for benefits and to understand their responsibilities while on a benefit. Staff and volunteers also spend considerable time and effort advocating for clients with Work and Income and Studylink.

Key findings

LACK OF MONEY RESTRICTED YOUTHS’ CHOICES

Many youth interviewed identified money as one of their biggest challenges in the first year. Some received a benefit while others were financially dependent on their parents. Youth dependent on parent/s commented mostly on the effect it had on their parents and how it restricted their own activities.

[on arrival] “Didn’t have much clothes – only four sets. We got here end of summer beginning of winter and we had to buy clothes as we didn’t have much. Dad said we had to get second-hand ones and I hate second-hand clothes. That was my biggest thing. And I was arguing with them for ages: “I’m not wearing second-hand clothes,” and they were saying, “But we don’t have money” and I’d be like “I don’t care!”” – youth

Older youth spoke more about the challenges of managing their own finances.

MONEY WAS THE MAIN DRIVER FOR SEEKING WORK

The challenges of living on a benefit surprised many youth and their parents. They had expected to find work easily and therefore not be reliant on a benefit.

“When we came, now we are safe but still a lot of problems. The boys tried hard to get jobs. They applied many times – many declines. We wondered how we going to live? Try to find a job – nothing. Is it going to be like this for the rest of our lives?” – youth

Youth over 18 years of age on arrival reported one of their main worries in the first year was dealing with Work and Income, in particular the pressure to find work.

“[on the] benefit, we under pressure to ‘find a job, find a job’. We trying” – youth

YOUTH AWARE OF PRESSURE TO FIND MONEY TO SUPPORT OVERSEAS FAMILY OR PAY DEBTS

Some youth commented that their family had debt from overseas or were under pressure to support family members overseas. It was interesting to hear young people speaking about this issue. They either felt responsible for helping financially or were aware of the responsibility and worry their parents felt about it.

“Family overseas don’t know what you’re going through. Calling for us to send money, send money and when we tell them they can’t believe you when we say it’s hard we don’t have money. You want to assist but you can’t – it’s really hard” – youth

“I remember Mum couldn’t call her Mum – \$10 for 15 min. Parents worry about their families left back there and you can’t financially help them as you haven’t settled yourself” – youth

6. Housing

“I’ve never had a house before in Colombia. It was all about surviving and not about living”
– parent

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around housing

Red Cross Refugee Services intake coordinators consult with Housing New Zealand, and private landlords where necessary, to find housing for each family arriving. Furniture, linen and household goods are provided from public donations. Volunteers in settlement locations set up each family’s house before they arrive.

Orientation to living in a New Zealand house and neighbourhood starts at Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre with the demonstration house. Volunteers and staff help families adjust to living in their own home once families arrive in the resettlement location.

Key findings

SAFE, SECURE HOUSING HELPED YOUTH FEEL SETTLED

Youth and parents identified housing as one of the “successes” of their first year and a way in which Red Cross Refugee Services had helped them.

However, some youth were unsure or nervous about using electricity and appliances they were unfamiliar with.

“[Where] we grow up, we don’t have electricity. How can we use electricity and microwave or washing machine?” – youth

“When I arrived in New Zealand I’m so afraid of turning the light off and on. Too nervous to touch them cos we never used them when I was in the refugee camp” – youth

Housing needs to be considered in future orientation planning.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

7. Social Connections

“Refugees – we have to gather often. I don’t know your problem, you don’t know mine: that is why we need to get together. We have to remember and think for the newcomers, come in and help them. It doesn’t have to be a job”
– youth

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around social connections

Red Cross provides the settled former refugee communities with information about quota refugees arriving in each region. This helps connect settled and newly-arrived refugees of the same ethnicity. Each resettlement location has local networks for families to join and events that families can attend, such as religious services or ethnic community meetings and events.

Red Cross Refugee Services staff use Pathways to Settlement assessments to identify opportunities for youth in the family to join a social, sports or religious group. Staff most commonly work with individual youth. Most staff felt they worked hard to help youth build a support network and find opportunities for self-development. Staff work with community organisations to involve refugee youth in those organisations’ projects and services. Volunteers and staff help youth make these social connections.

Key findings: Social connections

YOUTH FOUND IT HARD TO MAKE FRIENDS OUTSIDE ETHNIC COMMUNITY

Before arriving in New Zealand most youth had a wide social network and activities to be involved in. Their early experiences in New Zealand were quite different and reinforced feelings of loneliness.

“Our community was so supportive but...you could still feel lonely at home. It’s not like in Africa when there are people around all the time. Everyone is busy” – youth

Many youth were surprised at how hard it was to make friends with New Zealand people. While a few young people seemed to have no problems fitting in, most said they felt lonely at some point in their first year. Difficulties making friends were put down to personality, or poor English skills, or cultural differences.

