

Empowerment and health promotion of refugee women



Jaya Dantas, Anita Lumbus and Shelley Gower

International Health Programme, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine

Healthway Research Grant Final Report

Project/File Number	24265
Chief Investigator	Professor Jaya Dantas
Associate Investigator	Dr Jonathan Hallett
Project Team	Professor Jaya Dantas (Project Lead) Anita Lumbus (Project Manager) Shelley Gower (Reserach Officer) Natalija Brunovs (Photographer)
Project Title	Empowerment and Mental Health Promotion of Refugee Women Through Photovoice
Institution	International Health Programme School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine Curtin University
Partnering community agency	Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre, Mirrabooka Andrea Creado (CEO), Rehab Ahmed and Sally Bower (Project Officers)

Support for the production of this report has been provided by Healthway, the Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors.



With the exception of the logos, and photographs, material presented in this document is provided under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>.

Requests and inquiries concerning these rights should be addressed to:

Professor Jaya Dantas
Email: Jaya.Dantas@curtin.edu.au

May 2018

Please cite as **Dantas, J., Lumbus., A & Gower, S.** (2018). Empowerment and Health Promotion of Refugee Women: the Photovoice Project. Refereed report prepared for Healthway, Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia.

ISBN: 978-0-9945338-8-3

Acknowledgements

The project team members would like to acknowledge the following people and organisations for their contribution during this project:

- Healthway for funding the project and providing the opportunity to undertake this participatory project.
- Andrea Creado, CEO of Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre for her support and facilitation of the project and allowing Ishaar to become a partner in the project. We have gained much from this collaboration.
- Rehab Ahmed and Sally Bower, project officers from Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre for their support in recruiting women to the project; organizing the focus group discussion sessions, including notifying participants, and providing catering and child care; and coordinating the interpreters.
- The wonderful women participants who shared their photographs, stories and ideas with us throughout the project. Their lives are a showcase of resilience and inspiration.
- Natalija Brunovs, professional photographer, for her guidance and co-ordination of the photovoice component. She led the interactive teaching component with the women, and assisted with choosing the final photographs for the exhibition and scrap-booking session.
- Members of the Cultural Reference Group for their advice and support regarding the cultural acceptability of the project methods, and cultural considerations for the progression of the project.
- Librarians at various Perth metropolitan public libraries for hosting the travelling exhibition.
- Melanie Baak (University of SA), Anna Ziersch (Flinders University), and the Curtin University Events team for the support and collaboration in organising and hosting the dissemination workshops held in Perth and Adelaide in late 2017.

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Contents	3
Executive Summary	5
Objectives of the Photovoice Project	8
Background and Literature Review	10
Global forced migration and women	10
Refugee resettlement in Australia	10
Program Theoretical Framework	14
Research approach	14
Figure 1: Steps involved in data collection	14
Figure 2: The SHOWED Technique	15
Data Analysis	16
	17
Results	18
Table 1: Themes and subthemes	18
Impacts of the refugee experience	18
Women's backgrounds and experiences	21
Family separation	23
Strength through family	23
Family issues	24
English language	26
Transport	27
Settlement means and markers	28
Working in paid employment	29
Racism and discrimination	29
Social bonds	32
Role of a women's support service	33
Services and information	33
Social support and wellbeing	33
Successful and replicable model of care	34
Safety and opportunity	35
Multiculturalism and diversity	37
Maintaining own culture	38
Themes from Key Informant interviews	40
Gender roles	40
The impacts of settlement of family	41
The Australian context: Being marginalised in a new system and culture	42
The role of services	43
Implications for Health Promotion and Translation of Research into Practice	46
Recommendations drawn from participants, and key informants and the literature	46
Improving Social Cohesion	46
Addressing family separation issues	47
Improved Service Provision	47
Improved English Language Proficiency	49
Improved Employment Outcomes	49
Other National Settlement Framework Key Target Area	50
An intersectional and strengths based approach	50
Community Benefits from the Research	51
Partnerships	53
Effect of Research on Professional Development	54
Publications	55
Media & Community Engagement	56
Conferences, Seminars & Launch Events	57
Conclusion	61
References	62

Executive Summary

Photo 1: Photographer teaching refugee women the basics of photography	7
Photo 2: Participant with Curtin University researcher	9
Photo 3: A view from the other side: fences and barriers	11
Photo 4: Calm	13
Photo 5: Light and warmth in war	19
Photo 6: Immortal memories	20
Photo 7: Party time	22
Photo 8: Happiness in jumps of joy	24
Photo 9: Empowerment: driving into the future	27
Photo 10: A spread of food and happiness	31
Photo 11: Colourful Autumn	32
Photo 12: Happy times	34
Photo 13: Ishaar: my second home	35
Photo 14: Traditional delicacies of our land	36
Photo 15: Freedom of expression	39
Photo 16: Reaching for the skies: strong roots and branches	45
Photo 17: Shadows and memories	47
Photo 18: Cups of celebration and life	52
Photo 19: Exhibition banners on display at Ishaar	57
Photo 20: Road to life: leaving weary worlds behind	61

Women face many challenges during the refugee journey and upon resettlement. They demonstrate great resilience and agency as they navigate a new life for themselves and their families. Understanding settlement from the perspective of refugee women is important in implementing policies and programs which can effectively respond to their needs and issues.

The Empowerment and Mental Health Promotion of Refugee Women through Photovoice Project (Photovoice Project), funded by *Healthway – the Health Promotion Foundation of Western Australia* was conducted in partnership with Ishaar Multicultural Women’s Health Centre. The study used photovoice, a participatory research tool. Participants were provided with cameras and asked to photograph items and situations that represented their settlement experience.

43 women of refugee background took part in the Photovoice Project and 22 women selected photographs for a travelling exhibition. Over a third of the women who participated were from Iraq, with others from Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Vietnam, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Lebanon and El Salvador. Taking photographs and sharing these with the group was described as an empowering experience.

Settlement challenges faced by the women

- The women spoke of significant barriers to learning English, seeking social services and employment;
- Most faced social isolation and the majority did not have extended family in Australia;
- They faced challenges adjusting to a new life and different culture in Australia;
- Resettlement placed stress on family relationships due to changes in gender roles, and conflicting inter-generational aspirations;
- The women also faced difficulties managing physical and psychological health issues;
- A significant issue was the difficulty in accessing suitable housing for large families.

Factors that facilitate settlement

- Effective and contextually relevant settlement & community support services;
- Feeling accepted and welcomed in multicultural Australia;
- Family reunions with extended family;
- Learning to drive a car and obtaining a driver's licence;
- Drawing strength from religion and culture;
- Support from peers, religious and ethnic community groups.

Recommendations proposed by women themselves

- The need for English language programs tailored to women's unique circumstances, recognising issues which impact on learning such as family responsibilities, pre-Australian education, trauma/health issues and cultural adjustment.
- Support to gain employment through training, mentoring and building networks.
- Resourcing for settlement and women's services.
- Receiving assistance from settled migrants to help new refugees.

Conclusion

Photovoice proved to be an effective tool for supporting wellbeing and empowerment among women refugees. Language difficulties, gender issues and social isolation continue to be significant issues experienced among women refugees beginning a new life in Australia. Sustained English language tuition, appropriate to the needs and life demands of women refugees is necessary to support their successful settlement.



Photo 1: Photographer teaching refugee women the basics of photography

Objectives of the Photovoice Project

1. To teach a group of refugee women the elements of photography so that they can capture images of their life, environment, celebrations and community in Western Australia;
2. To explore through use of images, refugee women's experiences of resettlement, resilience and coping in various life domains (language, housing, security, mental and physical health, family safety, social and community connections, and employment);
3. To document experiences of discrimination and racism experienced by refugee women;
4. To understand the facilitators and barriers to successful resettlement, including programmatic interventions, from the standpoint of women who have had success in resettlement and acculturation, as well as women who are struggling with the process;
5. To collaboratively develop with refugee women strategies for personal and systemic responses towards better support for successful settlement;
6. Through the use of photographs and stories of successful and difficult resettlement, showcase the challenges and strengths of refugee women and engage them as advocates for better policy and advocacy responses to assist resettlement;
7. To increase wider community knowledge of a refugee women's life in Western Australia through a community photography exhibition.

The research team has been able to achieve the objectives of the Photovoice Project.



Photo 2: Participant with Curtin University researcher

Background and Literature Review

Global forced migration and women

In 2016, forced displacement was at a record high of 65.6 million people worldwide, including 22.5 million refugees and 2.8 million people seeking asylum (1). Women and girls make up 49 per cent of refugees (2). Gender has an important role in shaping refugee women's journeys and settlement experiences (3). Dominant representations of refugee women are that of vulnerable and helpless victims, disregarding women's agency and voice (4). Migration and resettlement issues from the perspective of gender is an emerging area of research (5, 6) and greater attention to women's voices is called for in responding to their needs and issues (4, 7).

Refugee resettlement in Australia

Resettlement is the relocation of refugees from a country where they applied for protection to a third State which has agreed to accept them (8). Australia is a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and one of 37 countries which participate in the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Programme (9). Australia's refugee intake is 16,250 for 2017-18 and this is expected to increase to 18,750 in 2018-19, representing the largest intake in 30 years (10). Australia has an offshore pathway for resettlement where visas are granted to people who are deemed refugees or humanitarian entrants outside of Australia and an onshore component is for those who arrive without a valid visa, including boat arrivals, or who arrive by plane with another form of visa and then apply for asylum (11).

Punitive policies to deter boat arrivals have included mandatory immigration detention and offshore processing, and temporary protection visas (1999-2007 and since 2014) for those who have had their refugee status recognised (12). A 'Woman at Risk' visa subclass of the offshore program was introduced in 1989 and comprises 12 per cent of the annual refugee intake, for women and their dependents subject to persecution because of their gender and without the protection of a male relative (13). More than 16,800 visas have been granted (14).

Successful settlement

Settlement is defined as "the activities and processes of becoming established after arrival in the country of settlement" (15) and from a policy perspective it is considered to be the first five years of living in Australia (16). However, the settlement period can stretch much longer than five years (17-19) as every migration journey is unique (20). Host nations tend to focus on socioeconomic participation and outcomes as a key determinant of settlement success (21). In Australia, success has been equated with economic and social integration 'into Australian life' (22) Integration can be defined as a two-way process which also includes how well countries welcome and support refugees to settle in their new communities (23, 24). English language proficiency is also considered important in achieving successful settlement (20, 25).

Settlement services for humanitarian entrants

The Australian Government funds the Humanitarian Support Program which includes individualised case managed support on a needs basis, generally for up to 18 months until a client achieves self-reliance across a range of outcomes, in addition to a specialised and intensive support program for those with complex needs (26). Upon exiting the Humanitarian Support Program refugees can also access a range of community programs which aim to foster "social and economic participation, personal well-being, independence and community connectedness" (26). Humanitarian entrants are eligible for 510 hours of English language tuition through the government funded Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). These hours must be started within the first 12 months of arrival and completed within five years (27). In 2017 a capped program was introduced of an additional 490 hours for clients who have made good progress or attendance but have exhausted their 510 hours and not reached a desired level of proficiency (20).



Photo 3: A view from the other side: fences and barriers

Life is like being caged up in a cell in my homeland. Bad things can spring up on you any second. In having experienced prison life due to political reasons I bear this heartfelt appreciation of every breath of fresh air and the generous necessities I can afford here in Australia post prison and refugee camp. Rukia

Refugee women, health and successful settlement

Gender is an important factor affecting integration outcomes, though it is often neglected in integration policy and practice (21, 28). Gender intersects with other individual factors to shape women's experiences of settlement. Recognising that there is no one-size-fits all approach to settlement (20) and the importance of settlement responses which account for the nuances among women (28) such as socio-economic, ethno-cultural and other issues, commonalities can be observed in reviewing the emerging body of Australian literature related to women's health and wellbeing and barriers and facilitators to their successful settlement.

More often migration has a negative impact on women's health (29). Refugee women experience higher rates of mental health issues (6). While trauma related to pre-migration is recognized as a factor in mental health, post-migration stressors experienced during the settlement period are shown to be equally significant in relation to mental health outcomes (30). Family separation is a stressor (31) and a significant settlement challenge reported in the literature (32-34). Experiences of social isolation are commonly reported (18, 35-39) and this is often attributed to being without family and support networks in Australia (18, 35, 36, 38). Newly arrived refugee women may experience low socioeconomic status (40) and lack of financial resources is a barrier to accessing family reunion arrangements (18, 35, 38) and puts significant stress upon families (18, 19, 41). In the absence of family, community and support networks, women's ethnic communities in their place of settlement have been shown to be a vital source of social support (35, 38, 42, 43).

Acculturation issues, including changing gender roles and the impacts of living in an individualist culture are a further challenge, linked to stress and difficulties in family relationships (19, 41, 44, 45). Family and domestic violence among refugees has been acknowledged as a gender based issue and culture not being the cause of violence (18, 46). The importance of situating the issue among refugees within the context of cultural transition and changing gender roles is highlighted (44). Settlement can be a stressful period managing family responsibilities including children's settlement needs and challenges (19). Issues include parenting in a new culture (18, 19, 41, 45) and fear of loss of children's original culture and language as well as parental authority (19, 35, 45).

Language proficiency

Language proficiency is a critical factor to social and economic integration, linked to employment, as well as health and wellbeing (28). Research has highlighted the universal design of the Adult Migrant English Program as not being conducive to women's learning needs (37, 47). Women may experience disrupted or minimal education pre-settlement (37, 47) as well as family responsibilities and health issues which prevent them from fully availing of the program (35, 37, 47). Being unable to speak the language and loss of social networks can lead to further feelings of isolation (35, 37) and negative impacts on psychological wellbeing (47).

