



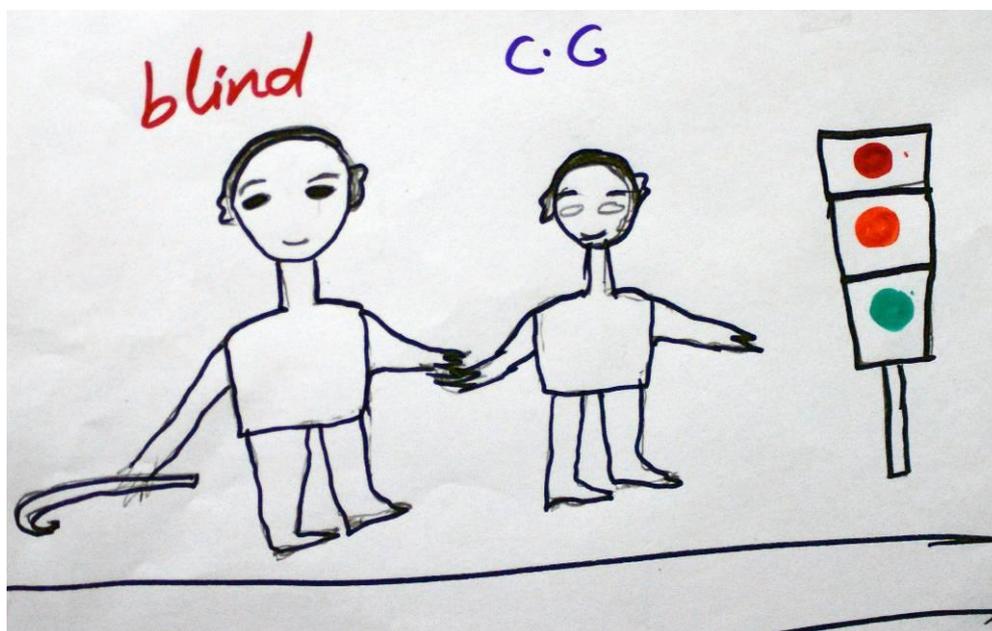
The Centre for Refugee Research
UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

“Unsung Heroes”

An evaluation of the AMES Community Guides program

by the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research

Geraldine Doney, Dr Eileen Pittaway and Tori Vu



“When we first arrive we are blind, a blind man will never see the beauty of Australia. The Community Guide helps us to see and puts a smile on our face. At first they have to tell us everything, but then we do it ourselves; we can learn like them.”

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A big team effort: thank you.

Geraldine Doney, Eileen Pittaway and Tori Vu.

Notes on quotes and terms used in this report

All quotations used in this report come from the verbatim documentation from the consultations or interviews. Quotes selected for use are representative of many similar quotes, representing the common themes and findings that emerged from analysis of the data. Most of the clients and Community Guides who participated in this research speak languages other than English as their first language; many of the clients also spoke through an interpreter. Their language and expression has not been 'corrected' for this report, other than to edit for meaning.

In keeping with the Centre for Refugee Research's ethical framework, and by agreement with the research participants, individual details or names or other identifying information is not included in this report. Quotes are attributed to the broad stakeholder group to which the participant belongs.

The term 'client' is used frequently in this report and refers to the group of people who receive or have received IHSS services from AMES – they are current or former clients of AMES' settlement services. However the terms 'refugee' and 'new arrival' are also used to refer to the same group.

Participants from the research consultations were invited to attend a meeting at which the plan and broad content of this report were outlined. This meeting was held in June, 2009, and representatives from each consultation attended and provided their comments and consent.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	5
Key findings.....	7
Recommendations.....	25
Introduction.....	29
Background to the Community Guides program.....	30
Australia and refugee resettlement.....	30
AMES and refugee resettlement.....	33
The Community Guides Program – a model for IHSS service delivery.....	33
The Community Guides research – methodology.....	37
Background to the research.....	37
Methodology.....	38
Pre-arrival experience, integration and social cohesion.....	44
The impact of pre-arrival experiences.....	44
‘Integration’: what is it and how do you get it?.....	47
Human rights and community development.....	52
Research findings.....	53
The impact of the Community Guides program on the settlement of new arrivals.....	53
The impact of the Community Guide role for Community Guides.....	68
‘Community development in action’.....	77
Case Coordinators and the Community Guides program.....	81
Perceptions of the role of the Case Coordinator and Community Guides.....	81
Case Coordinator views of the Community Guides program.....	82
Challenges in the Community Guide–Case Coordinator relationship.....	88
Service providers and the Community Guides program.....	89
Discussion and analysis.....	94
The Community Guides program as a key to ‘Integration’.....	94
Gaps and challenges in the Community Guides program.....	97
Potential for dependency.....	97
Numbers and turnover of Community Guides.....	98
Boundaries.....	99
Employment conditions.....	105
Duration of and eligibility for Community Guide support.....	106
The Case Coordinator – Community Guide relationship.....	109
Service provider understanding of the Community Guide role.....	109
Other issues.....	110

Broader barriers to successful settlement.....	111
How do settlement barriers affect the Community Guides program?	111
Barriers to the foundation for integration: citizenship and rights	112
Barriers to the ‘facilitators’ of integration.....	113
Barriers to social connections.....	116
Barriers to ‘markers and means’ of integration	121
Recommendations	129
Potential for dependency	129
Numbers and turnover of Community Guides	129
Boundaries	130
Employment conditions.....	130
Duration of and eligibility for Community Guide support.....	130
The need for Community Guides to work with refugee arriving on 202 visas	131
The Case Coordinator – Community Guide relationship.....	131
Service provider understanding of the Community Guide role	131
Appendix 1:	133
Appendix 2: AMES Organisation Chart 2009	134
Appendix 3: AMES IHSS structure.....	135
Appendix 4: Evaluation Criteria	136
Appendix 5: Research Methodology.....	144
References	148

Executive Summary

This report details the outcomes of an evaluation of Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES), Victoria Community Guides Program undertaken from September 2008 to July 2009. The research was undertaken by the Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales.

AMES was established in Victoria in 1951 to teach English to new settlers. The services have expanded to provide education and training, employment and settlement services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. A range of settlement services are currently funded by the Federal Government to assist resettled refugees in their first years in Australia, and in particular in their first six months. The most important of these for new arrivals are provided under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Since October 2005, the AMES IHSS Consortium has delivered IHSS services in Victoria. The Consortium is a partnership of AMES, Redback Settlement Services, Foundation House, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

The Community Guides Program is an initiative of AMES Settlement Services, and is an integral part of AMES' IHSS service delivery model. Under this model, 'Community Guides' (usually from a refugee background themselves) are employed to provide settlement support to new arrivals in the entrant's first language. The program has two main aims – to provide settlement support to new arrivals; and to provide employment pathways to longer-settled refugees.