“When I arrived, I didn’t have anyone to talk to, so felt very lonely. I was part of the first group of Colombians” – youth

“I’m a talkative person; I like to communicate. But I wasn’t communicating as much as I wanted to. It was quite hard to interact with others. I felt lonely” – youth

“They are always smiling here. But at home this would make you think something is going to happen. It makes you suspicious” – youth

Youth noted the way people communicate in New Zealand is different.

“There are a lot of strangers here but it’s not like that at home. Someone [New Zealander] will greet you a thousand times and they are still a stranger to you. There are no strangers in Africa” – youth

“We joke it would be good to have an African next door so we can get salt when we need it. But here we go to the supermarket instead” – youth

Not understanding how to behave in certain situations also made it harder for youth to relate to other people.

All the young people interviewed felt that they needed friends from their own ethnic community as well from the New Zealand community. Those who only socialised with their ethnic community were seen as not integrating, resulting in fewer opportunities and experiences.

“Sticking together doesn’t help. I interacted straightaway’- here, there, left, right, centre. But if you stick together it doesn’t work” – youth

All the young people and parents interviewed believed that having friends was important for successful resettlement.

YOUTH FACED BARRIERS TO TAKING PART IN SPORTS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (COSTS, TRANSPORT, INFORMATION, LANGUAGE)

Most parents saw New Zealand as a country with many opportunities for youth to take part in sports and social activities. However, parents were not always able to arrange suitable activities for their children. For some it was a lack of money or transport. Others did not know what activities were available and how to help their child participate.

“Our daughter wants to join sport group. But I don’t know how to do it, for example basketball, music” – parent

Parents and community members expressed frustration at knowing their children did not often have the same opportunities and experiences as Kiwi children. This also caused tension between children and parents when, for example, parents didn't know how to arrange for their child to attend activities or couldn't afford to pay for them. A community member who works as a taxi driver noted that when he was taking people and families places he felt guilty thinking: "When am I taking my family to these things?"

Youth did not find it easy to take part in sport due to the cost of activities and uniforms, lack of transport for getting to practices and games and perceived discrimination from coaches.

"In Colombia the young people do a lot of sport, like playing soccer in the street. Here in New Zealand they ask, 'how?' because they don't see people doing it. They have to pay to do it" – staff

"When we came we needed the car – to work, or for doing stuff. We stayed home. We wanted to go but we waited for volunteer or someone to help us" – youth

Sport provided opportunities for youth to develop relationships with adults, have positive role models, keep healthy, develop skills, and build confidence. An example was given of how an entire ethnic group at a school benefitted from one of their members representing New Zealand in a sporting activity. The respect generated from this achievement turned around certain negative cultural stereotypes in the school.

It worked best when sporting activities were subsidised, and when there was a supportive adult (coach, teacher or other parent) who could help with the transport.

ORGANISATIONS DO NOT KNOW HOW TO CONNECT WITH REFUGEE YOUTH

Service providers noted that there were lots of different activities available to youth and wanted to work more closely with Red Cross to help young people connect up with their organisation and services the first year of settlement. However, both providers and staff spoke about how hard it was to connect young people with these organisations. This was due to language barriers, or organisations not being aware of how to provide services for youth from different cultural backgrounds. Most youth said they were unaware of what activities settlement organisations offered.

Participants felt that it would be helpful if more organisations had specific refugee or youth-focused roles to provide more opportunities for refugee youth. An example was of Wellington-based staff connecting young people with youth services Vibe Youth Health and Support Services and Evolve Wellington Youth Services.

Some community organisations had actively sought to involve refugee youth in their activities, for example, a Girl Guiding programme in Palmerston North. However, these kinds of initiatives often depended on the enthusiasm and energy of one or a small number of people to keep it going. Success also depended on access to transport and funding for activity-related costs.

Some participants saw a specific role for Red Cross to provide leadership, guidance and expertise in training organisations to be more inclusive of refugee youth and to help organisations find ways to eliminate barriers (such as language, or cultural understanding) to youth using their services. Others spoke of wanting to work more closely with Red Cross Refugee Services to help youth connect the services their organisations offered.

Ensuring that the right information got to youth and parents at the right time was also seen as important.

"For many people, they are just trying to get by in the future year to do the basic resettlement. But it is in the future, when they are able to start looking at things like music lessons, youth groups, that they may not have the advice of volunteers and staff" – service provider

YOUTH RECOGNISED THEY HAD A ROLE IN SUPPORTING NEWCOMERS

Participants had noticed that more refugee youth now recognise they have a role in supporting newly-arrived youth. Peer support or mentoring was seen as one way of addressing the concerns many youth had in their first year about who they could ask for help with problems or information.