Racism and discrimination

The reception received in-country significantly intersects with the settlement experience (48). Studies have highlighted racism and discrimination as an issue for women (17, 19, 36, 37, 42, 49). Women of Muslim background in particular have reported higher levels of racism compared with others of non-visible religious dress (50). Racism and discrimination has negative impacts on mental health (50, 51). In Australia entrenched racism and negative community attitudes is also shown to contribute to social isolation among Muslim refugee women (52). As part of a welcoming environment, governments have responsibility for policy and messaging which promotes equality, diversity and combats racism (23). At the macro level, government messaging of offshore arrivals as the 'deserving camp refugee' while people who seek asylum by arriving on boat as evading a managed migration process (53, 54) is influential in determining public attitudes towards refugees (54, 55). Policy which favours a punitive approach to onshore arrivals is a barrier to settlement for women (18, 35).

Social support

Social support is a facilitator to settlement success and in supporting women's health and wellbeing. Support from family is shown to be significant in supporting psychological wellbeing (31, 56, 57). In addition, affirmational support from those who have already successfully adapted to the host country is an important resource in coping with the stresses of migration, as well as information, emotional and instrumental support offered by services and through informal channels (56, 57). Settlement services and programs have shown to be vital in helping women to access housing, employment, language learning and social interactions (17, 39, 43, 49). Programs aimed at facilitating social support through building women's relationships with their peers are shown to benefit them psychosocially through the provision of mutual support and information exchange (39, 43) as well as provide an empowering experience through the training and access to English language practice they provide (39).



Photo 4: Calm
When I go here I feel relaxed
and at peace and feel my
whole family is with me.
Leila

Progress

Theoretical Framework

For this research, intersectionality is utilised as a theoretical perspective, which recognises the intersection of social categories including race, gender, socioeconomic and migration status in women's lives (58, 59). As a research framework for issues affecting refugee women it acknowledges women's diversity at an individual level as well as social, institutional and immigration contexts in shaping their experiences (46). Situating this approach within our research we recognise commonalities as well as nuances among women and their experiences of settlement (46).

Setting

We conducted the project in partnership with a community organisation, Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre (Ishaar), a holistic health service for women located in an ethnically diverse area of Perth, the capital of Western Australia. Ishaar's clients include women of refugee background and the organisation receives funding to deliver programs for refugee women in their first five years of settlement in Australia. A memorandum of understanding between Ishaar and the university with agreed-upon roles was developed. The organisation assigned two staff members to the project, who managed recruitment of clients through its programs and other service stakeholders. Ishaar arranged for access to interpreters and a crèche to facilitate the participation of refugee women who had young children. A Cultural Reference Group was also established with agreed-upon terms of reference. The group included three Ishaar staff, three photovoice participants and two of the university researchers. The ethics approval for the project was received on the 30 October 2015 (Ethics Approval RDHS-253-15).

Research approach

A community based research approach emphasises collaboration, participation and reflexivity and is a suitable fit to an underpinning intersectional theoretical perspective (60). We used the community based participatory research method of photovoice, a form of participant photography designed to give voice to groups in health contexts (61). Photovoice has three main goals: to enable people to record community strengths, issues and concerns through taking photos; to promote critical dialogue among participants about issues captured in their photographs; and to reach policymakers (62).

It focuses on participant empowerment (63) as well as a social justice component through the power of images and stories to influence decision makers. Photovoice is informed by three theories: feminist theory, where participants become co-researchers and through the process are given a voice to speak and act in their own interests (64); Freire's critical consciousness theory which encourages critical reflection through group dialogue, leading to action (65); and participatory documentary photography, whereby instead of being passive subjects in images, participants are enabled through picture taking to explore issues and strengths in their communities (66).

Recruitment and Participant Characteristics

A convenience sample of 43 women of refugee background were recruited with the assistance of Ishaar Multicultural Women's Health Centre. Most women were regular visitors to the centre and volunteered for the project in response to promotional posters displayed at the centre. Women received three gift vouchers for their participation and were able to keep their camera after taking part in the sessions. The women took photographs and participated in the focus group discussions. 22 women selected photographs to be exhibited in the travelling exhibition. The majority of women were from Iraq (n=16), with others from Iran (n=6), Afghanistan (n=5), Syria (n=4), Vietnam (n=4), South Sudan (n=2), Eritria (n=1), Somalia (n=1), Myanmar (n=1), Pakistan (n=1), Lebanon (n=1), El Salvador (n=1).

Data Collection – Photovoice method

A professional photographer provided guidance in photography instruction. Six photovoice sessions were held with four groups of women (figure 1). Morning and afternoon sessions were held weekly to fortnightly on Mondays and Wednesdays from early May to the end of June 2016, to coincide with the school term. During the first session participants were given instruction in photographic techniques by the professional photographer, and provided with ethical guidance on the need for consent and permission to use photographs of people. The second session mainly focused on camera practice with the photographer, establishing group rules and choosing topics to photograph. A list of possible common topics in settlement experiences were generated and agreed upon by the participants, and these became the focus of the photographs each week. Sessions three to five involved sharing photos and group discussions. Interpreters were employed as required to facilitate the discussion.

Figure 1: Steps involved in data collection



We used a reflective technique of questioning in the photovoice discussions called the 'SHOWeD' technique, which is particular to the photovoice method. A strength of this questioning technique is that it encourages group discussions regarding images to delve deeper into "hidden transcripts," allowing for critical discourse on cultural and political issues (63). The SHOWED technique was used as a framework for the discussion (67) (figure 2). (68, 69)

Figure 2: The SHOWED Technique

S – What do you see here?
H – What is really happening here?
O – How does this relate to our lives and community?
W – Why does this (situation, problem or strength) exist?
E – How can we be empowered by this?
D – What can we do about it?

By using this framework, the photographs provided a catalyst for further discussion beyond the original photographic topic. Through their photos the women shared stories of their life and made recommendations for supporting successful settlement. The final session included a process of member checking of the emergent themes and sought their recommendations for supporting the successful settlement of women refugees to Australia.

A **scrapbooking day** in July 2016 was held where women had the opportunity to scrap book a selection of their photos and celebrate their involvement in the project. In total 33 women took part in two sessions. The morning scrapbooking session was attended by 18 participants and an afternoon workshop by 15 participants. The women received a certificate of participation on the day.

An **exhibition planning day** was held in December 2016. The project team presented on the themes which were identified through the analysis for any further input. Participants chose up to 4 photographs they felt most clearly represented their settlement experiences. Participants wrote a short summary in English of the meaning of the photographs, with the help of translators and researchers where necessary. The final photographs for the travelling exhibition were chosen from this collection of photographs.

Individual semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 11 participants which explored their reflections on participating in the project and their settlement experiences. Interviews with eight key informants from policy and advocacy organisations, and government and community organisations providing services to refugees in Perth were also undertaken to ascertain their perspectives on the challenges facing refugee women during settlement, and the implications of the findings for policy.

Data Analysis

We adopted a thematic framework analysis approach to data analysis of the photovoice sessions, interviews and photographs (70). The analysis was led by the lead researcher (AL) using peer review processes for data interpretation with participants, reference group and co-researchers (71). Triangulation of multiple data collection methods allowed for cross-validation of the data, thereby reducing the possibility of bias and increasing the richness of the data obtained (72). We used deductive as well as inductive coding, allowing space for participant issues and meanings to be identified in relation to settlement in Australia (70). A similar approach was followed for the analysis of the key informant interviews.

Applying an intersectional lens (73), we acknowledged categories of difference among women's voices including age, education and ethnic background. In addition, as a key objective of the research is on barriers and facilitators to successful settlement Ager and Strang's framework for integration was also considered. The middle range theory identifies four domains of integration: education, employment, housing and health which are means and markers of integration; the role of citizenship and rights; social connection processes within and between groups; and language, culture and the community context as structural barriers to these connections (24).

Photovoice sessions and interviews were transcribed by one researcher (AL) and a professional transcriber. The researcher (AL) reviewed the transcripts and photographs alongside notes written during the data collection process. Coding of a sample of the transcripts was conducted and discussed with other members of the research team for feedback. A working analytical framework was developed for categorising and coding the remaining data using *NVivo for Qualitative Analysis*. The data was then charted using an Excel spreadsheet and analytic memos written as part of the process of data interpretation. These were then reviewed by members of the research team in determining preliminary themes. The themes were presented to women who took part in the selection of exhibition photographs for member checking, in addition to the Cultural Reference Group. This feedback was incorporated when determining the final themes.

Results

Settlement Experiences of the Participants

Five overarching themes were generated from the analysis. Themes and sub themes are presented in Table One:

Table 1: Themes and subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
1. Pre-arrival experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of the refugee experience • Women's backgrounds and experiences
2. The importance of family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family separation • Strength through family • Family issues
3. Settlement challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language • Transport • Settlement means and markers • Racism and discrimination
4. Support and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social bonds • Role of a women's support service
5. Facilitators to settlement in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and opportunity • Multiculturalism and diversity • Maintaining own culture

Theme 1: Pre-arrival experiences

The pre-arrival experience refers to experiences of refugees in their home country pre-migration, as well as in-transit or during temporary settlement, for example in refugee camps in countries of asylum which are not signatories to the Refugee Convention. Whilst experiences vary considerably, pre-migration stressors include living through conflict and war; fear, violence and intimidation both personal and against one's family, insecure housing and lack of basic necessities for survival (74). Prior experiences of education, as well as disrupted education, will also impact on how well families may fare in the education system of the re-settlement country (75).

Impacts of the refugee experience

Some women reflected on the psychological impacts of their life during war and displacement, loss and grief, as well as the dangers they faced during their journey to safety. The ongoing impacts on mental health were discussed:

Photo 5: Light and warmth in war

Light makes me feel safe. War took all the light from our lives. We used this light to survive and hold us together.
Alma



I think it's underestimated to which extent people might have issues before coming here....Trauma, a personal reflection, I realised actually probably I was depressed before coming here. (Linda)

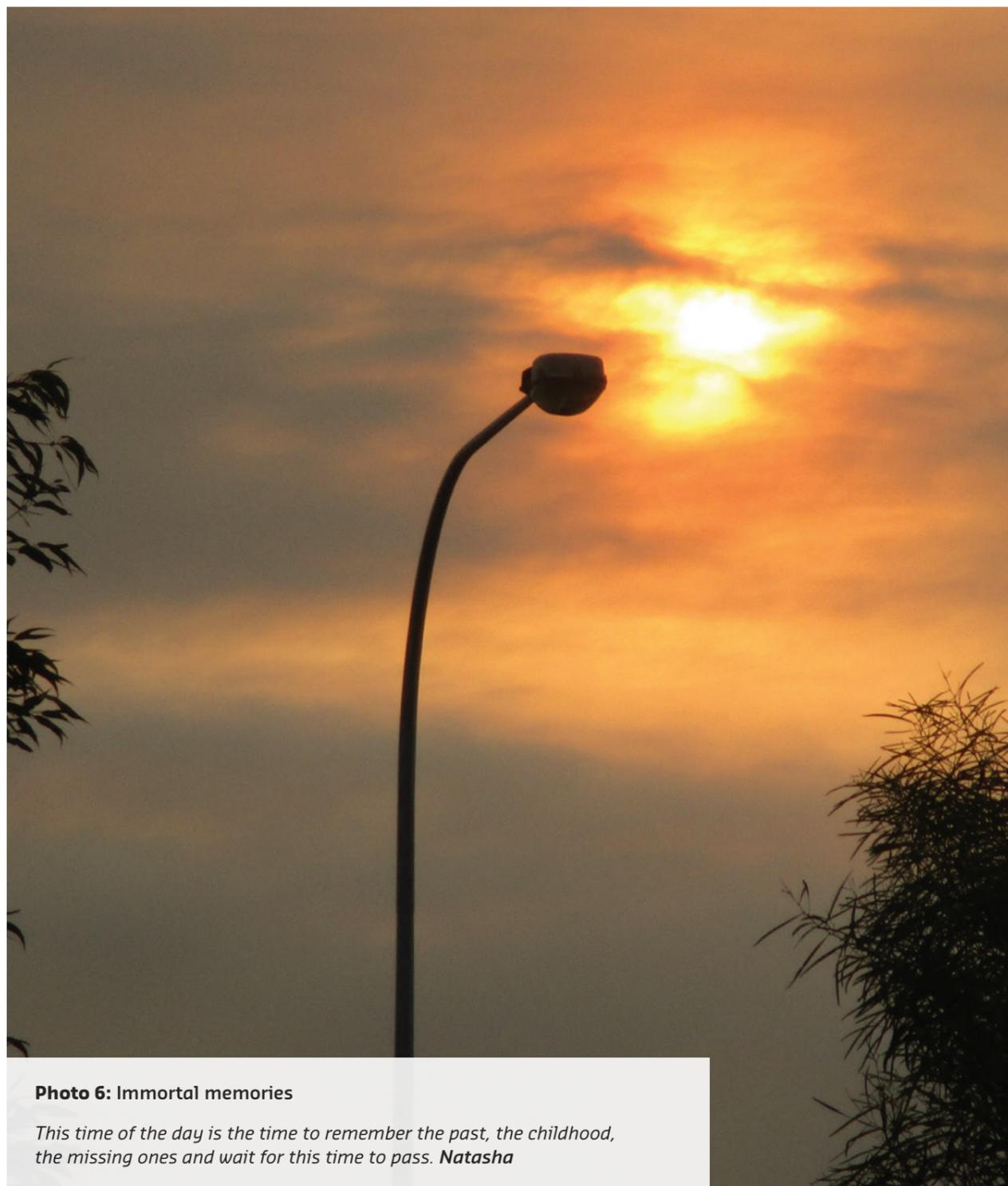


Photo 6: Immortal memories

*This time of the day is the time to remember the past, the childhood, the missing ones and wait for this time to pass. **Natasha***

Women's backgrounds and experiences

Prior to arrival in Australia, discrimination, unequal opportunity and gender role expectations were experienced by some women. While some women had been able to participate in schooling, further training and the workplace, others discussed limited opportunities for education and employment:

In Iraq we can't study, we can't work. In Iraq there's a set age for woman to stop studying. Not that the government stops the woman from studying. It's actually the family that stops the woman from finishing her studies. (Bahia)

For those with previous opportunities, there was a determination to have the same life opportunities post-settlement:

When I was in Syria I was married, had children and I used to work. When I come to Lebanon the same, I studied and I worked. In Australia I will do the same. I am looking for job and I want to study. (Aliya)

Previous experiences of gender rights was viewed as an important experience in shaping the approach to pursuing goals:

When I work in a women's right organisation I feel like, I can decide for myself, you feel more confident. You believe in yourself, oh I can do it, I can do it, yes. (Suu)



Photo 7: Party time

Family is important. Arab people love to be together but unfortunately my mum is not here because it is so hard to get a visa for her. Alma

Theme 2: The importance of family

International and domestic resettlement policies recognise the fundamental significance of family for human wellbeing (76). Discussions and photographs related to family were prominent in photovoice sessions. Within the overarching theme of family, three main concepts were discussed: being separated from family and its impacts; strength through family; and family issues.