In 2008, AMES decided to undertake an evaluation of the Community Guides program, to assess its effectiveness and value for all stakeholders. AMES chose the reciprocal action research methodology developed by the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) because of their commitment to full community participation in the evaluation. The methodology has been successfully used with refugee communities in Australia and in refugee camps and urban sites in Asia and Africa. It involves the use of training in human rights, the sharing of stories and the production of 'story boards', and a series of drawing in which participants produce a comprehensive needs and response analysis. This is reinforced with targeted semi-structured interviews (for details of the methodology see Appendix 5).

A framework for analysis

A key aim of the IHSS is for 'successful settlement' of humanitarian entrants, with a view to them becoming 'fully functioning members of the Australian community' (DIAC, 2009). The conceptual framework of integration by Ager and Strang (2008) was selected as a useful framework for the evaluation of the Community Guides program. Ager and Strang have proposed a conceptual framework for understanding and defining integration comprising ten core domains of wide relevance, based on common understandings of what constitutes successful integration (*ibid.*, p.166). Their framework examines key potential indicators of integration which are: markers of integration; means of achievement of integration; processes of achievement; and facilitators of local integration. Achievement of and access to employment, housing, education and health are identified as discrete domains and are recognised as both markers of integration and as potential means to support the achievement of integration (*ibid.*, p.169). Processes of social connection are broken down into three separate domains which also determine the achievement of integration: social bonds – with family and other members of their community; social bridges – with other communities, including the host community; and social links – with the structures of the host state. Language and cultural knowledge, and safety and security are identified as additional domains and considered 'facilitators' of local integration (*ibid.*, p.181). Underpinning all of these is the experience of citizenship and rights.

While providing a very useful framework, with a strong focus on integration as a humanitarian endeavour, the interdependent domains proposed by Ager and Strang do not encapsulate the full complexity or the breadth of the experience of the new arrival. Nor do they emphasise the responsibility of the host community to provide the infrastructure necessary for integration. This was acknowledged and is discussed in the body of the report.

Human rights and community development

AMES took a courageous step when they chose to have a key plank of their service provision evaluated by an external researcher, and using a human rights and community based methodology. The use of a human rights framework challenges service providers to examine the philosophical basis of the work they undertake. It introduces notions of accountability to service provision. The human rights approach is best applied with a framework of community participation. This framework is predicated on the agency of the service recipients as equal participants achieving effective outcomes, in this case, successful settlement. This executive summary contains the key findings and recommendations from the report.

Key findings

The success of the Community Guides program

The Community Guides program is a highly successful model for providing settlement support to individuals while also having positive benefits for Guides, communities and services.

There's benefit for the client, there's benefit for the service providers, partner organisations and there are benefits for the community, not just the ethno-specific community, but as well the broader community. External Service Provider

I think they're brilliant, I didn't know that much about IHSS before I started, I was dumbfounded that everyone else didn't use Community Guides because it seems the most logical thing to do: someone who can speak their language, knowledge of where they're coming from, the knowledge and skills to help them settle; it also gives the Community Guides some experience, something to put on their resume. It's a win-win. Case Coordinator

The value of the Community Guides to AMES is that they deliver settlement services extremely well. They give weight and reality to our mission to reach out to the communities. It creates employment opportunities for new refugees. In other countries this is done by volunteers, ad hoc and untrained. By using Community Guides we give consistent services. We give the new arrival a real go. AMES management

IHSS conceives settlement support as delivery of services by one party (the service provider) and receipt of services by another (the new arrival) to achieve successful settlement for the new arrival. The Community Guides program is innovative in moving beyond this provider - recipient paradigm. The Community Guides program engages members of refugee communities as active participants in and providers of settlement support, rather than passive recipients of services. It recognises, employs and develops capacity within individuals and within communities; it facilitates positive settlement outcomes at several different levels, including engaging elements of community development.

With the Case Coordinators, Community Guides play a critical role in linking the new arrival with Australian infrastructure and services – such as Medicare, banks, community service agencies (Ager and Strang's 'social links'). Facilitating connections and understandings of infrastructures and services enables new arrivals to access the

‘markers and means’ of integration and successful settlement – education, housing, employment and health.

Community Guides are the interface in this linkage to the Australian ‘system’, providing practical, direct settlement assistance to new arrivals. Key factors in the effectiveness of this practical assistance in facilitating successful settlement are the shared language, shared cultural background and shared refugee background of Guides and new arrivals. Shared language, culture and refugee experience enables the Guides’ insights into the needs and feelings of new arrivals, and to act as the bridge between the client and their new environment; new arrivals are comforted by the familiar amidst the unfamiliar.

Community Guides draw on their knowledge and experience of both their home and Australian systems and society to act as cultural mediators, identifying and explaining points of difference in Australian systems, social roles and culture. Their shared background with the client and the Guide’s own settlement experience enables the Guide to understand what the client needs to know and learn to adapt to life in their new society. Community Guides thus play a role in forming the ‘social bridges’ between the new arrival and their host community, which Ager and Strang identify as one of the necessary social connections for successful integration of refugees; and in passing on cultural knowledge that will facilitate successful integration.

The Community Guides program also increases the social capital of new arrivals through linking them with their own community and with the wider community. Community Guides inform new arrivals of where to find culturally appropriate goods. They link new arrivals with existing refugee, religious and cultural communities and social networks, which function as ongoing sources of support and assistance during and after IHSS assistance (Ager and Strang’s ‘social bonds’).

A major secondary benefit of the program is that it provides pathways for Community Guides themselves, both for employment and for personal integration. For many Guides it is their first form of employment in Australia. The training, knowledge, skills, connections, self-esteem, confidence and expanded social and employment networks gained in their employment enhances the success of their own settlement.

In learning how to assist others to settle in Australia, Guides acquire knowledge, capacity and connections to interact with their host country, and this knowledge and connection flows into their personal and community networks. The program thus increases knowledge of Australian systems and support services within refugee communities, and capacity to access, connect and engage with services and the wider Australian society. It is ‘community development in action’. The knowledge and connections acquired by Guides helps to build the total capacity and capital within refugee communities.