“I would share with recent youth things about New Zealand life that were not told to me when I arrived” – youth

Some staff envisioned a programme where refugee youth could be mentored by positive adult role models and/or peers. Several parents said they would appreciate having Kiwi mentors for themselves, as parents.

PARTICIPANTS WANTED RED CROSS TO RUN MORE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

Youth, parents and community members asked Red Cross to do more to provide activities that brought their young people together, to help them make friends and build their confidence and skills.

“The children are relying on themselves because at this time there is no community organisation where children can get together and talk heart to heart. We don’t have temples; we don’t have gatherings for children to sing in. They stay in their house and are not confident even when someone comes to the house. Not just talking about Burmese community but general community. There is a need for gatherings for parents and children to come together and meet and talk and be open about their feelings”– parent

“Create a group of refugee background youth to do activities like drama, singing, dancing, and camping. Draw some inspiration from a similar group in Auckland called Mix it. The group will allow us to express in other ways when you don’t know the language” – youth

Some staff and community leaders felt Red Cross should be running its own youth programmes, as well as referring youth to other providers of youth programmes.

8. Culture and identity

“I almost feel I am lost. I am still trying to find my identity here in New Zealand. I don’t know how much should I give up to be integrated into New Zealand society” – youth

Key findings

YOUTH FELT CAUGHT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND NEW ZEALAND CULTURE

Many youth described themselves as living in two worlds.

“I feel in between two cultures. I am not totally from here but, in Africa, I am no longer part of them either” – youth

“[I have] one foot in Colombia, one foot in New Zealand. At the start, I would relate the way we do at home and then reality hit. This is not Colombia, this is New Zealand” – youth

“Today I act more like a Kiwi, I’ve changed. The way I dress has changed me a lot. I no longer wear my African dresses” – youth

Most participants learned about New Zealand culture in school and ESOL classes; also through their daily interactions with others and thinking about those interactions. Youth who learned beginner English said there was more emphasis on Kiwi culture in their classes.

“We [ESOL class] were all refugees so they had to tell us about Kiwi culture, like how to bring a plate. When Kiwis invite you to their home you have to give them some thanks” – youth

However, youth at high school noted that lessons about New Zealand culture mainly focused on the Treaty of Waitangi, rather than on wider New Zealand culture. Many youth commented they would have liked more information about “informal” New Zealand culture such as rugby, or Kiwi experiences. A community member reflected on the importance of youth learning about New Zealand culture.

“To tell the culture [of New Zealand] is the main important thing. If they don’t understand the New Zealand culture, they cannot [help] feeling confused” – community member

COMMUNITIES WERE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUTH KEEPING THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Many parents and ethnic community members expressed concern about losing their cultural heritage. The family and wider ethnic community played the biggest role in ensuring the young people are aware of their cultural heritage.

“Our parents said we can’t speak English at home so we had to speak our own language. It kind’ve made it difficult because we had less time to learn English” – youth

“When we arrived our Aunty and uncle sat us down and told us not to lose our culture” – youth

“Culture is good. We will always keep how we are, based on our culture, language, and what we do. We will always be reminded of who we are and where we come from. It’s about remembering what we do in our country and doing it here” – youth

Several service providers and staff also suggested the wider New Zealand community needed to be educated about the different ethnic groups and cultures in the refugee-background communities.

YOUTH FELT ‘STIGMA’ OF BEING IDENTIFIED AS A REFUGEE

Most participants did not like the term ‘refugee’ being applied to them, stating they were no longer refugees. They felt the term carried negative stereotypes.

“I hate people calling me a refugee. Usually, they think a refugee is someone who had a rough life. They almost see you as a handicap, being a refugee – ‘you can’t do this.’ I’m a New Zealand resident now, not a refugee” – youth

Many youth believed they were easily identifiable as a refugee because of the way they spoke, how they dressed, the colour of their skin and the ethnic community they identified with. Often when youth were asked where they came from they felt the enquirer was suggesting the youth did not belong here. While questions about the youth’s cultural heritage might have been asked with the best intentions they reinforced the youth’s sense of not belonging.

“When someone says, ‘Where are you from?’ I say I’m from Hamilton. Then they use the emphasis, ‘no where are you from?’ Then I say [dejectedly], ‘Afghanistan.’ ‘Oh, Osama Bin Ladin!’ That’s the one” – youth

“Every time someone asks where you are from, it kind’ve reminds you you’re not from here. You don’t see it happening between Kiwis” – youth

Participants from Muslim and African communities saw their ethnic communities as being most discriminated against by the wider New Zealand community. These two communities felt it was much harder for them to fit in to New Zealand culture and also to keep their cultural identity.