Family separation

Fragmentation of family and community is a significant issue among refugees which intersects with other areas of settlement (77). Being separated from family who were an important support and feeling socially isolated was a settlement challenge identified by a number of women:

In my country the women have support from her family. But here no family, the woman feels stronger in her country. (Adele)

I'm always sad because I have friends but it's not like family, I don't have any family member here. There is a difference, you have sister, you have brother, I don't have any. I feel I'm alone. (Yasmin)

Maintaining family connections and reunion was important, but some Iraqi women spoke of the difficulty of successfully bringing family members to Australia:

If I decide go to holiday somewhere my husband say go to America, go to Thailand, go to Vietnam or somewhere, I am thinking no, I will go my country, I will visit my family. When I see them I am happy. (Shirin)

Here you know the immigration difficulties, I tried so hard to get my mum to come here just to visit me. All these years and I couldn't even manage to get her to come as a visitor. (Alma)

Strength through family

Women's photos and stories spoke of the importance and meaning of family in Australia. This included strength in their role as carers to family members and the support they were provided from their family. Coming to Australia with family was seen as important in helping settlement:

When I am tired about my problems, my issues, when I see my son's smile, I forget everything and I find myself between happiness, with many good things. (Niki)

I think I was lucky when we came overseas, coming from eastern culture that you are not living by yourself unless you are married. So that was the case when I came here. I came with my immediate family, my parents. (Linda)



Photo 8: Happiness in jumps of joy

*I used to feel lonely as I didn't have anyone here in Australia. Now that I have my children, I no longer feel lonely. They fill my heart with love. When I look at him in this picture (him jumping up), I think of birds flying. **Halia***

Family issues

Some participants described family issues such as problems in marital relationships and parenting as a result of dealing with a new culture and values which differed from their previous country. This was often framed in terms of a shift in the changing roles and opportunities for women in Australia compared with women and men in their former countries. Some women described the change as a shift in power, with women having increased freedom and rights, and these rights affected men. The men perceived themselves as having a reduced status. Difficulties arose when negotiating changing marital relationship roles:

Talking about my husband, when he came to this country he saw woman here are all respected and treated properly, they have rights. He became nuts. It drove him crazy. (Bahia)

They (men) make the assumption that when you go and live in a Western country than you have no right as a male. It is a woman's country, you know. So I think that idea in itself is shattering one. They are looking at the safety of the family but at the cost of what. (Linda)

I've been here 15 years now, just now my husband start recognising that driving is essential for me. The second thing the finance, I have to wait for him, if you want to go to the shops because he has the control of the budget, so he has all the money coming to him and if I want to buy something I have to go and wait for him. I said this is not going to work because sometimes I have to come back and wait for you to go there because I don't have the money in my hand so this is, I just faced him now and I said this is not going to work. (Alma)

Men's struggles with adjusting to Australian culture and changing gender roles had impacts on family relationships, creating stress for women:

So I want my husband to be with me, we go out, have fun. He doesn't want that. (Bahia)

They (men) feel there is no use for them in the society. (Linda)

Some women expressed being unable to raise their children as they felt was appropriate, including disciplining through physical punishment, and this was perceived as a threat to maintaining parental authority and raising well-behaved children:

So when you try to raise your children in your home, the way that you raised them back in their own country and then they go out in the Australia society here, it's totally different. So the two cultures kind of clash in a way. (Rukia)

Domestic violence was also raised as a universal and hidden issue affecting women. This was seen as something affecting women regardless of background or culture:

I think domestic violence is still here, but no one talk. (Adele)

It was felt there was inadequate support available for women in situations of domestic violence and more needed to be done:

No one help. Some people come from Canberra here for domestic violence for women, but no one do anything. Just listen and go again. (Adele)

Theme 3: Settlement challenges

There were several settlement challenges discussed by participants along with some suggestions and recommendations to overcome the challenges and improve community and government support.

English language

Competency in English was viewed as vital to settlement in Australia. Over half of the participants in the project required access to an interpreter. Many women reported challenges in undertaking the 510 hours of English tuition available to new refugees. Issues cited included a lack of pre-Australian education, being of older age, caring for children, family issues and health issues, including trauma:

For us women in Africa, most of the women they don't go to school...It is just good that when the women or the people from Africa arrived in Australia they are given the course, the 510 hours, but for some who have not gone to school, not even a single day, I think 510 is not enough. (Anna)

I used to go to English classes but since my kids go to school it's you know, pick up and drop off I can't make it. (Leila)

Women were of the view that the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) was not always adequate based on women's backgrounds and needs and the hours provided should be increased. Access to home tutoring was also recommended, as well as tailored programs offered to older women coming to Australia as an alternative to the AMEP format:

Maybe volunteers come and teach English at home. I know there are some people, some volunteers are still coming and teach because I know one of my friends she was from Burma, she got 2 kids and she can't go out so volunteers come in. (Nafeesa)

Especially for older lady. Difficult for them understand the alphabet...Give them a small class for English, easy for them. (Adele)

One of the impacts of low English literacy was in women's relationships with their children who upon settlement had become more competent in the language, and issues included assisting them with school work and needing their support to navigate Australian systems while ensuring parental authority:

They need us, but we can't help them, and we try to ask them for help. Because of the language. (Alma)

Despite experiencing difficulties, participants were determined to learn English to facilitate their settlement and participation in life in Australia:

I want to learn English... I want to become part of the Australian community. (Farida)

I am teacher for young kids. But when I come to Australia I can't get some work like teacher, but now I am study English.. Important, language English. Because I hope to go for work. (Kitana)

Transport

A number of women discussed difficulties in relation to transport, in particular those who were unable to drive. Driving was perceived as enabling independence and participation in study, employment and day-to-day activities:

If we don't have driving licence we cannot do nothing ... with license, I can take my son to school, to his class, to shop. It's very important. I can go to shop. It is very easier with life in this country. We need, we need driving licence first. (Noushin)

Photo 9: Empowerment: driving into the future

I love this photo because I got licence. I feel confident when I drive not like before when I had [L] just I feel depend on myself. Basima



Settlement means and markers

Housing, health, education and employment are seen as both markers as well as means to support integration (24). Access to suitable and affordable housing was explicitly discussed among five women. The women discussed waiting lists for public housing and lack of affordable and personalised accommodation for families:

Now I have house after waiting 7 years for Homeswest, last year they give me house. Take long time. (Yasmin)

There are a lot of other things with one person, settling in Australia. For example, I know we were big family when we came here, it was five of us and my parents. It was difficult to find a house because we were a big family. Now that in itself is it our fault that we are a big family? (Linda)

Managing mental health difficulties, sadness and stress were also shared among some of the participants. Women also had to manage the health issues of other family members:

I can't sleep at night. That's why I am not feeling well psychologically. I go to a psychologist. (Lina)

There was also a view that men were not accessing support services and the issue of men feeling alienated needed to be addressed:

They don't really want to come, they just surround themselves in a shell and work and then wife and that's it. (Bahia)

The opportunity to access education was valued and while a few women discussed their achievements, challenges were also identified related to gender roles including family responsibilities. The multiple challenges some African refugee women experience in attempting vocational or university study, including limited education before coming to Australia, were highlighted:

The only thing is if you know the English which can help you to go to the hospital, to the shops, and to explain yourself wherever you are, that will be good for us mothers. Because you have children who are going to school, but you yourself also need to go to school. Then the housework is here. You need also to find a job. It will be difficult. (Anna)

Working in paid employment

Most women explicitly expressed their desire to be in paid employment. They described barriers to work as English language, not having a driver's licence, lack of Australian experience, employer attitudes, difficulties with using job search technologies and inadequate employment support:

But the challenge is that if you go to find a job they say you don't have experience. Now for example if I need cleaning, how can I find experience if you don't put me to start doing it. (Anna)

Job Network offices - when I tell her that you know yes I keen to work, she said go and search on the computer.... She doesn't know that you know if you're not skilled enough to access the computer and look there, there's something they should look for you and help you doing it, instead of letting you go and search on the computer. (Bahia)

Women called for programs to help women enter employment including job application support:

I think they need a sort of program need to teach them how to look for job. Because now everything is internet, all technology. (Phuong Loan)

Where you know you don't need a high command of English, leave these jobs for us. And in this case we can contribute to the economy in the country, we can be in the workforce. (Bahia)

Racism and discrimination

A number of participants shared their experiences of racism, which was seen as a barrier to settlement. While it was expressed that not all Australians were racist, racism was something which was a part of their lives. This was discussed by women from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Middle Eastern, African and Vietnamese women:

We have lived here for 30 years plus but we still get racist remarks and stuff. Basically they just see if you are not blonde fair skinned, blue eyed or whatever they make racist comments. It happened to me just last week and I thought why do I have to put up with this? So basically we are not really being accepted. Even though we are trying to settle in, there are still individuals who don't accept us and it's not very nice. (Rukia)

Concerns were raised about experiencing racism in public institutions such as Centrelink and schools, leading some women to express fear their children's exposure to racism may impact on long term settlement success:

You know part of me says, he [my son] is happy so I am happy. But other part says this happiness can be better if Australian people accept us and don't be racist. (Niki)

There was some discussion in the groups about issues which were particular to Muslim women. Three women talked about the significance of the media in influencing racism towards Muslims. One of the women also spoke of how it made her feel unsafe to practice her faith in public:

The thing these days about stuff on TV about Islam. I don't know about you guys but it's harder to be Muslim in public. Like praying you feel like someone's going to attack you or harass you. (Lilian)

I am the only one who is covered up, wearing scarf and the people, the other parents they look at me with a different look. Even the teachers. (Bahia)

However, there was also a recognition that acceptance was possible and often demonstrated:

For me I think it is being accepted in most places without being discriminated. So that's one thing that is very important for us as migrants. I mean there are some places and situations where we are still being discriminated but in general most places and most situation we are accepted so it's a good thing. (Rukia)



Photo 10: A spread of food and happiness
Making and cooking food and inviting friends because I am alone, I don't have my family with me. That makes me happy and not alone.
Yasmin

Theme 4: Support and community

The importance of social bonds through friendships, ethnic and religious communities was discussed and these bonds also included assistance with finding employment and tips for successful settlement for women.

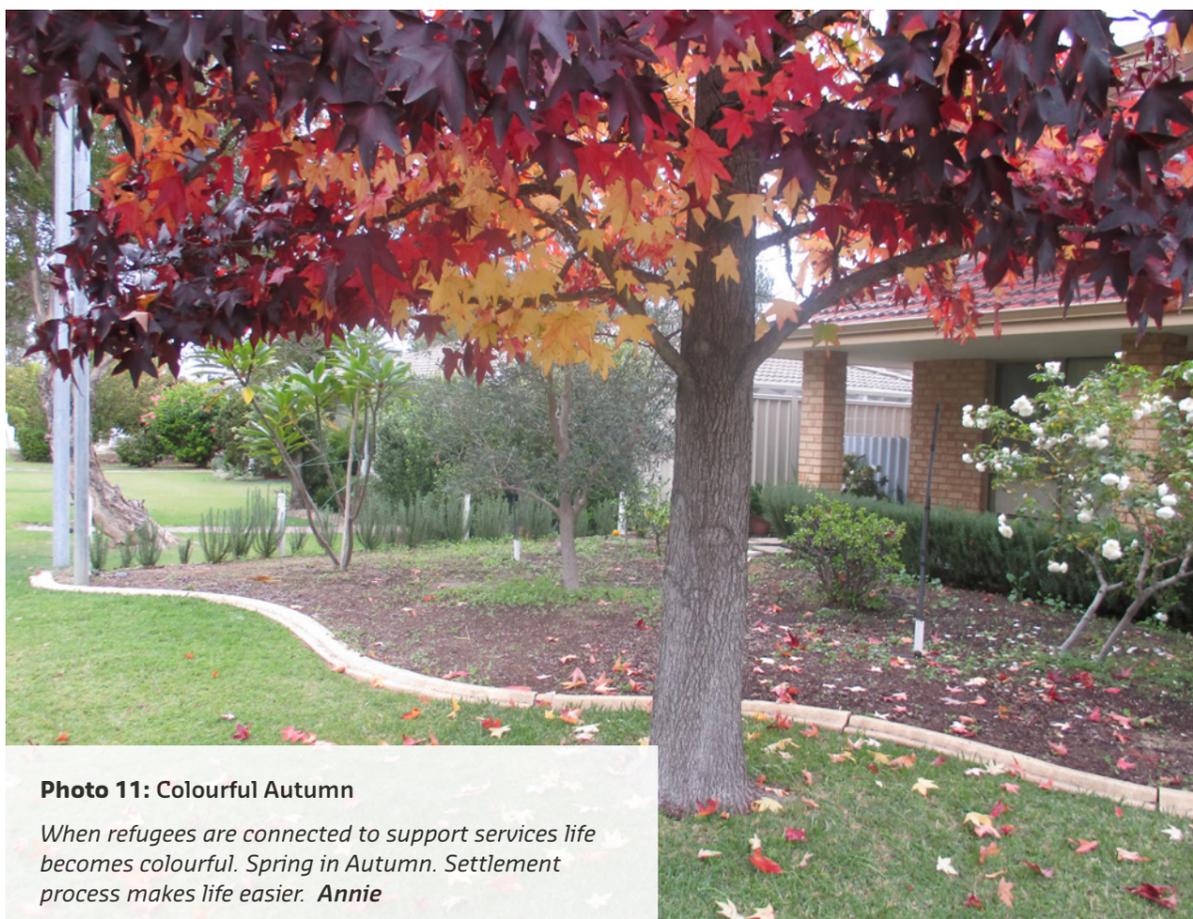


Photo 11: Colourful Autumn

When refugees are connected to support services life becomes colourful. Spring in Autumn. Settlement process makes life easier. Annie