Community Guides value the opportunity for work, training and employment pathways. Most find the job personally rewarding although part-time, casual work does not suit all Guides. Community Guides are very conscious of the value of their work with individuals and within their community, and have many ideas for further developing the program.

Case Coordinators see the Guides as a critical means of enhancing their own role and capacity, and achieving good settlement outcomes for clients. They identify the advantages of the two-way cultural interpretive role of the Guides, and value the role the program plays in providing employment pathways for their clients. Some Case Coordinators expressed a desire to have more time to mentor and support the Community Guide, and have other suggestions to enhance the existing program.

The role of the Community Guide is also welcomed by service providers, who report positive impressions of the program and similarly recognise and value the multi-layered benefits of the program for clients, Guides, refugee communities and their own services. Some service providers however are not entirely clear on the role and limits of the Community Guide.

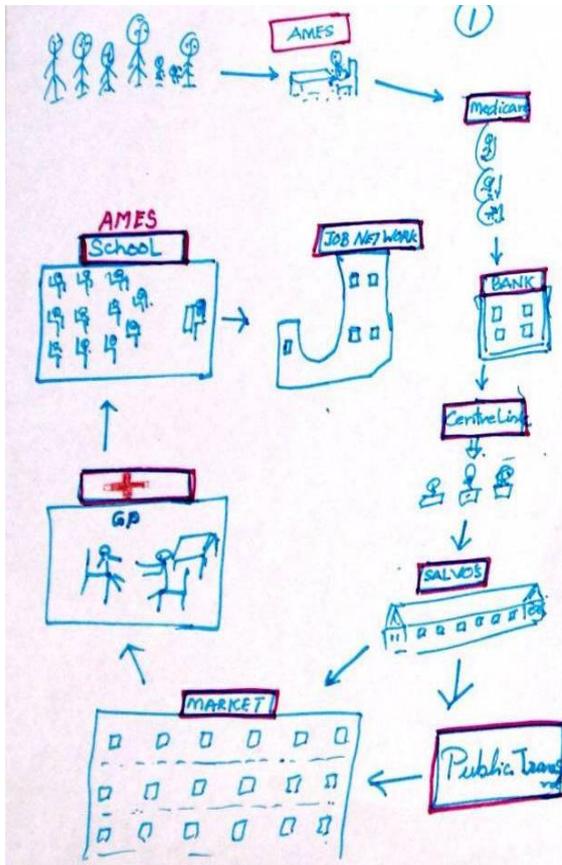
Challenges in the Community Guides program

The success of the program is its greatest challenge. Trained Guides move on to other education or employment, necessitating constant recruitment and training. Therefore, training must also constantly evolve in response to changing needs and challenges. Demand for Guides from new and emerging communities also necessitates recruitment and training of new Guides. Work boundaries are challenged by demands and expectations of communities and by some settlement service providers. The casual part-time employment conditions of Community Guides offer a flexible and responsive workforce but do not suit the working needs of all Guides. Roles, pathways and working relationships within the IHSS program continue to develop and evolve. Some of these issues are addressed briefly in this report and in more detail in a report for AMES management.

The impact of critical settlement issues on Community Guides

Identification of settlement problems and barriers was incidental but important to research into the Community Guides program. AMES' IHSS model provides paths to services which address identified problems, for example in the critical areas of health, language, employment and housing. However, some problem areas are intractable,

Meeting needs on arrival – practical assistance provided by the Community Guide

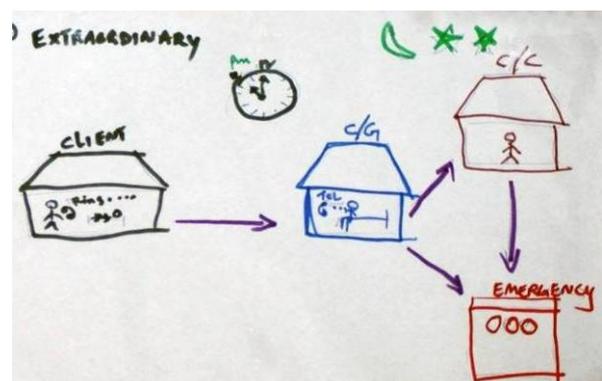


This is the clients, this is AMES, this is medical centre, the bank, this is Centrelink, this is Salvation Army, public transport, food market, Medicare, AMES education centre, Job Network. When [they arrive], I pick up the client to go to apply for a Medicare card, and a bank to open an account. Then we go home to see their house, and the next day to the Salvation Army, to get support for the client. Then orientation, how to buy tickets, how to reuse tickets, how to use ATM, I explain [it all] to them. We go to the food market, Big W or Coles, Target, for whatever they need – if they have to buy food and clothes, anything. Then we go to the medical centre to check up for everything. We go to AMES education centre to enroll for English school; sometimes children for primary school or middle school, high school; young adults for English language school. Then we go to Job Network for job assistance. Community Guide

'Extraordinary' assistance provided by the Community Guide

During the early stages of this evaluation, the concept of 'extraordinary tasks' arose, a concept that resounded across different cultural groups. Extraordinary tasks were described by new arrivals and Guides as something the Guide does above their job requirements. Extraordinary tasks are an immensely positive and also a challenging aspect of the Community Guides program.

Even on holidays or on the weekend, my son used to be sick and I asked my Community Guide to help my son with the language and she left her guests at home and came to the hospital. Client





Some extraordinary tasks are simple kindnesses such as welcoming the new arrival to their new home and country, or arranging for community members to prepare familiar food to welcome the new family. Other Guides assisted clients in accessing material goods.

Even they help us with the furniture; we had just one sofa, only four people could sit on it, so the Community Guide asked some of her friends and she brought [another one] for us. Client

The evaluation also revealed that Guides frequently need to exercise judgment and use initiative and skills not anticipated by the original task request; things arising in the course of performing an ordinary task often require more than expected of the Guide. In each case the Guide's role moves beyond performing a simple, 'ordinary' task, to an extraordinary situation where the Guide needs to draw on skills, judgment and knowledge.

Guides perform extraordinary tasks not only as part of their employment, but because they are caring and committed community members. This is both a strength and a challenge of the program, and raises boundary issues which are discussed later in this report.

The value of shared language in settlement support

The value of providing settlement services in the client's first language is recognised by all stakeholders, including clients, Guides and Case Coordinators. First language support makes communication with the new arrival effective and efficient.