Some staff and service providers thought it was important to encourage young people to see that their (youths’) own cultural beliefs and customs are an asset and something to be proud of.

SENSE OF BELONGING INCREASED WITH TIME, ENGLISH FLUENCY, FRIENDS AND FEELING WELCOME

Participants who had been in New Zealand the longest, had good English, or who had come to New Zealand at a younger age expressed a greater sense of belonging. Having good friends outside their ethnic community also seemed to make a big difference to youths’ sense of belonging. Youth who arrived in New Zealand during their high school years found it easier to integrate.

Some participants commented that participating in a powhiri helped them feel they belonged.

“When I entered the marae they said, ‘You are welcome, this is your home, everyone is free to do anything.’ And you feel happy. You feel accepted to the community” – youth

“[powhiri] We liked it – it means something when welcomed by the owners of the land. You feel accepted in the country, the speech, the way food is given” – youth

9. Family

“Parents lose authority overnight. Parenting in New Zealand is taken away. Kids gone wild, no boundaries. Even a country needs a border”
– parent

Key findings

NEW ZEALAND FAMILY AND YOUTH CULTURE WAS A SHOCK TO PARENTS AND YOUTH

Most parents experienced culture shock after arriving in New Zealand. All had struggled to parent their teenagers while adjusting to different cultural behaviours – for example; dating, sleepovers and how children interacted with their teachers. This changed the way the family normally behaved and related to one another.

“Even your own family is different here too – everyone leaves – long hours at school. Comes home – everyone is stressed” – youth

Youth, themselves, were also shocked at how much freedom youth in New Zealand had.

“The girls came home and said she had a friend at school who smokes. Oh, I can’t believe that. How can I be a friend of someone who is at that age smoking?” – youth

“Hongi and tattoos was so scary – at home tattoos are seen as something a rebel will do but seeing everyone here with one – what is this country?!” – youth

The concept of a young person becoming independent once they reached 18 years of age was often at odds, culturally, with the refugee communities. The ability for youth to have their own money and receive legal and social support outside of their families changed how families related to one another.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS WERE DISRUPTED: PARENTAL AUTHORITY ERODED, ROLES REVERSED

Many parents felt their ability to parent changed after arriving in New Zealand. Parents and community members believed that the largest impact on the parent-child relationship was the greater freedom of children in New Zealand.

“One problem when you arrive with teenage children is that they were rebels but they become more [rebellious] here. In Colombia or Ecuador I have authority over my children. I don’t feel that here. They are out of our hands. Kids here feel they are protected by the law” – parent

Parents also felt that not enough emphasis was placed on consequences and responsibilities to balance out their children’s ‘rights’.

Social workers reported they had seen authority struggles between parents and children, particularly with the oldest child in a family. They believed this was a result of the parent-child relationship being disrupted when parents and children were separated from one another, perhaps living in different countries. Staff noted that some family relationship breakdowns were sometimes due to youth not understanding decisions adults had to make to survive during the resettlement journey: decisions such as the type of work they did or the need to leave the child for periods of time.

Service providers expressed concern about youth having to take on responsibilities beyond their age because they spoke better English than their parents. Examples given included youth dealing with household finances, reading incoming mail, and interpreting for their family at Work and Income and medical appointments. Some service providers felt that the change in parent-child relationships was the main reason they, as agencies, were dealing with youth offenders and child protection agencies.

The opportunity for families to be reunited was a significant event for both parent and child.

“To see my Dad for the first time in 13 years was a big thing for me” – youth

But reunification changed family dynamics. Already-settled families who were joined by a parent after a long separation often had more problems adjusting to the parent’s arrival. This applied particularly to those families with young adults and more so where those young adults had taken on a parenting role in the parent’s absence. Some staff noted that unaccompanied minors (a person under 18 years old, who arrives in New Zealand to join a parent or guardian already here) adapted more easily to an established family unit.

DESIRE FOR ROLE MODELS TO SUPPORT PARENTS

Some community members thought youth should have role models outside the family as a way of replicating the ‘community parenting’ that would happen in their country of origin. Parents concerned about a lack of knowledge of the way things work in New Zealand (such as how to find work) also welcomed this suggestion. However, other community members believed mentoring programmes may not work, because of a lack of trust amongst community members.

“Our trust in our own people was broken, so how do we trust someone else?”

Some parents were interested in hearing from Kiwi parents about ways of parenting in New Zealand. Staff, in particular, noted a lack of positive male role models for young adult men.