Social bonds

Women described the support they received through these friendships and being part of a community which enabled them to feel safe and connect with their culture, particularly with those who had been in Australia for some time:

She is about 25 years living in Australia. She is Arabic, from the Middle East. She is always reminding me and emphasising on the fact that Australia is a peaceful country and you will be ok with your family here. I always trust what she is saying. Whenever I see her she gives me some sort of peace and calmness.... And I get a lot of advice from her too. (Sulaf)

When I go to the church I feel very happy and very honest with the people in the church. I feel with my family, with god, I feel close to the people in the church. (Wera)

And sometimes with the new arrival coming, new one, maybe is doesn't have anything. And we help that people a little bit, if they didn't have job, we find a job. (Shirin)

Role of a women's support service

Ishar was viewed as having a valued and important role in many of the women's lives. In particular Ishar was viewed as a conduit to social support, through the information and services it provided and also through the opportunity to meet other women and form friendships. As a women's only service it was seen as culturally acceptable by the women and their families. Ishar was described as having played a significant role in facilitating the settlement of the women:

Their support is a very good thing for people who are here in Australia and having problems, health problems and other problems. The support is needed for anyone who enters Australia as a migrant or as a refugee. (Annie)

Services and information

All of the women discussed the specific benefits of Ishar as a multicultural women's health centre that supports refugee women. Ishar was particularly valued for its role as a health service, in particular the provision of women's health, maternity care and psychological health services. Legal information was also seen as particularly beneficial to successful settlement:

Very important because a lot of information we got from here and joining with people, learn a lot of things and we know a lot of law here, because some people they are coming here and they are speakers, and they give to us a lot of information. (Noushin)

Because have here in Ishar good service, especially for nurse and the woman were pregnant have checking at the time with the doctor for women. It is good service for the young girls for when she is pregnant or have young baby, is good service to Ishar. (Adele)

Social support and wellbeing

The range of activities offered at Ishar contributed to women overcoming isolation and feeling stronger. For some women, visiting Ishar was the only opportunity to leave the house and integrate into the community. By sharing with other women settlement difficulties were often overcome:

Before we were scared of anything, now we are not. I feel like as strong, I feel like I can do anything. And my kids and my husband they see the difference... Like who I am before and who I am now. They say you are very strong now. (Halila)

I know a lot of ladies just they have Ishar you know. They stay one big visit at home, just waiting for Friday we come to Ishar. No place, not anywhere, not friend, just husband say you stay at home look after the kids. And just we come to Ishar and free is little bit we can talk with other people. (Shirin)

Successful and replicable model of care

The social and holistic model of care offered at Ishaar centre was viewed as creating a culturally inclusive community, allowing women to meet across other cultures. Being a women's only space was particularly important as it was considered acceptable by the partners and families of the women, where cultural issues may otherwise restrict women from attending mainstream services:

At Ishaar we have different support for different groups and I think when people come from overseas some of them they don't know where to go or they don't know the places, the hospital, so, maybe if, as soon as they come from different places they can direct them to come to Ishaar, because Ishaar have many different programs. I think this is the first thing that we feel more comfortable or more support. (Gabriella)

These ladies come here they found themselves very safe and very enjoyable. Because they come here, because woman only, there is no man. So the husband know that they only go to this group, just for the woman only. (Phuong Loan)

Photo 12: Happy times

My son is going to the library. It is important to me because in my country it was not possible for children to go safely to the library or school.

In Australia, my children can have the opportunity to be educated, which is something I did not have. I enjoy being part of my son's school. Gabriella

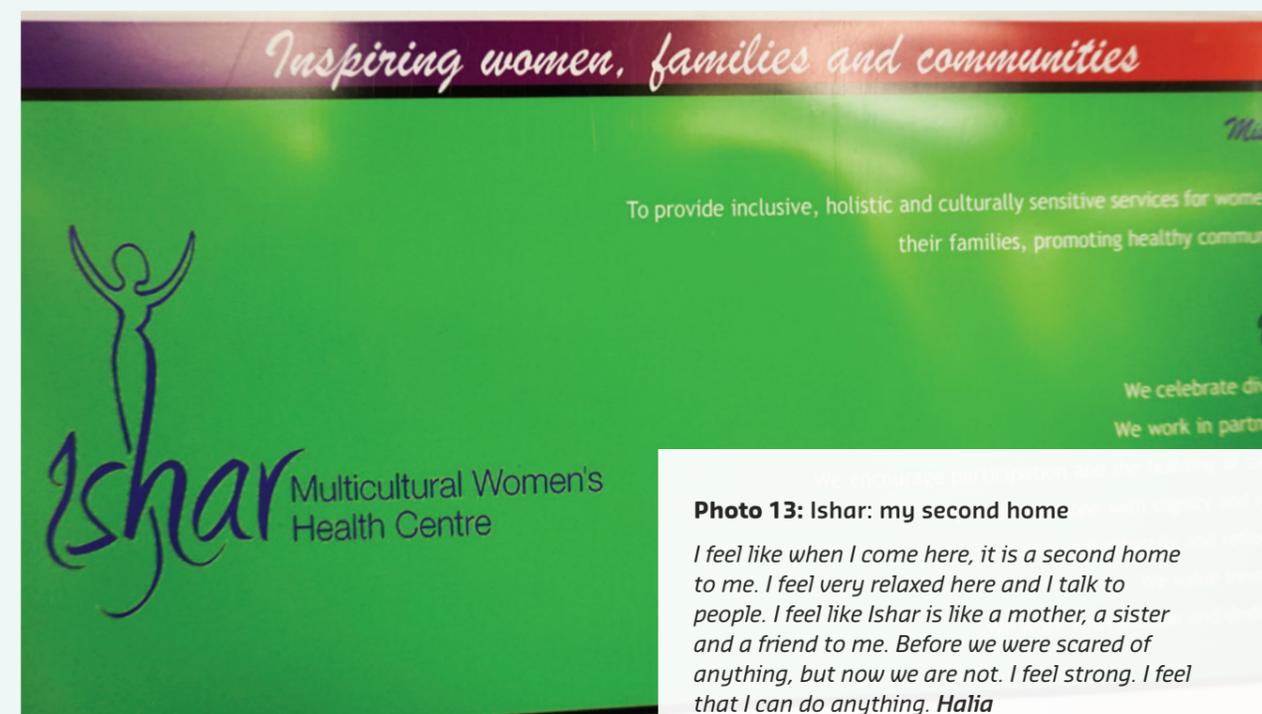
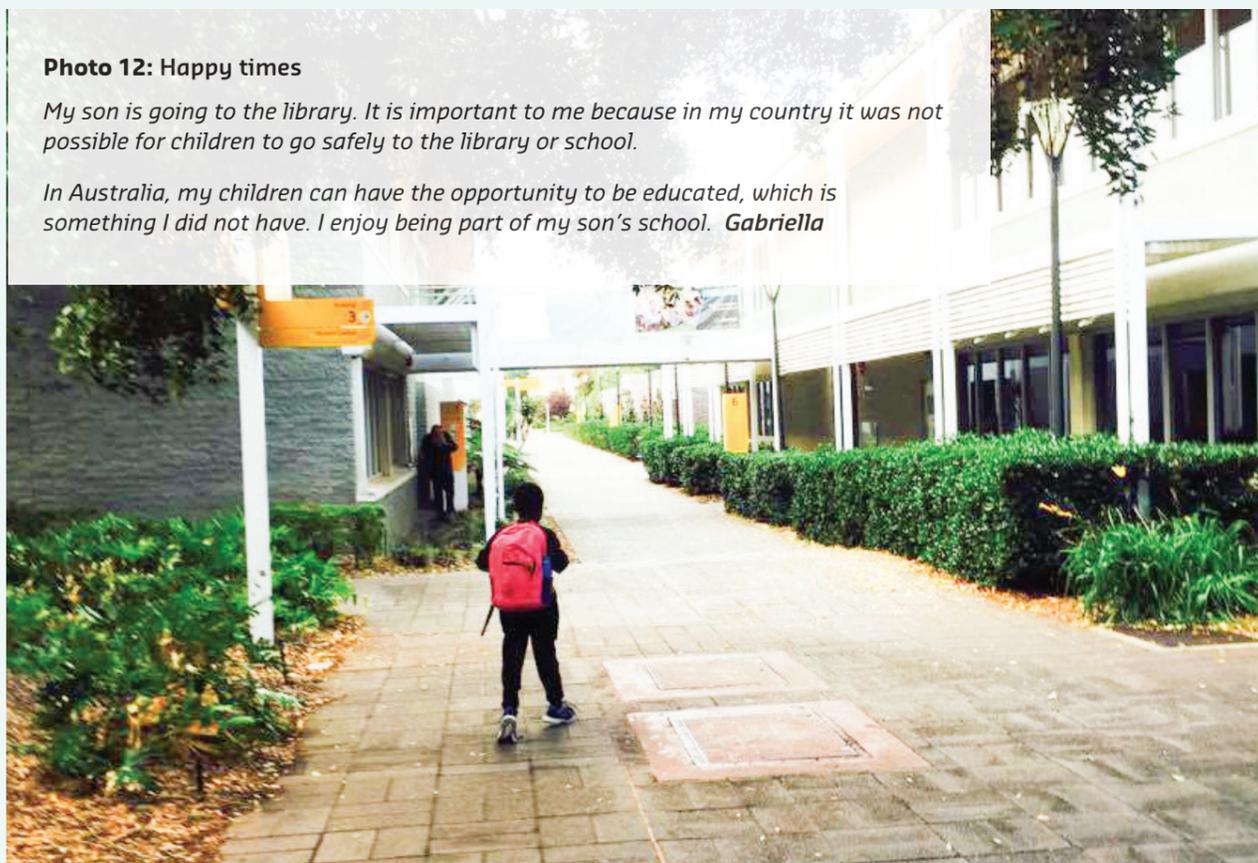


Photo 13: Ishaar: my second home

I feel like when I come here, it is a second home to me. I feel very relaxed here and I talk to people. I feel like Ishaar is like a mother, a sister and a friend to me. Before we were scared of anything, but now we are not. I feel strong. I feel that I can do anything. Halia

Theme 5: Facilitators to settlement in Australia

Safety and opportunity

Women expressed their gratitude at being given refuge in Australia. Australia was viewed as a safe place, with opportunities to build a new life for themselves and their families. A number of women, in sharing photographs of their children and grandchildren, talked of their desires for them to belong and succeed:

I feel peace here in Australia, my kids feel safe here. We have a life starting again. (Aliya)

Australia do provide, regardless of your age or background, they provide the good environment for people to live and succeed. So that's why when we look at him we wish him a better future for his life, better than what we've seen. But he's a continuation of us, the generations to come. (Sulaf)



Photo 14: Traditional delicacies of our land

I enjoy baking and cooking traditional food for my family because my family like the food I cook that reminds them about our country. Asma

Multiculturalism and diversity

Australia was valued as a multicultural country, attributed to a diversity of people from different cultural backgrounds and increased immigration intake over time. Some women talked about multiculturalism being associated with respect and acceptance of diversity and valued Australia's focus on multicultural education in schools. It was felt that Australia allowed for women to practice their own culture safely while learning about Australia as well:

Australia is multicultural. They respect all the religions and cultures which is a good thing. (Nafeesa)

I just want to say that we have achieved one thing from the government specifically and that's improving the diversity in the schools and emphasising on we are all different, but we are one. Because our children growing up in this country I think it will become a healthier nation, a healthier Australia. (Linda)

Because we are all from different country, different culture, in Australia you know it gives people good opportunity for everyone. So is you that can change yourself. You can still keep your culture but you learn about other people. (Gabriella)

In contrast to earlier concerns about racism and discrimination, there was a general acceptance that the multicultural nature of Australian society facilitated acceptance:

"In Australia you don't have racist people or they look at you different. We are all from different country." (Gabriella)

The behaviour of other people was critical to whether the women felt welcomed or isolated, especially when they were visibly ethnically different. Welcoming behaviour facilitated settlement, whereas lack of acceptance was difficult:

If for me if I go into somewhere, a party or wedding and if I am different, I am one of the odd one out, ok everyone else look got same colour, same skin and I am the odd one out, then I feel very uncomfortable because I don't speak the language and I look lost. But if the people there talk to me, welcome me as a friend then I'll be ok. (Phuong Loan)

Maintaining own culture

Women discussed the initial culture shock of settlement in Australia, and adjusting to a significant cultural gap, which brought with it changing lifestyles. The particular challenges for older female refugees who arrived from culturally distant countries was noted, along with the shift from living in a collectivist to an individualist society:

Very difficult in the beginning, especially we arrived at night time. The worker waited for us, he took us and put us in a property in Balga and for us we can't talk or speak the language, we don't know the places. I felt as if I'm blind person. I was even concerned to leave the house and just walk outside I might not be able to come back because all the houses they look alike and all the streets are alike. (Bahia)

I have noticed that the point that the government or the society wants to make is I want you to depend on yourself. But then the communities we have come from is not so, you are interdependent. (Salima)

There was a view that there was more education needed to help new refugees adjust to Australian culture:

Some sort of introduction to the society for people getting into the community. So if they have some bubbles in their head, that life will be like this, or as they have seen it in magazines, or somebody told them something then actually they can see the reality. Overall, some not all but still some people, when you go you have freedom, but what is freedom? To which extent is freedom? That is not explained. (Linda)

Programs so that we are aware more of the custom and culture of the country and what's happening around us so we don't feel alienated to some extent. (Farida)

Despite these challenges, women discussed their ability to adjust to Australian culture while keeping their own culture and traditions that were important to them. Many women shared photographs related to celebrating their culture and religion. This included religious ceremonies and involvement in dance groups. Women stressed the importance of their children also keeping their original culture and language:

Absolutely your children to learn English. But your culture, your language is very important. And your children to learn. Because if your children are distanced is not good for their education or anything. (Noushin)

Good thing for someone to touch the culture and keep it in Australia. It is a good thing when you go out your country and have this ceremony for your culture. (Yasmin)



Photo 15: Freedom of expression

The freedom to express myself through speech and actions without fear for my safety here in Australia. Keeping up with my traditional values as I am proud to be a Vietnamese with an Australian citizenship. Rukia

Themes from Key Informant interviews

Eight key informants were interviewed from organisations which delivered services or programs to humanitarian entrants, or undertook policy and advocacy work representing the needs of people of refugee background. The KIs represented policy and advocacy organisations (n = 1), vocational educational providers (n = 2), a consumer organisation (1), settlement services providers (3), and a community legal service (1).