If I come to Australia as a refugee and I meet someone who speaks the same language as I speak, I will feel that I have met someone who understands me right away. If I met a strange person I would be afraid to ask – because I would be afraid that this person did not understand my English or that his English is very different to mine. Client



The value of shared culture

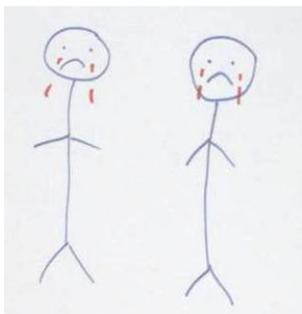
The shared culture of Guide and client also adds value to the program. The meaning or significance of the Community Guide to the new arrival extends beyond the practical assistance provided. For the new arrival faced with culture shock and the stress of so many new places and systems, the Community Guide is the familiar amidst the deeply unfamiliar.

I have been at the airport and seen people arrive – I have seen the looks on their faces when there is someone they can relate to, someone who speaks their language. They feel welcomed, but overall they feel relief: “Here is someone who understands me”. I am not just talking about language. I have also seen groups without Guides to meet them – they look lost. Service provider



When you have the worker from your own community you feel much comfortable to talk. Community Guides are the sun... The sun gives warmth, light, that's why we put the sun here. Community Guide

The value of shared refugee experience



Because the Community Guide was a refugee he will understand my suffering before we start talking about it. He understands – we are both crying together over the suffering we have shared and we can laugh together. He knows all of the horror- he knows how we feel – he feels our sorrow. We do not have to explain everything. He knows the things we sometimes cannot say. Client

Community Guides, Case Coordinators and clients recognise the great benefit of the empathy and understanding consequent to shared experience as a refugee. The knowledge of their shared experience gives the client comfort and enhances trust.

It is the language – the power of having someone who can speak the language there to help you! Not having to stand in banks with people treating you as if you are stupid or deaf: “Go home if you can’t speak the language”. But it is not just the language. It is having a familiar face from your community – someone who knows your culture, but more importantly, knows where you have come from and what you have been through. They are more than guides, they are advocates. Case Coordinator

New arrivals benefit from someone who knows not just where they have come from, but also what they have come from; what they have experienced, what they might need or feel; what might continue to affect them. The Community Guide understands that the transition to a new country is not just from one culture to another, but also from conflict to peace.

The Community Guide as a role model: a source of encouragement

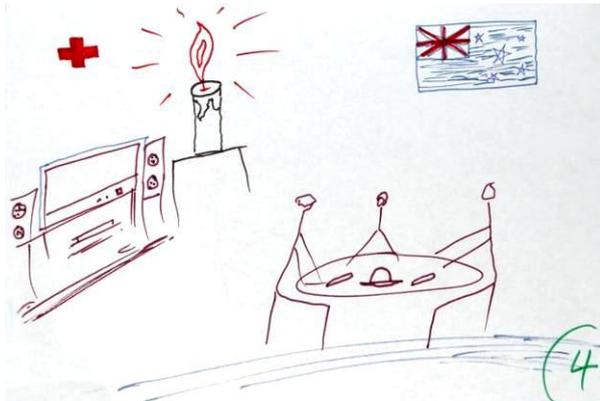
The Guide’s own experience and success in resettlement also gives the clients encouragement. The Community Guide is a role model – what is possible for the Guide is possible for the new arrival.

It’s a big bonus, because the new clients can see in front of their eyes that their Community Guide was at some stage just like me, and look at them now, they are showing me round, they have some money coming in. It gives the client a lot of hope. The Community Guide can understand what the client is going through, and for them the clients feel like they have someone who understands them, because

they were just there just a year ago. It's really important: they feel validated and understood. Case Coordinator

What does the Community Guide mean to the new arrival?

Clients frequently described Guides as a source of 'light', comfort or nurture, across all refugee communities and in both interviews and consultations.



When refugees come from an Arabic speaking country, we are like blind. Guides make our life easy and put a smile on our face. Client

When we first arrived we feel like we are in the dark, we find our way in the dark then we meet our Guide and we are very happy. Client

Our Community Guide is like a guiding star to community. For the new arrivals, they have the light: they are in the darkness, they see the star and they see the future... Our Community Guide is like a lamp, for the communities. When they arrive in the new country they will feel lonely, lost because this is a very new environment, very new country, new lifestyle. We also give them encouragement, if they feel sad or discomfort for to adapt to the new lifestyle in the new country. What is our value to them? Giving encouragement, sharing experience, giving them more support.
Community Guide



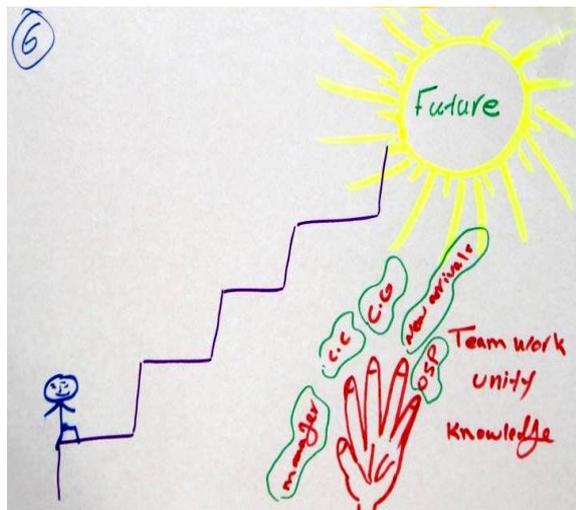
The overwhelming conclusion is that the Community Guide program is more than effective in achieving positive settlement outcomes for the new arrivals. Not only does it fulfil the requirements and objectives of the IHSS program, it has an added value which is difficult to measure in commercial terms. It provides a sense of welcome, security and familiarity which is critical to the successful settlement of people who come from harsh protracted refugee situations.

The impact of the Community Guide role for Community Guides

AMES has done me a very big favour. It has opened doors. It has been invaluable to me, given me experience I never dreamed of, supported me all the way.
Community Guide

It puts hope in their hearts, this channel to employment. Case Coordinator

The primary goal of the Community Guides program is to improve the immediate settlement experience of newly arrived refugees receiving IHSS services. However, the program also aims to address the needs of Community Guides who are themselves refugees and humanitarian entrants. The program is also undoubtedly fulfilling this supplementary role. Guides report that their employment and experience as a Guide has been personally beneficial, and that the training, knowledge and confidence gained has helped to improve their own settlement.