10. Transport

“I tried to cry so people could see I needed help but it was raining and no one could tell. The rain was washing away the tears”
– youth (Lost going home on first day of school)

Key findings

GETTING AROUND THE CITY WAS DIFFICULT, COSTLY AND STRESSFUL

Youth and families mostly walked or took buses to get around their new city. However, the cost of using buses also prevented youth and families from taking part in more activities and social events. Participants shared many stories of getting lost. While most stories were a humorous reminder of the early days, they also recalled situations that were stressful at the time.

“Mum and daughter 5 years lost. Last bus had gone home and the daughter said ‘I will get us home’. And she went and asked an ambulance driver if they could help, and they took them home in their ambulance!”
– parent

Getting to a new school on the first day was stressful. Families did not usually have access to private transport and did not know how to get to the school.

“First day at school our volunteers asked if we knew the way. Dad said yes, so he picked us up [end of the day] and we walked. It took us 2 hours to get home. I think we went up and down many streets. We would say ‘It’s this way – oh no dead end.’ Our volunteers called us, ‘Are you home from school?’ It had been two hours and Dad said, ‘We are close I think’. I thought that first day school is so far away from our home. But it was only because we went all around the area”
– youth

YOUTH FELT UNSAFE AND RESTRICTED WITHOUT THEIR OWN TRANSPORT

Youth felt that having a car reduced their worries about walking in unsafe areas and made life easier – such as in getting to school without problems. They felt that their mobility was restricted. However, it was difficult for youth to get their driver’s licence and buy a car because of difficulties speaking and reading English, not having access to a car to learn in, or someone to teach them; or not having enough money to pay for driving lessons or petrol.

“Drivers licencing – I’ve failed 3 times. I really need an interpreter to help” – youth

Having a driver’s licence was seen as important to successful youth resettlement. It made it easier for young people to find and travel to part-time work and lowered the chances of fines and convictions for illegal driving. All groups spoke of needing more support for youth to get their driver’s licence as soon as they were able. However, without parental or other support, this was often difficult. Participants were supportive of drivers’ licensing programmes such as those offered at the Refugee Orientation Centre Trust Waikato.

11. Language

“Language probably my first worry. Everything starts with this, how to make friends. Making friends makes it more easy” – youth

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around language support

Red Cross Refugee Services advises the Ministry of Education of youth to be enrolled in schools and advocates for bilingual support where necessary. Staff and volunteers also help youth at intermediate or secondary school level with school enrolments, including ESOL support.

Where youth are eligible for ESOL classes or higher education, staff and volunteers arrange language assessments and help youth enrol in the appropriate classes.

Key finding: English language skills critical for successful settlement

All groups believed that it was crucial for youth to have good English language skills to help them adjust to school, make friends, find employment and become independent. Being unable to speak, read or write English, severely limited youths’ ability to take part in education and daily life. This was seen most clearly in the education and social interactions of the young people.

Those who had some English on arrival found it easier to settle. But they also had to interpret for others, not understanding Kiwi jargon and worrying about losing their mother tongue. Some young people were frustrated when the English they learnt overseas did not sound like the English in New Zealand. They struggled to understand and be understood.

“Even if you speak English you still have an accent. [It’s] frustrating people saying, ‘I don’t understand you’. ‘What?! I’m speaking English!’ End up not saying anything in class even when you want because you’re scared you won’t be understood” – youth

Discussion: Social participation findings

Most youth found it harder than expected to make friends, and build social networks with other New Zealanders. Many participants noted a lack of opportunities for youth to mix socially with others. Youth also found it difficult to find work or make career choices, and parents did not know how to guide them. Mentoring and buddy systems were also seen to be helpful in contributing to social and educational achievement. Cultural identity was a key concern for both youth and parents.

The resiliency of youth and their parents was clearly demonstrated in how they dealt with the social and cultural integration challenges of settlement in the first year. While the family remains the primary support for the young person, many consulted felt there was a role to be played by those outside of the family to support social connection.

Families found it hard to support their young people to engage with New Zealand culture while keeping their traditional family cultural practices. The challenges of developing cultural identity and adjusting to cultural change within the family and community during a time of transition require practical support to be put in place to assist families navigate this time successfully.

A young person’s resettlement plan should include belonging to a sports or other interest group. As well as providing physical and social benefits, sporting activities gave youth a chance to participate, excel and have fun, often without needing to speak much English. Successful participation was increased where extra support was put in place to ensure barriers were overcome. For example, where fees were subsidized, or transport provided.

While it is unlikely that one programme could be set up across all settlement areas and client groups, consideration should be given for building opportunities for increased social connection into settlement plans. This could include programmes run specifically for young people in their first year to help them build confidence, make friends and experience local activities. Programmes run in various locations around New Zealand settlement locations have had positive benefits and could be replicated. Younger volunteers could be recruited specifically for families with young people, as a way of providing mentoring or buddy systems.