Four main themes were generated from our thematic analysis of the interviews: 1) gender roles 2) the impacts of settlement on family 3) the Australian context: being marginalised in a new system and culture; and 4) the role of services. These themes mirrored the comments made by the women themselves.

Gender roles

Gender roles and how these shaped women's experiences of settlement was an overarching issue identified from the interviews. Six key informants highlighted that caring responsibilities assigned to women were a significant factor to be taken into consideration in policy and programs supporting successful settlement. This role was seen as impacting on women's ability to participate in employment and education, and services needed to be responsive to women's circumstances:

"Even things as simple as having child care facilities onsite for the AMEP classes, you know, that's something that wasn't available, and it depends on the place... if you have young children, what are you supposed to do with your young child while you're supposed to go to your 510 hours." (K11)

The gender roles of women in Australia compared with their original cultures was also seen as a challenge for women to address:

It is the reorientation of the roles that they need to play in their family. If they come from cultures where the structure is such that mainly you know the males are the head of the family and they are the main decision makers and the main drivers, economic drivers in particular, the women have to assume some of those roles, they have to take up those roles because otherwise they find it's really hard for them to negotiate. (K16)

The impacts of settlement of family

Importance of family support

The loss of women's family support networks contributed to experiences of isolation and had impacts on managing family roles without extended family support. KIs reported that women experienced difficulties in achieving family reunion which was seen as both having humanitarian and broader benefits, as family could potentially provide support with caring responsibilities so women could enter employment:

If people's families are here then they, especially those older generations then become the built in carers for the younger generations while the adult aged parents can go to work. (K11)

Family issues

Parenting in an Australian context was discussed by three key informants, in particular the difficulties of managing children who tended to learn English quickly and adopt aspects of Western culture, with parents fearing that their children would lose their original culture as well as loss of parental authority:

The power relationship between the family structure gets turned around and that can be awful for parents and women. (K12)

I think parents generally just feel really disempowered. (K13)

Three key informants raised the issue of family and domestic violence. It was seen as complex as intersecting factors such as lack of family support, isolation and being unaware of their rights, laws and services available made women vulnerable to being trapped in abusive relationships:

Women not knowing their rights, not being able to escape abusive relationships... And because you know they're isolated in the communities in that they don't really know that they can get out of it, or they have the opportunity to escape. (K15)

They were not exposed to campaigns that we had in Australia about you know what's right and what's not right, what's illegal and what supports can you get. (K12)

Culturally sensitive approaches at a community level were recommended in responding to the issue:

But what really seems to help women is to work at the community level, providing opportunities for women to come together to find out information, to share their experiences and to train community members to be kind of facilitators in the community around that. (K13)

The Australian context: Being marginalised in a new system and culture

Traversing new systems and culture

Effectively navigating Australian systems, including health care, finances, transport and housing were raised as issues. The cost and location of housing in particular was seen as a challenge for new arrivals:

The housing cost and the way we've seen that manifest itself is refugee individuals and families having to move to very, to the outskirts of metropolitan areas where there are fewer services and access to public transport. (K11)

The cultural gap was also considered a challenge. Starting a new life in Australia was seen as difficult and a long-term process:

The challenges are not just restricted to the first few years (K16)

Employment

Supporting women to enter employment was discussed by four key informants. The mainstream system for supporting job seekers was viewed as not suitable to refugee background clients with low level English proficiency and who may not have the IT literacy to perform job searches online and write resumes. It was reported that women found themselves working in casual and low skilled positions, despite having significant skills and experience:

Women have ended up working in places like the chicken factory where they're basically cleaning chickens ready for the table and some of them have got degrees. (K14)

It was argued that initiatives were needed to support women to meaningfully participate in the workforce, where their skills, experience and qualifications could be harnessed:

If we want a community of people who are able to contribute and contribute well as they want to, we actually need to support them in order to achieve that. (K14)

Language and education

Learning English was a challenge identified by all key informants, particularly for those who had no prior English and low literacy levels, and where long term study was required:

Many migrant students will take years of study to acquire skills to be developed to an Australian level. (K17)

Language was viewed as essential for employment:

Language is very critical to people gaining and retaining employment because, well it's a vehicle for communicating through. (K14)

Caring responsibilities were viewed as a barrier to English language education among women, and it was recommended that the Adult Migrant English program for new arrivals be designed to accommodate women's needs:

Particularly younger women with small children who can't necessarily access solid blocks of English language, if something could be thought about crèche arrangements and where those language classes are provided so that they could attend more frequently. (K14)

Social isolation

A common observation made by informants was of experiences of isolation among women, who were often living in outlying suburbs, with limited access to transport and few social opportunities:

They feel really isolated and scared to venture out and find friends. (K12)

The role of services

Key informants discussed the ways in which settlement and mainstream services can effectively support the successful settlement of refugee women, and made recommendations.

Supporting inclusion

In addition to targeted programs for women which facilitated the opportunity to meet other women of refugee background, giving them the chance to interact and build relationships with the broader community was seen as important in addressing isolation and building social bridges:

I think it's very, very important to give the women the opportunity to meet up with a lot of mainstream communities and women because you know refugee women tend to get siloed. (K16)

It's also Australians learning that there's nothing to be scared about these people, you know they're just people who've been through some horrendous experience and we should embrace them rather than vilify them. (K12)

There was a view by some informants that at the political level more could be achieved to support women's inclusion and Australia as a welcoming country for refugees, through positive rhetoric and cultural diversity in leadership:

It would really help if the government stopped whistleblowing about refugees and asylum seekers too, that really does have an impact on people... a spike of people reporting issues, harassment issues particularly, particularly women who are more visibly obvious, Muslim women. (K13)

They need to come out and actively engage with people, encourage people to be part of their office bearing positions, decision makers. (K16)

Intensive support

Intensive support on arrival was seen as essential. The importance of effective support, for example with housing, was stressed as important in helping people through the challenges of starting a new life in Australia:

From the beginning, the actual, the basic stuff of being, from the day they arrive of having all of the basic stuff sorted out and being assisted through that whole process. (K13)

Giving that sort of intense support in the initial period. (K16)

A recent change to the humanitarian settlement services model was viewed favourably by one key informant in that it extended the timeframe for intensive support to new arrivals:

I'm glad that the government now realised that immediate settlement journey, what is to be provided though the settlement services, it's not going to be the same period of time for everybody. (K12)

Humanitarian Settlement Services

However there was also a view that the Humanitarian Settlement program needed a more long term, sustainable focus:

Nobody talks to any of the women about their long-term. It's always short-term, short-term so the services are not coordinated towards that long-term settlement and that's why you see women even 10 years later, often who have not had that support in the initial years still stuck. (K16)

I think the entire model itself has to be really reviewed... The government obviously has to have value for money and efficiencies and things like that but you can't get efficiencies if you don't have a kind of longer term vision (K11).

Further, it was highlighted by some informants that there was a disconnect in particular

at the policy making level of the experiences and needs of refugees. Better engagement with women and communities was suggested, and programs tailored to their circumstances:

It would really help if the national kind of narrative and debate and discussion around this, was better informed. (K13)

Governments and organisations providing direct services really need to try to find ways to speak to women and find flexibility in how they approach it. (K11)

Mainstream services

It was also recommended that mainstream services needed to be culturally sensitive and aware of the needs of people of refugee background:

I think services in general should be much more culturally competent. (K13)

Increase the education and the preventive model and bearing in mind that people come from backgrounds where they don't have this and there are language and cultural things they have to overcome. (K15)

Two key informants highlighted that people from non-English speaking backgrounds still faced issues such as not being given an interpreter when using health services, reflecting the need for cultural competency training:

People are very intimidated about using interpreters. (K13)

Use interpreters, not only from a safety perspective and a legal perspective but how do you actually communicate with somebody if you and they can't, don't share a language. How do you set up any sort of trust. (K14)

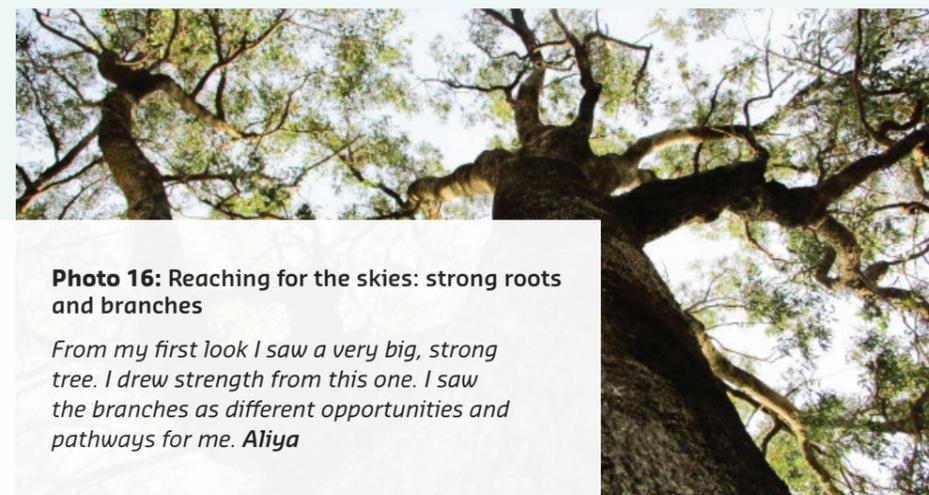


Photo 16: Reaching for the skies: strong roots and branches

*From my first look I saw a very big, strong tree. I drew strength from this one. I saw the branches as different opportunities and pathways for me. **Aliya***

Implications for Health Promotion and Translation of Research into Practice

Recommendations drawn from participants, key informants and the literature

We worked with participants to identify responses at the systemic level that will lead to better support for successful settlement. We have situated these recommendations within the broad humanitarian settlement policy and research context. In particular, these findings will be relevant to the Humanitarian Settlement Program Outcomes Framework of the Department for Social Services (DSS) (78)) and the National Settlement Framework (16) outlining responsibilities and approaches of the three tiers of government – Local, State and Territory and Commonwealth. These documents are informed by research evidence and these findings will contribute to these policy frameworks. The recommendations are also supported by the literature to improve outcomes for refugee women in key target areas.

Improving Social Cohesion

An Innovation Target Outcome of the DSS Settlement Program Outcomes Framework is *improved social cohesion*, or positive social relationships in communities (79) which is viewed as a means to prevent marginalisation for refugees (80). We highlight the following issues to be addressed in improving social cohesion for refugee women.

Recognition of settlement as longitudinal, non-linear and longer than five years

The time taken for refugee women to settle may be impacted by an interplay of factors, such as English language skills, caring responsibilities, health issues and adjusting to a new culture. There is limited funding for targeted services for women beyond five years of settlement (81). A longer-term vision and approach to funding policy is recommended. Extending funding beyond the current five years will recognise the competing priorities that refugee women experience during that period and allow for adequate support in each priority area at an appropriate time.

Promotion of original cultural traditions

Definitions of settlement lack recognition of the importance of cultural security in supporting belonging and emotional attachment to the host society (82). Cultural security can be facilitated through an inclusive social context, where original cultural traditions are promoted and protected (83).

Addressing family separation issues

Family separation and difficulties in achieving family reunion hampers women's successful settlement, with significant psychological, social and financial impacts (32). This was clearly highlighted by women participants and key informants in our project. In support of our findings, research on this issue by the Refugee Council of Australia showed barriers to sponsoring family members included long waiting periods, the restrictive definition of family, sourcing the relevant documentation to support applications or family members experiencing barriers to registering as refugees overseas, and the costs involved (32). Making family reunion more accessible to women and their families is recommended, and we support changes proposed by the Refugee Council of Australia as part of their *Fair Go for Refugee Families* campaign (84).

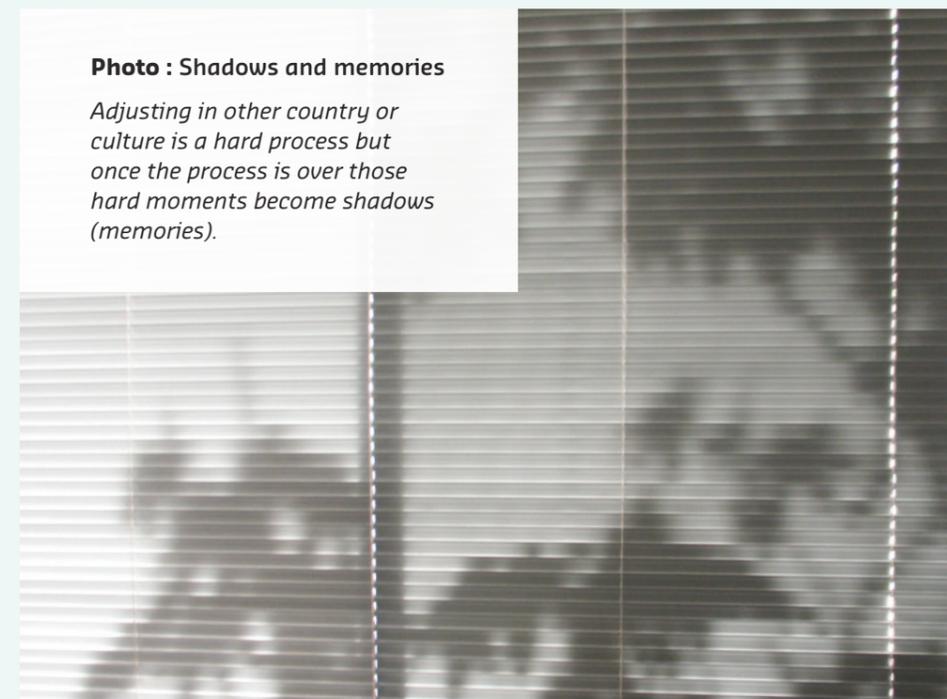
Improved Service Provision

Resourcing for settlement and women's services

This research demonstrated the effectiveness of the Ishar model for holistic health as well as the role of settlement services more broadly in supporting women to settle successfully and assisting women on a longer term basis has significant implications for health promotion.