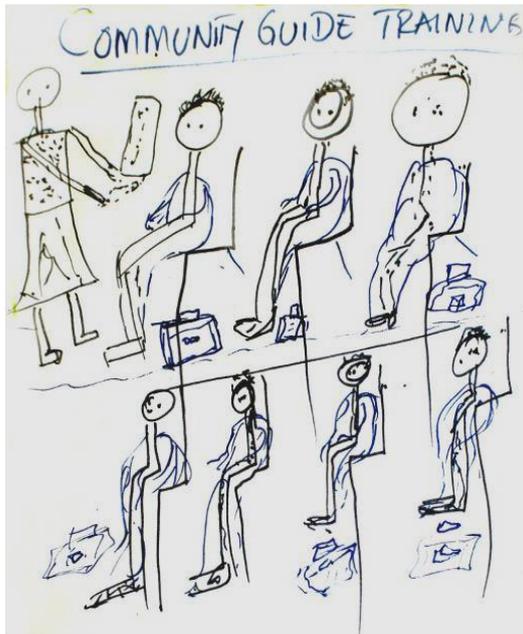


The Community Guide is stepping towards a brighter future. We work together with manager, Case Coordinators, Community Guides, new arrivals and other service providers. We all work as a team, unity, knowledge. If you take a client to a certain service to help them, we first need information beforehand; that builds up our knowledge. We feel very proud and it's a remarkable thing to do and we get pleasure helping clients and being a bridge between clients and other service providers. Community Guide

As well as appreciating the role that Guides play in supporting the settlement of their clients, Case Coordinators also recognise the value of the employment experience for Guides.

Knowledge of the Australian 'system'

Community Guides discussed how working with clients to access services increased their own knowledge of how Australian systems operate. They described how being trained in processes and procedures on behalf of the client, especially related to housing, health, employment and education, had developed their ability to negotiate these sectors for their clients' benefit as well as their own.



[AMES] gives us training: training about how to rent property, what needs to be done; housing; sometimes health; how to eat properly; healthy and safety if an emergency happened in the house; what to do if emergencies happened. Things I never learned before; I never knew it before. We learnt them so we can explain them to the clients. It helped me in my own life. Community Guide

It helped me gain confidence to learn my community environment. I decided that if Australia was going to be our new home, we had to go out there and learn our new environment. Community Guide

Community Guides as facilitators of increased community knowledge

Community Guides gained a strong feeling of purpose and wellbeing from their work as Community Guides, not only from being in paid employment, but from witnessing the direct and immediate effect of their actions on the progress of clients. Community Guides described how providing guidance and assistance to new arrivals from their own community gave them a lot of job and personal satisfaction.

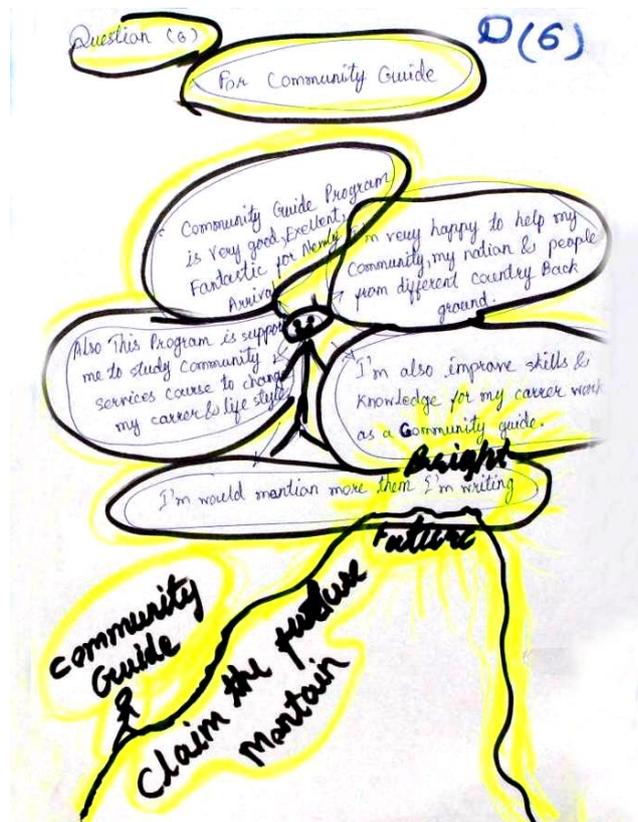
When we came here in AMES as a Community Guide we came empty, but now as we go to the community we have knowledge to empower the community. It is to say I am a driver of a car. I am the driver, and all the new arrivals, they are in the car; that is the illustration. The case coordinator fuels the car, you get the information from the Case Coordinator, but you as the Community Guide drive the car. Community Guide



Community Guides expressed a sense of responsibility to contribute to the welfare of their own community. They perceived their work in AMES as a means to identify and engage with factors affecting the needs and outcomes of others in their community.

Their role allowed Community Guides to pass on their knowledge, experience and training in a way that strengthens and expands the capacity of community members to settle.

Acquiring new work skills and local work experience



When we work as Community Guide, we receive knowledge, skills; also we receive the listening skills, because we communicate with each other, agencies, and we also receive reading skills, communication skills. If you work as a Community Guide, you already know a lot of people, so you got a friend in the Australia, and also you can bring the clients to another place, so it's easy to know if you want to get there, you can get there already, so this is also what we receive. This Community Guide program is fantastic to all Community Guide, to the agencies, to the clients. Community Guide

Since many humanitarian entrants to Australia have lived in protracted situations for years, they often have not had experience with the work practices and technology which are embedded in most Australian workplaces. Their training and experience from AMES and on the job have enabled Community Guides to learn and practice knowledge and skills such as office and computer skills, time management, case management, communication and negotiation skills, problem solving and assertiveness.

Pathways into education and employment

As with other refugees and migrants, Community Guides face barriers to recognition of their overseas qualifications, skills and work experience. Many reported difficulties finding opportunities in the Australian workplace to work in their previous professions or fields. For some, working as a Community Guide provided valuable exposure to the human services sector through working with both settlement and mainstream service

providers. This allowed many to reconsider their vocational choices and subsequently change careers, having gained local experience as a Community Guide.

Community Guides accessed a number of pathways to employment within AMES Settlement. As the Guides program has evolved, positions have been developed in AMES Settlement division which utilise the skills of experienced Guides and provide Guides with additional training and experience, while also employing them on a contract rather than casual basis.

Guides and former Guides have also used their experience as a Guide as a springboard into education; sometimes into a course related to human services work such as community development or social work, and sometimes into alternative fields. In some cases Case Coordinators were the source of mentoring and support that propelled a Guide into further education or work.