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Snapshot of Red Cross refugee resettlement processes around youth health and well-being

Red Cross Refugee Services' role in supporting the health and well-being of refugee youth begins with enrolling a young person at a doctor. Referrals to specialist mental health services and disability services are made as and when required. Most referrals made to mental health specialists are for youth over 18 years.

Social workers provide in-depth case support for youth clients who refer themselves to health services or to families who ask for help with their youths' health and well-being. Intervention plans are developed case- by-case, with family involvement, using existing family intervention plans. There were no specific youth psychosocial assessment tools for using with youth who had complex resettlement problems.

Red Cross Refugee Services staff work closely with other agencies to coordinate health and well-being support for youth. These agencies include District Health Boards, Refugee Health Liaison, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Primary Health Organisations (PHOs), Refugee Health Screening Services, school and private counsellors.

12. Mental health

“You feel for the rest who have not made it. You actually really want to do something, if you could do something for them. Cause they keep calling asking for help, saying no food and you feel so bad. It is a stress; it doesn’t go away. You know, because you went through that” – youth

Key findings

YOUTH EXPERIENCED DEPRESSION OR WORRIES ABOUT RESETTLEMENT PROBLEMS AND PAST EXPERIENCES

Youth experienced ‘depression’ ‘worries’ or ‘problems’ as a result of some of the experiences they had in New Zealand in the first 12 months, on top of trying to manage their experiences before coming to New Zealand..

“You have seen something happen but now you have come to a different country it is always going to impact you. Your past is always your past and will always be there” – youth

“Get depressed when thinking of the past and what happened. But when you are just here don’t think of the past – no worry – you safe” – youth

Youth who had adult responsibilities – such as running a house or caring for younger siblings – said they had felt stressed or worried by practical everyday problems.

“When you been trying to forget the past – power bill, letter, Telecom, work – needed to get the money. They calling your houses” – youth

“When we arrived there wasn’t a social worker. Now I look at what happens now [with new families] and I think we wouldn’t have had half the problems we did if we had a social worker” – youth

BOREDOM AND LACK OF FRIENDS INCREASED FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION

Being bored or not having friends was often identified by some youth as something that led to feelings of ‘depression’. Staff and community members noted that young people living on their own required a lot more support to avoid feeling lonely.

“Something to make them busy, not get depressed. No job, no car, no friends. Living by himself. After school, he just sitting there. Volunteer tried hard to be friends but [his] English is still down” – community member

BARRIERS TO USING COUNSELLING SERVICES (CONCEPT, FEES, TRANSPORT, CULTURAL RELEVANCE, LANGUAGE)

Staff had seen where counselling had made a big difference. They believed that early links to health services were important for youth to deal with trauma and changing family relationship dynamics. However, none of the youth who took part in the focus groups or interviews had had counselling or mental health support. Several did not understand what counselling involved.

“I had friends who used to go to counselling, but I never knew what ‘counselling’ was. I don’t know why they went because it’s not a concept back home. If I knew what it was maybe I would have gone” – youth

“I know there is social workers, but the social workers are with the parents not with the kids or teenagers. Sometimes you need someone, to say you are having problems at school because sometimes you don’t want to say it to your parents that you have this problem” – youth

Parents spoke of wanting their children to know “who they can go to, to ask for help” with worries about school or everyday worries.

Staff felt there were limited counselling options to refer youth to. As with many findings in this report, barriers to using counselling services included few organisations being culturally appropriate to refer youth to, the cost of counselling services, and transport to get there and counsellors not speaking the language of the person needing counselling. Also, some staff felt youth were concerned about confidentiality, particularly in health settings.

YOUTH WERE CONCERNED FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY LEFT BEHIND

Many older youth felt responsible for people or extended family overseas who needed help. This contributed significantly to their worries.

“I think you always have in the back of your mind that you survived that life. But there are still lots of people still living there and you tend to think about them” – youth

13. Sexual health

“Parents are scared about what schools are saying. In Africa someone else teaches you, not your parents. 18 years and it is your aunty who teaches you. School starts a lot earlier”
– community member

Key findings

SCHOOL SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION CONFLICTED WITH CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Most parents had been surprised to learn sex education was taught at school. Some were shocked at the age at which sex education classes started, and with the topics covered, including same-sex orientation. They were concerned that sex education being taught in New Zealand schools may go against their cultural or religious practices on sexual education.