Photo : Shadows and memories

Adjusting in other country or culture is a hard process but once the process is over those hard moments become shadows (memories).



Culturally competent services

Cultural competence and awareness will ensure refugee women can effectively engage with services in meeting their needs. Former refugees being upskilled and employed in roles in services assisting refugee women as well as training for mainstream service providers could help to achieve this (81).

Family and domestic violence responses

Refugee and migrant women report similar levels of domestic violence to women from non-refugee backgrounds (48). However compounding factors can make refugee families more vulnerable to domestic violence (83). At a government level, responses are viewed as inadequate (85). Community based projects which involve training members of ethnic communities to provide education and awareness have shown to be effective, as they demonstrate cultural sensitivity and understanding of communities (85). Our study documented that domestic violence is a complex issue situated within an intersection of factors including structural inequalities, acculturation difficulties, isolation, trauma and changing gender roles (83). We stress the importance of a multicultural perspective in formulating policy and health promotion strategies along with community based initiatives, and culturally competent health and social services for women leaving abusive relationships.

A 2014 Parliament of Australia report on domestic violence and the recent 2018 report on DV in Australia highlighted the need for community groups representing culturally diverse groups is essential for reducing the incidence of domestic violence and that more evidence is required on what works in violence prevention (86). This research may inform Federal Government responses in directly targeting the specific intersection of factors in refugee communities.

Whole of community approach to women's inclusion

Successful settlement is a two way process, and also relates to how well receiving communities welcome refugees. While women valued the role of settled migrants in supporting them in their settlement journeys, relationships with people outside of women's ethnic communities were also an important conduit to feeling welcomed. One way to facilitate the building of social bridges is through settlement service providers using volunteers to help orient and welcome people who are newly arrived. This should extend from the local through to the political level and governments have responsibility for policy making and messaging which promotes equality, diversity and combats racism (23). We recommend changes for the genuine inclusion of refugee women and their families.

Improved English Language Proficiency

The DSS Settlement Program Outcomes Framework also aims for **improved English language proficiency, literacy and numeracy, and improved participation in education and training**. English language proficiency is a key facilitator to settlement success. Access to English language education was a significant challenge for our participants. We call for:

- Sustained access to English language tuition. This could include extending the timeframe for registering for the Adult Migrant English Program to two years, and completion within ten years. We note that this recommendation was also made in a recent Parliament inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes (20) and discussed in government commissioned research on empowering migrant and refugee women (81)
- Access appropriate to the needs and life demands of women refugees. Women face competing priorities during settlement based on gender roles, in particular caring responsibilities. Programs require flexibility in responding to women's circumstances, for example through access to home tutoring as well as childcare on site while attending classes. This is also supported in the Australian research (81).

Improved Employment Outcomes

The findings of this project highlighted that refugees' sense of belonging to the host country is enhanced through labour force participation, and we have developed and are seeking funding for a further project to be undertaken in collaboration with our community partner - Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre in Western Australia (WA) that focusses on mentoring to improve employment outcomes. Using a participatory peer support intervention to empower (includes resilience, confidence, self-esteem, collective mobilisation) refugee women, the project will promote health and well-being, job-seeking, entrepreneurial skills, knowledge of work rights and occupational health and safety. This research supports the Australian Government's Office for Women strategy to boost CALD women's workforce participation via the Women's Leadership Development Program. This program offers grants for projects that enhance women's economic security and workforce participation (87). Both the current and the proposed research will provide evidence to inform the funding principles and assessments of applications focussing on refugee women from CALD backgrounds.

Community Benefits from the Research

Other National Settlement Framework Key Target Areas

Housing

Access to secure housing is essential for women to become established in local communities, including developing long-term relationships with schools and community organisations. This provides a base for essential cultural adjustment activities such as finding employment and facilitates a sense of belonging. This aligns with the social cohesion target of the DSS Humanitarian Settlement Program Outcomes Framework.

Family and social support

Adult and community education and support needs to be provided to refugee parents on Australian expectations around parenting and disciplining children and where these may differ from the original culture of the women.

An intersectional and strengths based approach

At a broader level we also highlight the significance of two key approaches in contributing to the health and wellbeing of refugee women through research, policy and practice. A primary focus on the role gender plays in experiences of discrimination and oppression can obscure the influence of other factors (60). Gender intersects with categories such as English language ability, previous education, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances and religion to shape settlement experiences. Intersectionality is an emerging approach for exploring the integration outcomes of refugees and for which further research is needed (28). It is also seen as a promising framework for application to women's health research, providing a deeper analysis into the underlying causes of poor health (60).

This project, based on participatory and social justice principles, provided multiple benefits to women participants. The research on refugees has been criticised for lacking a strengths-based approach and focus on resilience factors in overcoming adversity during the settlement period (5, 88). Further, strengths based approaches to service delivery are called for which harness the strengths of women in supporting their empowerment (81). We recommend research and approaches to policy and services which shifts the narrative of women as vulnerable and helpless to a focus on their resilience and agency.

The research results are being shared with Members of Parliament, and Government Departments so as to inform and to provide direction in the planning and development of health promotion programs specifically targeted at refugee and migrant women. At a policy level, in 2017 in light of proposed government changes to attaining citizenship which would have required a higher level of English proficiency we wrote to Federal crossbench and opposition senators about the results of our research. We highlighted that a strong finding was English language proficiency as a significant settlement challenge facing women and the potential for changes to act as a barrier to citizenship. We reported that half of the women who participated had low levels of English, despite some being settled in Australia for more than a decade. We received responses from nine Senators. Their responses outlined their party's concerns and/or opposition to the proposed changes. Ultimately the bill failed to pass the Senate.

In health promotion, **empowerment** is a core principle, reflected in the Ottawa Charter (89). Common to definitions of empowerment is that of enabling people to have increased power and control over their lives (90, 91, 92). Empowerment can occur at the individual, organisational or community level (92). These levels are interlinked, as community empowerment stems from individual action (92, 93). Facilitating empowerment is central to the photovoice method (94). We found this to be the case for the Photovoice Project. Many women reported personal benefits of taking part which can be linked to understandings of empowerment, including increased confidence, well-being, skills and knowledge, as illustrated in the following quotes:

I think it built confidence and it enhances the self-esteem. (Alma)

This experience took us away from depression and feeling sad. (Lina)

I heard about different problem in here, and how to fix it. (Ariana)

This is first time I use the camera in my life. I use the camera, I take the photo. Over time my daughter take photo for me but this is first time how I use the camera. I love this group. I am happy that I learn about camera. (Yasmin)

Partnerships

Thus the project has contributed to bridging a significant knowledge gap by exploring refugee women's perspectives in improving health and well-being using qualitative participatory research methods. The refugee women were collaborators and participants in the research project, learning the skills of photography and how to create and develop an exhibition. We have used refugee women's stories and photographs to build case narratives of successful and difficult settlement. An exhibition of photo images and narratives is currently being exhibited in public libraries and migrant resource centres in Perth. The travelling exhibition of the Photovoice Project Banners provide powerful glimpses of the lives of refugee women, and raises awareness of issues faced by the women in the wider community.

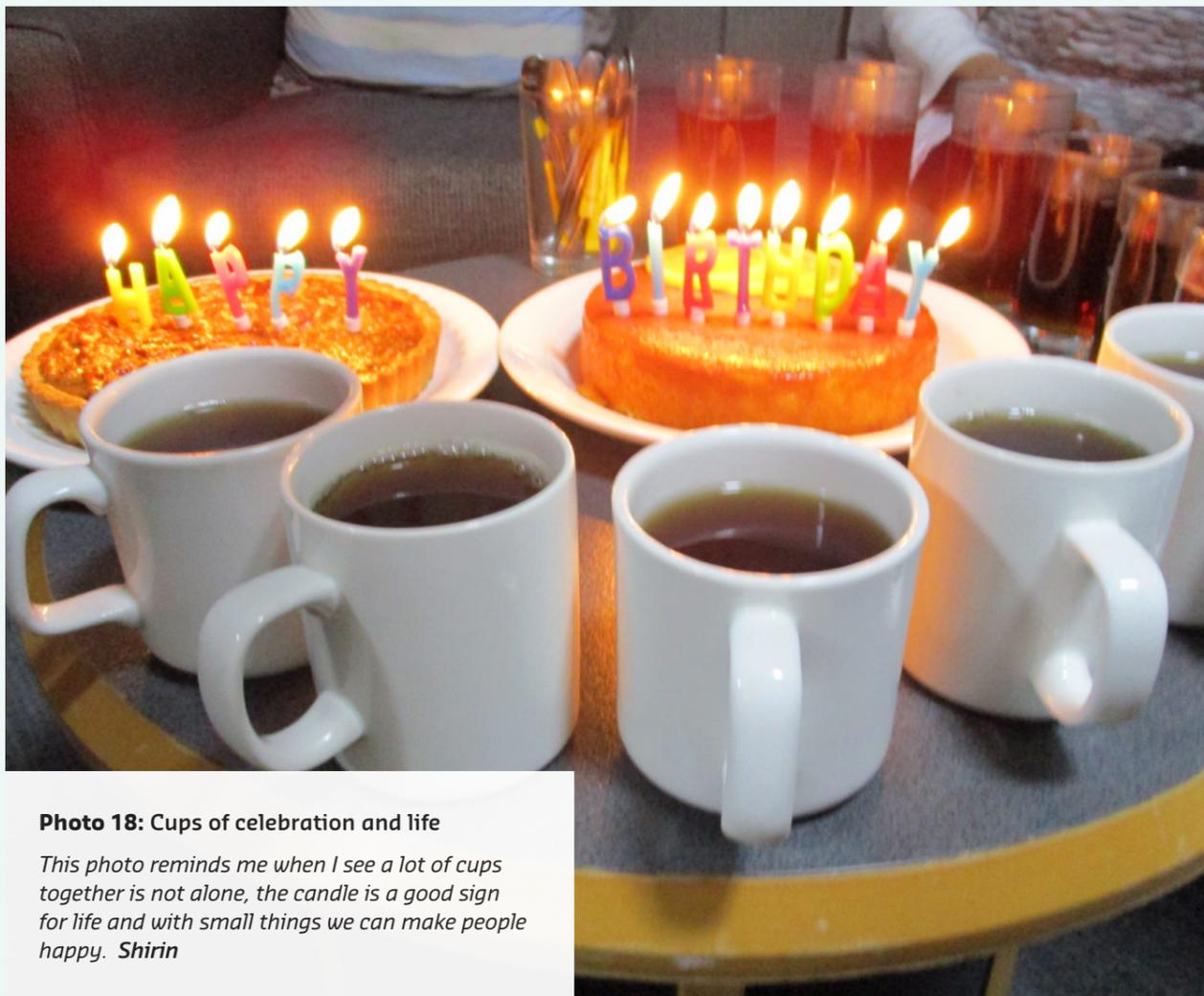


Photo 18: Cups of celebration and life

This photo reminds me when I see a lot of cups together is not alone, the candle is a good sign for life and with small things we can make people happy. Shirin

International and National partnerships have been developed as a result of the project

- We have an established a strong community partnership with **Ishar Multicultural Women Health Centre** who have worked with us along the research journey and this has resulted in a strong and harmonious relationship with the organisation and they are keen to partner with the university in future projects.
- A **Cultural Reference Group** was established with agreed upon terms of reference. The group included three Ishar staff and three photovoice participants. This group met regularly throughout the project to ensure the project was proceeding in accordance with cultural sensitivity. Some members of the group continue their connections with the research team.
- The **Research & Evaluation Manager of the Health Promotion Service from the South Western Sydney Local Health District** contacted us for use of our 'Photovoice Protocol' in the evaluation of Physical Activity in Arabic community living in South Western Sydney, Australia". They wanted to use Photovoice to systematically map Arabic community priorities with respect to dietary and Physical activity behaviour changes and possible solutions. We shared our Photovoice protocol with them.
- **Associate Professor Caroline Fleay and Dr Lisa Hartley** from the **Centre for Human Rights Education (CHRE)** at Curtin University are Associate Supervisors for Anita Lumbus who has undertaken the Photovoice Project for her PhD. They have been highly supportive of the project, promoting it through their networks and social media in addition to providing supervision. We hope to continue developing this partnership with the CHRE, through avenues such as a collaborative journal article and cross promotion of research activities.
- The **Brotherhood of St Laurence's Research and Policy Centre** have contacted us in regard to their research with young people in community development contexts, and are particularly interested in our participatory research - particularly image-based research. The researcher is currently designing a Photovoice project with a group of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The focus is on transitions into employment and education and enabling/inhibiting factors influencing transitions. The researcher is in discussions with Professor Jaya Dantas.
- Professor Dantas has commenced discussions with **Dr Kristen Eglinton** (<http://www.kaeginton.com/about/>) of the Footage Foundation (<http://www.footageyouth.org/>) in New York, USA about the possibility of undertaking an international photovoice project.