‘Community development in action’ – an unplanned benefit of the program

The Community Guide is also the clients’ link to the community – it is community development in action. Case Coordinator

It is a fantastic settlement model, and there is contribution back to the community: to give the community the feeling that there is a bit of a cultural coherence, that someone from your community is supporting the new arrivals, as well as linking with the Anglo society. It’s challenging but it’s fantastic and also it sends the message to the mainstream, to the broader society, that these are settlers, and they’re working now and the community is helping them and supporting them; that’s what I’m really excited about. Case Coordinator

Many participants in this research described a ripple effect of the Community Guide program – the program increasing total knowledge and capacity in, and contributing to strong development of, refugee communities. These are some of the multiple ways that the Community Guides program contributes to the development of refugee communities:

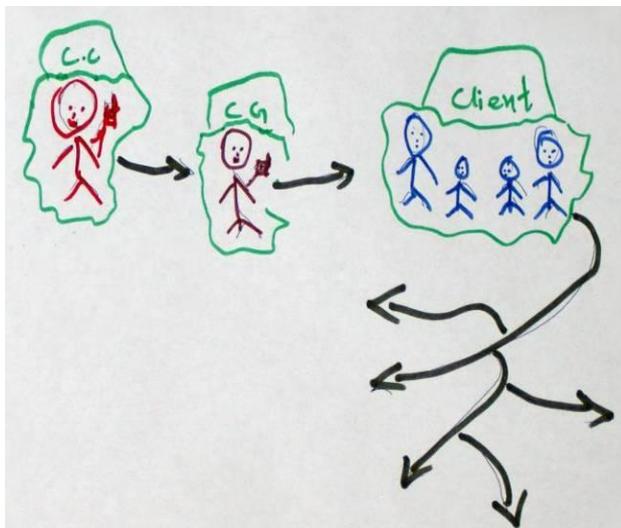
- Effective settlement support links new arrivals to Australian institutions and services.

- Community Guides help to link new arrivals with their community, increasing their 'social capital' which plays a vital role in successful settlement in a new country (Lamba and Krahn, 2003).
- Increased knowledge and experience of Guides flows into their networks, increasing the total knowledge and self-help capacity of the community.
- The program facilitates Guides' and new arrivals' increased interaction and confidence with broader social structures and mechanisms.
- Community Guide employment and employment pathways are valuable for individuals and for their communities.
- Community Guides facilitate linkages, access and information sharing between refugee communities and services.
- The Community Guides program creates opportunities for refugee communities to have a 'voice'.

Perceptions of the Case Coordinator and Community Guide roles

Case Coordinators and Community Guides work together to achieve the goals of the clients' case plans developed by the Case Coordinator. Clients, Case Coordinators and Community Guides shared similar understandings of the roles and responsibilities of the different groups in the delivery of settlement support.

The first day we arrived here the Case Coordinator asked the Community Guide to guide us and take us where we needed to go and the Case Coordinator gave the Community Guide instruction on what was needed. Client



What usually happens is, immigration department will contact AMES, AMES will allocate family to any one of the Case Coordinators, Case Coordinator will contact the Community Guide. They go to where the family is being accommodated and meet with the family, and deliver the information. So the work will be for the Community Guide, [to] deliver and go with the family to the various service provider locations. Community Guide

Case Coordinator views of the Community Guides program

Case Coordinators attribute the Guides with playing a significant role in achieving good settlement outcomes for clients, a critical element of AMES IHSS program that enables the Case Coordinator to assess and manage their caseload effectively:

I do not know the real words that can describe how effective they are... without them we cannot go a step... actually they are so effective that we can actually see tangible results with clients from the time they arrive to the time they exit the program, and we know that it is because of the Community Guides. Case Coordinator

They bring something that I couldn't bring as a Case Coordinator. Case Coordinator

The role is invaluable...their job is invaluable, we would not be able to achieve anything in this program without the Community Guides...they do about 75% of the work directly with the clients, we rely on them heavily. Case Coordinator

Guides are a link between the Case Coordinator and client

Case Coordinators felt that because the client is able to communicate and feel comfortable with the Guide, this creates a conduit for information flow between the Case Coordinator and client. The Guide has a 'foot in both camps' and provides the linkage between them.

They are generally very effective because they are able to understand and deal with and ensure that Case Coordinator is aware of cultural barriers (gender, religious, language) that may exist with the new arrival. So [the client is] closer to the Community Guide and actually the Community Guide acts as a link between the Case Coordinator and the client. Initially the Community Guide has to inform and make Case Coordinator aware of cultural expectations of the community. Also sometimes you find that a client may be shy to talk to the Case Coordinator, so the link with Community Guide is vital. Case Coordinator

The Community Guide's two-way cultural interpretation is valuable to the Case Coordinator

Many Case Coordinators described Community Guides as instrumental in guiding their own interactions with clients. Case Coordinators sought the insights of Community Guides to understand culturally specific protocols, and used knowledge gained from Guides to ensure culturally sensitive and appropriate case management plans.

The Community Guide is the point of connection for the Case Coordinator on cultural awareness. The Community Guide will guide the Case Coordinator on appropriate etiquette, so that we do not unknowingly disrespect the client. Case Coordinator

I will ask the Community Guide: how do you treat this particular culture? Starting from the greeting, all the way to saying goodbye. In some cultures, it is offensive for a man to be shaking hands with a woman, or the other way around. All these impressions can make a difference. Case Coordinator

This cultural knowledge is especially valuable where clients are from new communities.

Beyond etiquette, the cultural knowledge of Community Guides also brings an additional level of specificity to the implementation of settlement programs. Case Coordinators are able to recognise and incorporate specific issues into a client's case management plan using Community Guides' understanding of clients' culture and experience.

Sometimes you get people with severe post traumatic stress and the tiniest information about the environment back in the camp helps out a lot... in coordinating settlement services. We can target referrals and construct a little bit of risk management interventions in our plan as well. Case Coordinator

Challenges in the Community Guide–Case Coordinator relationship

Case Coordinators overwhelmingly support and value the work of the Community Guides, and Community Guides recognise the importance of the role and direction of the Case Coordinator and appreciate their support. However, both Guides and Case Coordinators were aware of occasional tensions in the relationship between some Guides and some Case Coordinators. These challenges relate to conflicting approaches to boundaries, and to notions of being valued and recognised by other stakeholders.

However, tensions in this relationship should not be overstated. In many ways they are a natural consequence of a relatively new and developing program, as the different stakeholders work towards equilibrium to achieve the best outcomes for all stakeholders, principally for clients. It is important to identify the sources of tensions so they can be mediated and resolved. This is discussed in other sections of this report and in a separate report to AMES management.