Youth had various opinions on the subject. However, most identified that they were ‘between two worlds’ regarding this – what everyone learns at school and what their parents and community teach. Some youth suggested the Red Cross or schools should educate the parents ahead of time about what sex education involves and how it may benefit the young person.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION DISRUPTED DUE TO FAMILY DISLOCATION

Education and service providers were concerned that young people had missed out on sexual education for two main reasons: 1) Language or cultural barriers that had prevented youth from attending sexual health education lessons at school, and 2) cultural practices that had been disrupted because of the dislocation of families. For example, in some cultures, children’s aunts teach them sexual education. If an aunt was not living in New Zealand, and the refugee culture had not adapted to meet this need, then children missed out on sexual education.

14. Physical safety

“I was quite scared to be outside – some bullying outside my door. I didn’t have the language so I didn’t understand what she was saying but I knew she was threatening me”
– youth

Key findings

MOST REFUGEE YOUTH HAD EXPERIENCED BULLYING

Most youth had experienced bullying in their first 12 months living in New Zealand. They had felt stressed and unsafe. Bullying was most commonly experienced in schools, followed by public and social settings.

Youth identified the reason for the bullying as their ethnicity or religion or just being ‘a refugee’. Some community members noted that girls wearing head scarves (from Muslim communities) or youth from African communities were those most targeted for discrimination.

“When they saw me eating with hand they disgust at us and they kind of talking a little behind us” – youth

“Some students ...laughing about our accents” – youth

Several youth said they would have liked to have had someone their own age to talk to about it at the time, and who would know what to do. Some youth spoke of not wanting to worry their parents or not being able to communicate with their teachers to tell them.

The Kiwi culture of ‘hassling’ and ‘joking’ also caused confusion for youth and mistakenly made them believe they were being made fun of.

HAVING A HOME CONTRIBUTED TO YOUTH FEELING SAFE LIVING IN NEW ZEALAND

Safety was seen as ‘a given’ in New Zealand. Some youth and parents noted that although unsafe things still happened here, it was on a lesser scale than what they had experienced before coming to New Zealand. Having a home was seen as a key factor that made a difference in someone feeling safe.

“Freedom in a good way, own room, own house, very beautiful, stability, they feel safe” – parent

“They felt this is their house – it can’t be taken away from them. As they feel safe they can focus on studies, their future, motivation to go ahead” – parent

NEW ZEALAND CULTURE CAUSED PARENTS CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN’S SAFETY

In the first year in New Zealand families also had to work out what ‘safety’ was in New Zealand. Differences between the family’s traditional culture and modern New Zealand culture contributed to concerns about their children’s safety.

“As a parent, we had similar concerns for safety and negative influence of youth in New Zealand on our child. There was also girl- to- girl fighting at school, which we didn’t know of. As a parent I don’t feel very confident if my child goes out alone. Safety is an issue, maybe because it’s a new location for us. Maybe in time the concern will go” – parent

“My child said other friends or students in the school smoked and didn’t respect teachers. They break mirrors and glasses as well. She felt scared when these things happened. The police also came. She had never met these situations before” – parent

Discussion: Good health and wellbeing findings

Young people and their families often felt worried and stressed in their first year living in New Zealand. Experiences of bullying were widespread. This is a major concern that needs to be addressed. A key theme that emerged during the consultations was youth not knowing who to go to for help or advice. This was also a frustration for parents who could not guide their children because of language difficulties or not understanding how things work in New Zealand.

Youth and their parents were often unaware of options available for addressing problems that arose during settlement or as a result of the refugee journey. There is a need for buddy programmes or orientation information for youth and parents about what support is available. Staff raised concerns about the barriers to youth and families using these services, suggesting that ongoing community education would be necessary.

Community members and staff saw the need to motivate, inspire and encourage young people in their resettlement.

“The only stories we do are for the funders” – staff

Suggestions included presenting success stories of former refugee youth in New Zealand or linking youth to positive refugee youth role models. Celebrating what has been achieved by youth and their families was seen as beneficial for settled families and new families alike.

Red Cross Refugee Services does not currently use specific youth assessment tools. Implementing these would likely help client services staff and youth themselves.

Appendix 1: Organisations consulted for the review

Careers New Zealand, Hamilton
Change Makers Refugee Forum, Wellington
City Bible Church, Hamilton
Department of Internal Affairs, Hamilton
English Language Partners, Hamilton
Fraser High School (ESOL Department), Hamilton
Hamilton City Council (Community Development Team),
Hamilton
Hamilton Multicultural Services Trust, Hamilton
Link House Agency, Hamilton
Ministry of Education, Hamilton
New Zealand Police, Hamilton
Refugee Trauma Recovery, Wellington
Refugees as Survivors New Zealand, Auckland and
Hamilton
Settlement Support NZ (Immigration New Zealand),
Hamilton
Shama Hamilton Ethnic Women's Centre Trust, Hamilton
The Refugee Orientation Centre Trust, Hamilton
Waikato Refugee Forum, Hamilton
Women's Organisation of the Waikato Muslim
Association, Hamilton

Appendix 2: Red Cross Refugee Services Pathways to Settlement programme

RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES' PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME IS A RESETTLEMENT FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE REFUGEE FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE FIRST 12 MONTHS AFTER ARRIVAL IN NEW ZEALAND AND INTO THE LONG TERM. THERE ARE TWO STRANDS TO PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT: SETTLEMENT PLANS AND, WHERE OFFERED, EMPLOYMENT PLANS.