Effect of Research on Professional Development

1. The project is being undertaken as part of a PhD (International Health) by **Anita Lumbus** at Curtin University, she has worked with Professor Jaya Dantas (formerly Earnest) to undertake and conduct the research. Anita also received a Curtin University Postgraduate Scholarship (CUPS) & a Research Training Scholarship (RTP) to support her PhD. She is now writing her findings in the form of publications and hopes to submit by March 2019.
2. A Master of Public Health student in the School of Public Health, Curtin University, **Shwata Suresh Kumar**, assisted with the research and used a small component of the focus group discussions for her coursework Master's project. Shwata completed her MPH and graduated in February 2018. She moved to the USA in August 2016 and her research experience helped her obtain a Health Educator position at Rutgers University in New Jersey. As a result, Prof Dantas have been invited to give a talk on the Photovoice Project at Rutgers University in March 2018.
3. **Shelley Gower**, has also supported the project in assisting in the photovoice sessions and focus groups, and assisting with the analysis, report writing and dissemination of findings. She is also a PhD student, research officer and lecturer.
4. We have worked with **Rehab Ahmed and Sally Bower as Project Officers** from Ishaar at all stages of the project and will continue to do so and the CEO, **Andrea Creado**. They have been exposed to the research process and this professional development will enhance future research collaborations. They are keen to further collaborate with us and will partner with us on research publications.

Publications

1. Lumbus, A., & Dantas, J.A. (2017 – reviewed and revising for resubmission). Settlement experiences of refugee women in Australia and health and wellbeing: a thematic synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.
2. Lumbus, A., Dantas, J.A., Gower, S., & Creado, A. (2018 – under preparation). Framing our lives: using photovoice to explore resettlement experiences. *Ethnicity and Health*.
3. Lumbus, A., Dantas, J.A., Gower, S., Brunovs, N., & Creado, A. (2018 – under preparation). Photovoice and empowerment. *Qualitative Health Research*.
4. Lumbus, A., Dantas, J.A., Fleay, C., & Hartley, L. (2018 – under preparation). 'If people welcome me, then I will be ok.' *Critical Public Health*.

Media & Community Engagement

16 August 2017: Anita Lumbus and Prof Jaya Dantas contributed an article to the Refugee Research Blog, titled: *Exploring refugee women's settlement experiences in Australia through photovoice*. URL: <http://refugeereseachblog.org/exploring-refugee-womens-settlement-experiences-in-australia-through-photovoice/>

8 December 2017: Indian Link did a piece on the launch event on the Human Cost of Migration and also interviewed Prof Jaya Dantas. <http://www.indianlink.com.au/human-cost-migration/>

12 December 2017: Prof Jaya Dantas was interviewed by the ABC afternoon show by Christine Layton and received excellent twitter feedback.

14 December 2017: The Southern Gazette photographed the banners and Prof Jaya Dantas and did a news feature to introduce the community exhibitions. <https://www.communitynews.com.au/southern-gazette/news/refugee-womens-photographs-of-their-new-lives-on-display-at-town-of-victoria-park-library/>

7 January 2018: SBS Urdu Radio did a phone interview in Urdu and English with Prof Jaya Dantas. <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/urdu/en/audiotrack/our-images-and-our-stories-lives-wa-refugee-community>

30 January 2018: SBS Arabic Radio – interview with a Photovoice Project refugee woman participant in Arabic – Afifa Ali one of the participants. The interview is online here: <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/arabic/en/audiotrack/new-project-offers-snapshots-lives-was-refugee-community?language=en>

February 2018: Muse Magazine: The magazine did a feature on the Photovoice Project titled: *No place like home*. https://www.dropbox.com/s/818ngcuq6qx1wsk/muse0202_Lores.pdf?dl=0 – Page 82 – 87.

April 2018: An invited article by Prof Jaya Dantas titled: *Empowerment and Health Promotion of Refugee Women: The Photovoice Project in Western Australia. For Femnet International* – a free e-magazine for women, by women that connects, and empowers.

The communications officer from **Adult Learning Australia** is doing a feature on the Photovoice Project for their June issue. The readers of this quarterly magazine, **Quest**, work in adult education across Australia and many work with new migrants and refugees. She feels that the research and the participatory approach we adopted will be appreciated by the readers.

The **Photovoice Project exhibition banners** commenced travelling across libraries in Western Australia from January 2018 and have been displayed across eight community libraries. The State Library of Western Australia will display them during Refugee Week 2018. A list of library exhibitons is available on request.

Conferences, Seminars & Launch Events



Photo 19: Exhibition banners on display at Ishar

Launch events:

1. The first launch was held at Ishar in July 2017 when the project and exhibition banners were first shared with the participants along with a lunch. 60 participants and Ishar members attended the launch.
2. A public launch of the project for academics and community members was held at Curtin University in November 2017. The event was attended by approximately 100 people from academia, representatives from community organisations providing services to women of refugee background, relevant government departments and political representatives.
3. A third launch was held in Adelaide at Flinders University in November 2017 to academics, settlement services officers and education providers.

97 people attended the Perth launch event. A scan of participants highlighted that they represented:

Government

- MLA for Mirrabooka (high refugee and migrant population)
- Office of Multicultural Interests
- Health Consumers' Council
- Health Promotion Foundation of WA
- Department of Human Services

Community organisations

- Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre
- Australian Red Cross
- Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTs)
- International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Academia

- University of Notre Dame, & UWA
- Members of the Curtin Executive Leadership team (the provost and the VP – communication).
- The Deputy Pro-VC of Health Sciences was the MC for the event

Education

- TAFE especially from the AMEP programme
- IECs

WA Police – Community Engagement Unit

Community Groups

- Bahai community
- Goan Association of WA
- Ethnic Community Council

The event was well received and we had good networking among attendees and the research team. The MLA spoke to us about initiatives taking place and wanted us to be involved. There were also ideas for future research collaborations.

We had around 20 attendees at the Adelaide launch. Flinders University hosted the event at their city campus. Associate Professor Anna Ziersch from Southgate Institute of Health Equity was the MC for the event. Representatives were there from:

- TAFE Adult Migrant Education Program
- Catholic Education
- Public Health Association of SA
- Settlement assistance services
- Universities
- Those working in migrant and settlement services

There was good discussion and networking throughout and after the presentation with an agreement for the attendees to join up with the existing Migration and Refugee Research Network (MARRN). We are building up a long list of people to send the final reports to, this should generate some further discussion around research translation, advocacy, policy and practice.

2018

1. **Dantas, J** (March 2018). *Using participatory research to study resiliency and empowerment among refugee women: a Photovoice case study from Western Australia*. **Invited speaker at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA.**
2. **Dantas, JAR; Lumbus, A; Baker, S; & Gower, S.** (July 2018). *Exploring the complexities: the conceptual, methodological and ethical challenges of research with refugee women and refugee students in Australia*. International Association for Studies in Forced Migration (IASFM) Conference 17, Thessaloniki, Greece, 24-27 July 2018. A panel presentation chaired by Professor Jenny Phillimore, University of Birmingham. The conference will be attended by academics, policy makers and practitioners and will explore changes in global refugee movements, responses and debates.
3. **Dantas, JAR; et al., (July 2018). Methodological Roundtable:** Prof Dantas was invited to be part of this roundtable aims to examine the challenging and evolving nature of methodological approaches to research migration. Scholars and practitioners with expertise in various methods, will discuss the research needs, data sources, and changing landscape of methodological approaches brought on by current innovations. International Association for Studies in Forced Migration (IASFM) Conference 17, Thessaloniki, Greece, 24-27 July 2018.

2017

4. **Dantas, J** (March 2017) *Gender, health inequities, and the social determinants: using rights based participatory research to study resiliency and empowerment among refugee women*. **Invited speaker** at The Brock Institute for Community & Global Health and EVMS (Eastern Virginia Medical School), **Norfolk, Virginia, USA.**
5. **Dantas, JAR, Lumbus, A & Gower, S.** (April 2017). *Our images and our stories: Using photovoice to explore refugee women's experiences of settlement in Australia*. Paper presented at the World Congress of Public Health, **Melbourne, Australia.**
6. **Dantas, J** (March 2017). *Global Migration Symposium*. Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) 2017 Annual General Meeting and Symposia, 25-26 October 2017, **Sydney.**
7. **Lumbus, A** (August 2017). *Photovoice and empowerment: reflections on a project with refugee women*. Presentation at the Centre for Human Rights Education Annual Postgraduate Colloquium at Curtin University, Perth.

Conclusion

2016

8. **Lumbus, A** (2016, November) Researchers for Asylum Seekers (RAS) Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Conference, November 17 2016, Melbourne. The Research Officer/PhD Student Anita Lumbus presented at the conference for postgraduate researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

2015 (Presentations based on our previous pilot Healthway Photovoice Project)

9. **Earnest, J.**, Bayati, S; Thompson, Kantaria S, P Strauss, Sandra C; (2015, November). *Refugee Youth Resilience, Photovoice and Resettlement Experiences*. Presentation and exhibition at Newcastle University, Newcastle, NSW, November.
10. **Earnest, J.**, Bayati, S., Kantaria, S., Strauss, P., Thompson, Sandra C; (2015). *Using Photovoice to showcase Refugee Youth Resilience*. Presentation and exhibition at the National Complex Needs Conference, Canberra, ACT, November.

This research utilised a participatory strength-based approach to explore the challenges and facilitators to successful settlement in Australia amongst women of a refugee background. Pre-arrival experiences, the importance of family, settlement challenges such as English language and transport, social support, safety and cultural adjustment issues were all highlighted as being of significance. To facilitate and support successful settlement, Australian government and community organisations need to recognise the strengths that refugee women bring, provide culturally competent and appropriate services, including those that assist with adapting to a new country, and ensure access to secure housing and employment. Promoting social determinants of health and the promotion of social cohesion will ultimately impact on the health of refugee women and their families.

Drawing on Linderberg (95), our use of Photovoice presented a sensitive means of undertaking research and in this case empowering refugee women. We effectively implemented the approach within a participatory approach that drew on photography and narrative discussions of meanings that facilitated deep exploration of the lived experience of resettling in WA. Furthermore, we facilitated critical reflection on the positioning of personal experiences within larger social, and political, structures in order to draw understanding of the complex social phenomena of seeking refuge. We explored with the women meaningful ways in which to address and/or change the challenges they face. We hope this collaboration on several levels that have been established will meaningfully add the voices of refugee women to the wider discourse on migration and resettlement.

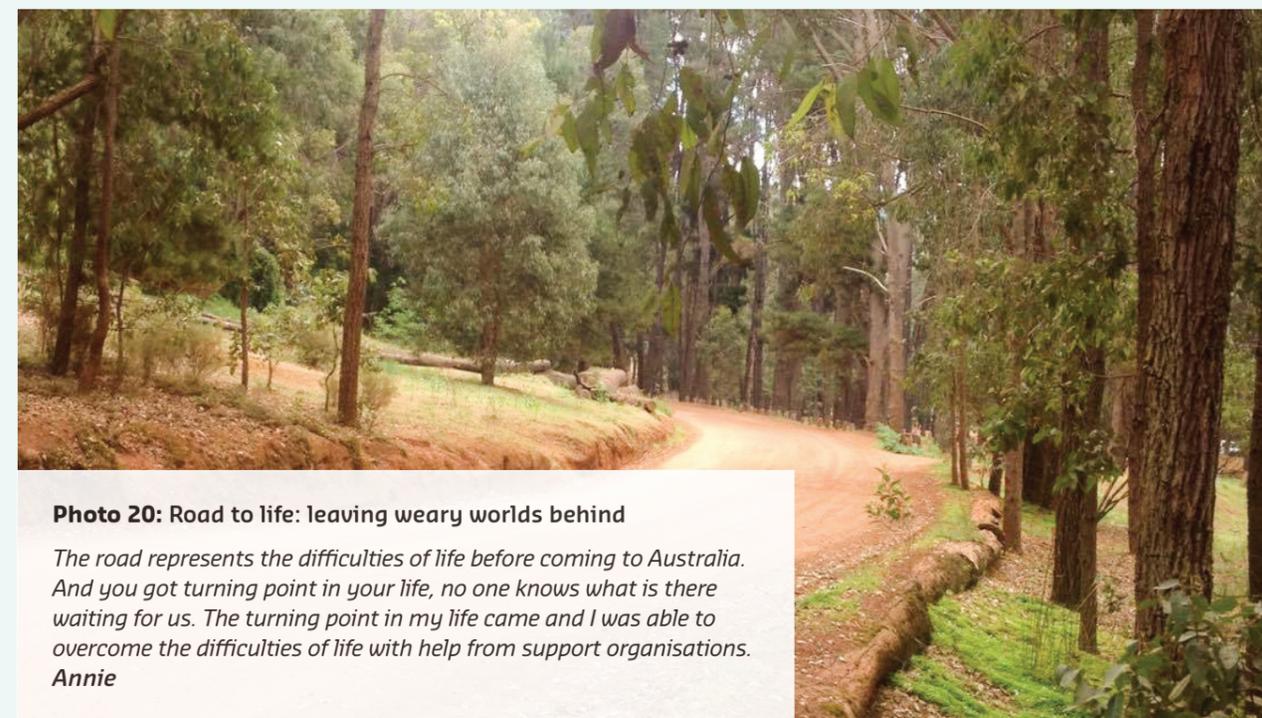


Photo 20: Road to life: leaving weary worlds behind

The road represents the difficulties of life before coming to Australia. And you got turning point in your life, no one knows what is there waiting for us. The turning point in my life came and I was able to overcome the difficulties of life with help from support organisations.
Annie