Service providers and the Community Guides program

I think the Community Guides are fantastic; it's a fantastic service that works well. I think they're really terrific. Service provider

They really are the unsung heroes of the whole program. Service provider

The service providers who participated in this research were aware of the Community Guides program and most were clear about the different tasks and responsibilities of the Community Guide. However, some Guides reported that service providers do not always know what they do or why they are with the client.



These are the service providers - they think that we are a gift; we are a gift box from the sky. When I went with a client to a service, she asked me, what's your relationship to the client? I said I was a Community Guide. They were very excited and happy. Who came up with this idea? We are glad there is someone here to help us with the clients. Community Guide

[With a Community Guide] our clients are feeling more comfortable about asking questions and settling in general. It is a good transition for people to start their lives in Australia. We do get a lot of good comments about that. Service provider

The program benefits all stakeholders

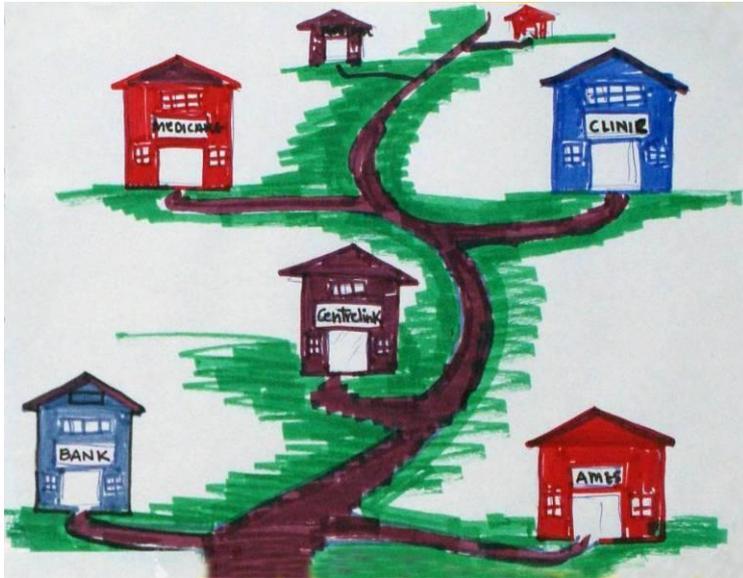
Many stakeholders described the multiple levels at which they had observed the Community Guides program assisting in the settlement of refugees, from the individual to Guides, to Case Coordinators and the refugee and wider community.

I think it's a very positive program: positive in the sense of providing opportunities for newly arrived communities, and identification of well-linked people in those communities who can help that transition of refugees into the community. Also I think it's useful for recognising that a few contacts are required to support the settlement process and recognising that the case worker has a whole lot of people to support as well. So it really complements the work of the case worker. Service provider

Service providers also recognised the value of employment pathways for Guides.

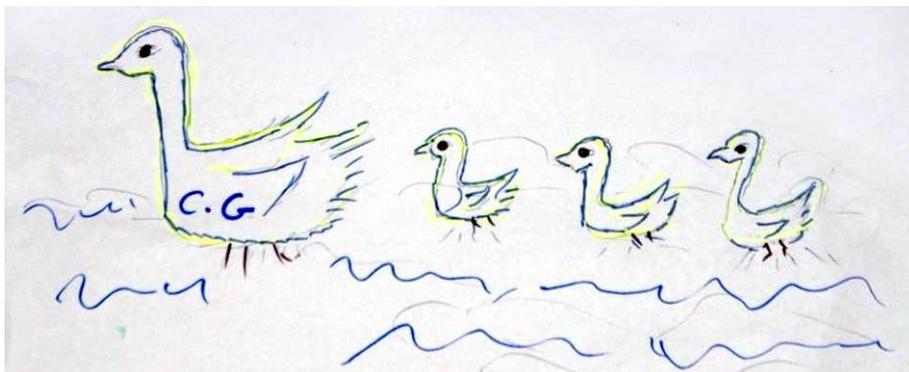
Community Guides improve clients' access to services

Many service providers saw the trust, interpretation and social support offered by the Community Guides program as facilitating clients' access to and understanding of services. This is consistent with the way Community Guides see their role.



Being able to go places with someone who speaks their language also helps alleviate some of the confusion. We don't communicate well with the people sometimes, nobody has explained what it's about. The Community Guide can explain all of this to them: why they have to go to the doctor. The relationship builds out of necessity. Service Provider

The high value placed on the work of Community Guides by service providers external to AMES, and the obvious value they add to the work of those service providers, is an additional, unexpected and extremely positive consequence of their role. It is providing a model of service provision which could be useful for a wide range of agencies working with people from a refugee background.



Recommendations

In light of the overwhelmingly positive results of the evaluation the key recommendation of this report is *that the Community Guides program continue as a major plank of AMES IHSS service delivery model.*

It is further recommended *that serious consideration be given to adapting the model for use in other areas of AMES service delivery.*

In light of the fact that the program has so many positive outcomes in terms of well being, integration and community development, it is recommended *that a similar model be considered by Government as a basis for all service delivery to new arrivals and refugee communities, both under the IHSS scheme but also under the Settlement Grants Program.*

However, as noted in the report, some areas of weakness and challenges to the program were identified. In order to address these and to strengthen the program we further recommend that:

Potential for dependency

- a clear definition of 'dependency' be developed, with guidelines to assist staff in understanding what it means, and judging whether behaviour is dependent or a consequence of genuine high client needs because of the severity of pre arrival experience or challenging settlement issues.
- a training module be developed to assist Case Coordinators and Community Guides to respond appropriately when client is thought to be exhibiting signs of dependency.

Numbers and turnover of Community Guides

- the particular learning needs of Guides with lower levels of English be identified and addressed.
- additional training and support be developed for these Guides.
- training or other strategies be developed to support the Case Coordinators in their role of support and supervision of Community Guides.

Boundaries

- the issue of expectations and boundaries be explored in a forum with Community Guides and Case Coordinators, and that a very clear and transparent model of what these boundaries are developed.
- a training module be developed based on the outcomes of the forum, which focuses on the issue of boundaries and how to deal with expectations from the community which exceed these boundaries.
- a mechanism be put in place by which Community Guides can make a case to the Case Coordinator when they feel that it is essential to exceed these boundaries in a particular case.
- a simple explanation sheet for clients about the role of the Community Guide containing a little more detail than the current materials, be developed and translated into all appropriate languages.