PATHWAYS TO SETTLEMENT PLANS

Each refugee family has its own settlement plan that identifies the family's goals for building a new life in New Zealand. Families start developing their settlement plans at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, with the help of Red Cross Refugee Services staff and other agencies. Refugee youth aged 18 to 24 years complete an individual plan. Youth aged 12 to 17 years are included in their parent or caregiver's settlement plan.

Settlement plans have economic, social and health progress indicators to track each family's participation in New Zealand society:

- Economic participation indicators include education, employment, finances and housing.
- Social participation indicators include social connections, culture and identity, family, transport and language.
- Good health and well-being indicators include safety, mental health and sexual health.

Red Cross Refugee Services staff and volunteers in each resettlement location support families to achieve their settlement goals. Settlement progress is formally monitored at six weeks, three months, six months and 12 months after the family's arrival in New Zealand.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT PLANS

Pathways to Employment provides employment and training assessments, guidance and support for former refugees. Employment advisors provide one on one tailored support to assist clients to achieve milestones towards sustainable, durable and fulfilling work. Employer

Liaisons work with employers to find work experience and paid experience opportunities. Former refugee youth between the ages of 18 and 24 years can access this programme. Where the programme is offered (currently Waikato and Wellington only)³ employment liaison staff work with individuals to develop an employment plan. Staff provide career guidance and planning, advice on study pathways, help with CV writing, and support youth to attend employment workshops, gain work experience and find part-time or full-time work.

³ As of May 2014, MSD has granted funding for Red Cross to roll out the programme to all settlement locations

Appendix 3: Pilot leadership training programmes for refugee youth in Waikato, 2013

FUNDING PROVIDED BY THE VODAFONE FOUNDATION NEW ZEALAND ENABLED RED CROSS REFUGEE SERVICES WAIKATO TO RUN TWO PILOT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES FOR 47 REFUGEE YOUTH IN WAIKATO.

PROGRAMME 1: BUILDING LEADERSHIP THROUGH SPORT (IGNITE SPORTS ACADEMY, WAIKATO)

Twenty seven refugee youth took part in this 2-day workshop run by Ignite Sports Academy, aimed at building leadership skills through sport. Participants selected had been in New Zealand between two months and ten years. The programme covered fitness and strength building, skill development (in soccer and netball) and goal-setting. Each session focused on how to build character and leadership skills on and off the field. A graduation dinner was held at the end of the programme, with certificates being presented to each participant.

While some participants found the programme physically demanding, most thought it was a good way to meet new people.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK – ‘WHAT WE LEARNT’

“Work on your character and your reputation will follow”

“Team work makes a dream work”

“I learnt how to run better, catch a ball better and also how to work in a team”

“Communicating with my team members – communication skills”

“I had a lot of fitness which was good for my body”

“I learnt how to build my character in team-based sports. How to lead in those types of sport. And also learning new sports and people”

PROGRAMME 2: BIG DAY OUT – CASTLEROCK (FIRST STEP ADVENTURES, WAIKATO)

Big Day Out was a one-day leadership development programme for newly-arrived refugee youth aged between 14 and 24 years old. All had been in New Zealand less than 12 months, with the most recent arrivals having only been in Hamilton two weeks. Three instructors from First Step Adventures led the programme. Six Red Cross Refugee Services staff and a local youth leader supported the instructors and youth, providing language support and role-modelling.

With the programme being designed to challenge and grow the youth in skills, experience and confidence; participants spent the day learning rock-climbing and riding a flying fox. These activities took a lot of courage and resulted in the youth achieving feats they had not previously thought themselves capable of.

The programme enabled participants to meet other refugee youth, build relationships and networks through shared experiences, have some fun, travel out of the city and see more of their new country.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Several youth wanted to join the local rock climbing club.
- Two youth who spoke different languages managed to have a conversation.
- Two other youth found out they went to the same school. They were seen, later in the week, walking to school together.
- Youth being excited to see more of the country.
- Time spent doing new activities together created bonds between staff and youth.

Appendix 4: Reading list

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National Office
Red Cross House
69 Molesworth Street
PO Box 12140
Thorndon, Wellington 6144

www.redcross.org.nz

0800 RED CROSS (0800 733 276)

 facebook.com/NewZealandRedCross

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