References

1. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016. 2017.
2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics. 2015.
3. Ochala Y, Mungai NW. The challenges facing single female parents of African background in regional Australia. *Australian Social Work*. 2016;69(3):311-22.
4. Freedman J. Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. 2010;23(4):589-607.
5. Shishehgar S, Gholizadeh L, DiGiacomo M, Green A, Davidson PM. Health and socio-cultural experiences of refugee women: an integrative review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*. 2016:1-15.
6. Young MY, Chan KJ. The psychological experience of refugees: a gender and cultural analysis. In: Safdar S, Kosakowska-Berezecka N, editors. *Psychology of Gender Through the Lens of Culture: Theories and Applications*: Springer International Publishing; 2015. p. 17-36.
7. Smith MD. Rethinking gender in the international refugee regime. *Forced Migration Review*. 2016(53):65.
8. UNHCR. Master glossary of terms rev. 1. In: Services UDolP, editor. 2006.
9. UNHCR. Information on UNHCR resettlement 2016 [Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/information-on-unhcr-resettlement.html>].
10. Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Discussion paper: Australia's Humanitarian Programme 2017-18. In: Protection DolaB, editor. 2017.
11. Fleay C, Lumbus A, Hartley L. People Seeking Asylum in Australia and their Access to Employment: Just What Do We Know? *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 2016;8(2):63-83.
12. Killedar A, Harris P. Australia's refugee policies and their health impact: a review of the evidence and recommendations for the Australian Government. *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2017:n/a-n/a.
13. Karlsen E. Refugee resettlement to Australia: what are the facts? In: Australia PLo, editor. 2016.
14. Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Australia's Offshore Humanitarian Programme: 2015-16. In: Protection DolaB, editor.: Commonwealth of Australia; 2016.
15. Valtonen K. From the margin to the mainstream: conceptualizing refugee settlement processes. *Journal of refugee studies*. 2004;17(1):70-96.
16. Government of Australia. The national settlement framework. 2016.
17. Hashimoto-Govindasamy L, Rose V. An ethnographic process evaluation of a community support program with Sudanese refugee women in western Sydney. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. 2011;22(2):107-12.
18. Versha A, Venkatraman R. 'You can't hide it - family violence shows' 2010.
19. Babatunde-Sowole OO, Jackson D, Davidson PM, Power T. "Coming to a Strange Land" The West African Migrant Women's Establishment of Home and Family in a New Culture Within Australia. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*. 2016;27(5):447-55.
20. Joint Standing Committee on Migration. No one teaches you to be an Australian: report of the inquiry into migrant settlement outcomes. Commonwealth of Australia; 2017.
21. Curry O, Smedley C, Lenette C. What Is "Successful" Resettlement? Refugee Narratives From Regional New South Wales in Australia. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*. 2017:1-19.
22. Government of Australia. Multicultural Australia: united, strong, successful. 2017.
23. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The integration of resettled refugees: essentials for establishing a Resettlement Programme and fundamentals for sustainable resettlement programmes. 2013.
24. Ager A, Strang A. Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*. 2008;21(2):166-91.
25. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia Joint Standing Committee on Migration. Inquiry into migration and multiculturalism in Australia: Commonwealth of Australia; 2013.
26. Department of Social Services. Settlement services for humanitarian entrants: Australian Government; 2017 [Available from: <https://www.dss.gov.au/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/publications/settlement-services-for-humanitarian-entrants>].
27. Department of Education and Training. Adult Migrant English Program. 2017.
28. Cheung SY, Phillimore J. Gender and Refugee Integration: a Quantitative Analysis of Integration and Social Policy Outcomes. *J Soc Policy*. 2017;46(2):211-30.

29. Adanu RM, Johnson TR. Migration and women's health. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2009;106(2):179-81.
30. Miller KE, Rasmussen A. The mental health of civilians displaced by armed conflict: an ecological model of refugee distress. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*. 2016;26(2):129-38.
31. Schweitzer R, Melville F, Steel Z, Lacherez P. Trauma, post-migration living difficulties, and social support as predictors of psychological adjustment in resettled Sudanese refugees. *Aust N Z J Psychiatry*. 2006;40(2):179-87.
32. Refugee Council of Australia. Addressing the pain of separation for refugee families. 2016.
33. Pittaway EE, Bartolomei L, Doney G. The Glue that Binds: an exploration of the way resettled refugee communities define and experience social capital. *Community Development Journal*. 2016;51(3):401-18.
34. Wilmsen B. Family separation and the impacts on refugee settlement in Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 2013;48(2):241-62.
35. Cousens J. My life in a new state: an exploration of the major challenges to settlement identified by Tamil Sri Lankan women refugees during their first years in Sydney: Centre for Refugee Research, School of Social Work, University of New South Wales; 2003.
36. McMichael C, Manderson L. Somali women and well-being: Social networks and social capital among immigrant women in Australia. *Human organization*. 2004;63(1):88-99.
37. Casimiro S, Hancock P, Northcote J. Isolation and Insecurity: Resettlement Issues Among Muslim Refugee Women in Perth, Western Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*. 2007;42(1):55-69.
38. Rung DL. How "Universal" Are Human Rights?: Listening to the Counter-stories of Subaltern Refugee Women Resettling in Sydney, Australia. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations: Annual Review*. 2015;15.
39. Liamputtong P, Koh L, Wollersheim D, Walker R. Peer support groups, mobile phones and refugee women in Melbourne. *Health promotion international*. 2015:dav015.
40. Marshall D. Building a new life in Australia: the longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants. In: Data NCfL, editor.: Department of Social Services; 2015.
41. Khawaja NG, Milner K. Acculturation stress in South Sudanese refugees: Impact on marital relationships. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. 2012;36(5):624-36.
42. Lenette C. Mistrust and refugee women who are lone parents in resettlement contexts. *Qualitative Social Work*. 2015;14(1):119-34.
43. Wollersheim D, Koh L, Walker R, Liamputtong P. Constant connections: piloting a mobile phone-based peer support program for Nuer (southern Sudanese) women. *Australian Journal of Primary Health*. 2013;19(1):7-13.
44. Fisher C. Changed and changing gender and family roles and domestic violence in African refugee background communities post-settlement in Perth, Australia. *Violence Against Women*. 2013;19(7):833-47.
45. Hebbani AG, Obijiofor L, Bristed H. Acculturation challenges that confront Sudanese former refugees in Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*. 2012;28(28).
46. Vaughan C, Davis E, Murdolo A, Chen J, Murray L, Quiazon R, et al. Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia. *The ASPIRE Project: Research report (ANROWS Horizons 07/2016)*. 2016.
47. Watkins PG, Raze H, Richters J. "I'm Telling You ... The Language Barrier Is the Most, the Biggest Challenge": Barriers to Education among Karen Refugee Women in Australia. *Australian Journal of Education*. 2012;56(2):126-41.
48. Vaughan C, Davis E, Murdolo A, Chen J, Murray L, Block K, et al. Promoting community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in metropolitan and regional Australia: The ASPIRE Project: State of Knowledge Paper: University of Tasmania; 2015.
49. Brand R, Loh JM, Guilfoyle A. Young African Female Refugees' Sense of Acculturation and Community Connection in Western Australia. *Australian Community Psychologist*. 2014;26(2).
50. Ferdinand AS, Paradies Y, Kelaher M. Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: a cross-sectional survey. *BMC Public Health*. 2015;15(1):401.
51. Yin P, Jehonathan B, Nida D, Amanuel E, Naomi P, Alex P, et al. Racism as a Determinant of Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *PLoS ONE*.

- 2015;10(9):e0138511.
52. Sulaiman-Hill CMR, Thompson SC. Afghan and Kurdish refugees, 8–20 years after resettlement, still experience psychological distress and challenges to well being. *Aust N Z J Public Health*. 2012;36(2):126-34.
 53. O'Sullivan M. The ethics of resettlement: Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region. *The International Journal of Human Rights*. 2016;20(2):241-63.
 54. Refugee Council of Australia. Department of Immigration and Border Protection: Response to proposed changes to the test for Australian citizenship 2017. Available from: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Response-to-Citizenship-Test-Discussion-Paper.pdf>.
 55. Esses VM, Hamilton LK, Gaucher D. The Global Refugee Crisis: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications for Improving Public Attitudes and Facilitating Refugee Resettlement. *Social Issues and Policy Review*. 2017;11(1):78-123.
 56. Simich L, Beiser M, Mawani FN. Social support and the significance of shared experience in refugee migration and resettlement. *West J Nurs Res*. 2003;25(7):872-91.
 57. Stewart MJ, Makwarimba E, Beiser M, Neufeld A, Simich L, Spitzer D. Social support and health: immigrants' and refugees' perspectives. *Diversity in Health & Care*. 2010;7(2).
 58. Seng JS, Lopez WD, Sperlich M, Hamama L, Reed Meldrum CD. Marginalized identities, discrimination burden, and mental health: Empirical exploration of an interpersonal-level approach to modeling intersectionality. *Soc Sci Med*. 2012;75(12):2437-45.
 59. Ngum Chi Watts MC, Liamputtong P, McMichael C. Early motherhood: a qualitative study exploring the experiences of African Australian teenage mothers in greater Melbourne, Australia. *BMC Public Health*. 2015;15:873.
 60. Hankivsky O, Reid C, Cormier R, Varcoe C, Clark N, Benoit C, et al. Exploring the promises of intersectionality for advancing women's health research. *International journal for equity in health*. 2010;9(1):5.
 61. Evans-Agnew RA, Rosemberg M-AS. Questioning Photovoice Research. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2016;26(8):1019-30.
 62. Wang CC. Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health*. 1999;8(2):185-92.
 63. Catalani C, Minkler M. Photovoice: A Review of the Literature in Health and Public Health. *Health Education & Behavior*. 2010;37(3):424-51.
 64. Morgan MY, Vardell R, Lower JK, Kinter - Duffy VL, Ibarra LC, Cecil - Dyrkacz JE. Empowering Women Through Photovoice: Women Of La Carpio, Costa Rica. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*. 2010;5:31-44.
 65. Hatcher A, de Wet J, Bonell CP, Strange V, Phetla G, Proynk PM, et al. Promoting critical consciousness and social mobilization in HIV/AIDS programmes: lessons and curricular tools from a South African intervention. *Health Education Research*. 2011;26(3):542-55.
 66. Wang C, Burris MA. Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*. 1997;24(3):369-87.
 67. Shaffer R. *Beyond the dispensary*. Beyond the dispensary. 1985.
 68. Wallerstein N, Bernstein E. Empowerment Education: Freire's Ideas Adapted to Health Education. *Health Education Quarterly*. 1988;15(4):379-94.
 69. Strack RW, Magill C, McDonagh K. Engaging youth through photovoice. *Health promotion practice*. 2004;5(1):49-58.
 70. Gale NK, Heath G, Cameron E, Rashid S, Redwood S. Using the framework method for the analysis of qualitative data in multi- disciplinary health research. *BMC medical research methodology*. 2013;13:117.
 71. Letts L, Wilkins S, Law M, Stewart D, Bosch J, Westmorland M. Guidelines for critical review form: Qualitative studies (Version 2.0). McMaster University Occupational Therapy Evidence-Based Practice Research Group. 2007.
 72. Charmaz K. *Constructing grounded theory : a practical guide through qualitative analysis / Kathy Charmaz*. London: London : SAGE Publications; 2006.
 73. Shields SA. Gender: An Intersectionality Perspective. *Sex Roles*. 2008;59(5):301-11.
 74. Perera S, Gavian M, Frazier P, Johnson D, Spring M, Westermeyer J, et al. A Longitudinal Study of Demographic Factors Associated With Stressors and Symptoms in African Refugees. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. 2013;83(4):472-82.
 75. Pittaway E, Muli C, Shteir S. "I have a voice—hear me!" Findings of an Australian study examining the resettlement and integration experience of refugees and migrants from the Horn of Africa in Australia. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*. 2009;26(2).

76. McMichael C, Gifford SM, Correa-Velez I. Negotiating family, navigating resettlement: family connectedness amongst resettled youth with refugee backgrounds living in Melbourne, Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 2011;14(2):179-95.
77. Doney G, Pittaway E. Its not all right: rights in refugee families in Australia. 2010.
78. Department of Social Services. Humanitarian settlement program outcomes framework 2017 [Available from: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2017/hsp_outcomes_framework_-_14_september.pdf].
79. Australian Human Rights Commission. Building social cohesion in our communities: a summary of the online resource for local government. Australian Human Rights Commission; 2015.
80. Department of Social Services. Social Cohesion. Australian Government; 2016.
81. De Maio J, Silbert, M., Stathopoulos, M., Rioseco, P., Jenkinson, R. and Edwards, B.,. Empowering migrant and refugee women: supporting and empowering women beyond five-year post-settlement. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies; 2017.
82. Fozdar F. Belonging in the nation-state: Civic and ethno-belonging among recent refugees to Australia. MMG Working Paper. 2013.
83. Rees S, Pease B. Domestic violence in refugee families in Australia. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*. 2007;5(2):1-19.
84. Refugee Council of Australia. Fair go for families: A campaign for family reunion n.d. [Available from: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/fairgo/>].
85. Ewings W. Family and Domestic Violence: Issues Affecting Service Delivery and Relevance for Women from Multicultural Communities. 2017.
86. Phillips J, Vandenbroek P. Domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia: an overview of the issues. 2014.
87. Australian Government. Towards 2025: An Australian government strategy to boost women's workforce participation n.d. [Available from: <http://womensworkforceparticipation.pmc.gov.au/>].
88. Babatunde-Sowole O, Power T, Jackson D, Davidson PM, DiGiacomo M. Resilience of African migrants: An integrative review. *Health Care for Women International*. 2016;37(9):946-63.
89. McPhail-Bell, K., Fredericks, B., & Brough, M. Beyond the accolades: a postcolonial critique of the foundations of the Ottawa Charter. *Global Health Promotion*. 2013;20(2): 22-29
90. Spencer, G.. 'Troubling'moments in health promotion: unpacking the ethics of empowerment. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. 2016;26(3):205-209
91. Turner, S. G., & Maschi, T. M. Feminist and empowerment theory and social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Practice*. 2015;29(2):151-162
92. Woodall, J. R., Warwick-Booth, L., & Cross, R. Has empowerment lost its power? *Health Education Research*. 2012;27(4), 742-745.
93. Cyril, S., Smith, B. J., & Renzaho, A. M. Systematic review of empowerment measures in health promotion. *Health Promotion International*. 2015;31(4):809-826.
94. Teti, M., Murray, C., Johnson, L., & Binson, D. Photovoice as a Community- Based Participatory Research Method among Women Living with HIV/ AIDS: Ethical Opportunities and Challenges. *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics*. 2012. 7(4), 34-43.
95. Liebenberg, L. Thinking Critically About Photovoice: Achieving Empowerment and Social Change. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 2018; Volume 17: 1-9