Employment conditions

- a review be undertaken of the training and on-the-job support needs of the Guides and training be tailored to meet new and emerging needs. We commend the recent introduction of the competency booklet as a tool for skill building and recognition and recommend that this be used as the foundation for the review.
- a review be undertaken of employment issues such as numbers of Guides employed, and the development of clear exit strategies as part of pathways management.
- given the strength and success of the employment pathways, these need to be more clearly defined and developed, and linked to building on the strength of the Guides and the value they add to the program.

Duration of and eligibility for Community Guide support

- the flexibility already built into the scheme by AMES to provide services for a longer period to those new arrivals with very high needs to be made more transparent, and this be clearly stated in guidelines for Case Coordinators and Community Guides.

- this be discussed with all Case Coordinators and Community Guides to ensure an equitable application of the guidelines.
- a system be established to record high levels of need over and above the expectations of IHSS and the ability of AMES to respond to this. This will provide invaluable information to DIAC for future policy and service provision planning.

The need for Community Guides for refugees arriving on 202 visas

- a formal position be developed on the need of all humanitarian arrivals, in particular those with 202 Visas, for the services of Community Guides and extended IHSS service provision, and raised with DIAC.

The Case Coordinator – Community Guide relationship

- the role and relationship between the Case Coordinators and the Community Guides be articulated in more detail in the job descriptions of both groups.
- a training module be developed to assist Case Coordinators to optimise their use of the Community Guides program. Given the excellent working relationships developed between many of the Case Coordinators and Community Guides, it is suggested that this could be peer-developed and run.

Service provider understanding of the Community Guide role

- in addition to the existing pamphlet available to external service providers, some simple educational materials for service providers about the Guides could be produced and distributed.
- Service providers could be invited to a short forum to discuss the role of Community Guides and the optimum way to work with them.
- any materials distributed to service providers must clearly state that Community Guides are not interpreters, and must not be asked to take that role. The materials must state that Community Guides have been instructed by AMES to refuse to act in this role.
- a printed statement stating the position of AMES could be given to Community Guides which they could then produce for service providers if they feel they are being pressured to take on the role of interpreter.

“Unsung Heroes”

An evaluation of AMES’ Community Guides program

Introduction

This report details the outcomes of an evaluation of Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES), Victoria Community Guides Program undertaken from September 2008 to July 2009. The research was undertaken by the Centre for Refugee Research, University of New South Wales.

AMES was established in Victoria in 1951 to teach English to new settlers. The services have expanded to provide education and training, employment and settlement services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. A range of settlement services are currently funded by the Government to assist resettled refugees in their first years in Australia, and in particular in their first six months. The most important of these for new arrivals are provided under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). Since October 2005, the AMES IHSS Consortium has delivered IHSS services in Victoria. The Consortium is a partnership of AMES, Redback Settlement Services, Foundation House, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

The Community Guides Program is an initiative of AMES Settlement Services, and is an integral part of AMES’ IHSS service delivery model. Under this model, ‘Community Guides’ (usually from a refugee background themselves) are employed to provide settlement support to new arrivals in the entrant’s first language. The program has two main aims: to provide settlement support to new arrivals; and to provide employment pathways to longer-settled refugees.

In 2008, AMES decided to undertake an evaluation of the Community Guides program, to assess its effectiveness and value for all stakeholders. AMES chose the reciprocal action research methodology developed by the UNSW Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) because of their commitment to full community participation in the evaluation. The methodology has been successfully used with refugee communities in Australia and in refugee camps and urban sites in Asia and Africa.

This section of the report provides an historic context for the development of the Community Guides program.

Background to the Community Guides program

Australia and refugee resettlement

Who is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who:

“Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (1951 Refugee Convention)

It is estimated that there are currently 10.5 million refugees worldwide.¹ More than half the refugees worldwide are in Asia, and 20% in Africa. Most refugees endure significant human rights violations and deprivation in their country of asylum, often for extended periods. The average period spent as a refugee is 17 years.

Refugees do not leave their countries voluntarily. Most want to return to their homeland, to reconnect with their land and their community, culture and way of life. It is only when this becomes impossible - they can't go home and they can't stay where they are - that resettlement may be facilitated by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2004). Resettlement to a third country like Australia can provide legal and physical protection to refugees for whom there is no other way to guarantee safety. However resettlement is a solution for very few of the world's refugees, with only approximately 65,000 places available annually.

Australia's history of refugee resettlement

Australia was one of the first signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and since the formation of the first Federal Department of Migration in 1945, has provided a home to over 645,000 refugees as part of the annual planned migrant intake.

Australia is one of nine principal countries which accept refugees for resettlement from offshore locations. Based on agreements with UNHCR, Australia receives a designated

¹ There are an additional estimated 26 million people who have been displaced from their homes and live in refugee-like circumstances, but who remain within their home country. These figures do not include an additional 4.7 million Palestinian refugees.

number of refugees every year. During the 2007-8 period, Australia accepted 6,004 refugees and an additional 5,026 people on special humanitarian visas as part of its humanitarian program (Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), 2008), and the target for 2009-2010 has been increased to 12,500. Australia has one of the highest per capita rates of refugee resettlement in the world (Millbank, A., et al. 2006).

Australia currently aims to divide its intake relatively evenly between Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Australia also allocates at least 12% of its yearly refugee quota to 'women at risk', under a specific refugee visa category for women and their dependents who are vulnerable to or have experienced harassment, victimisation and violence.

The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship recognises that protracted refugee situations are a significant challenge facing the international community, and has committed to offering resettlement to refugees from protracted situations, including those originally from Burma and Bhutan. However, with high numbers of refugees worldwide and few options for durable solutions, most new arrivals under Australia's humanitarian program will have been living in what UNHCR defines as 'a longstanding and intractable state of limbo... [where] their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years of exile' (UNHCR, 2004)

Settlement service provision

Australia's migration program has evolved from an early focus on assimilation, where migrants and refugees were expected to quickly blend into the population, to a focus in the 1960s and 1970s on integration, recognising that new arrivals may want to retain some of their cultural identity. The current policy of multiculturalism began in the 1980s. The recognition that refugees had additional settlement needs to most other migrants also began to be reflected in settlement policy and service provision at that time.

Some basic settlement services and programs were provided by the Commonwealth Government after the post-war migration program began. However, interpreter services, language classes and other more sophisticated settlement services have developed over time in response to the shift towards integration and then multiculturalism.

Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy

A range of settlement services are currently funded by the Government to assist resettled refugees in their first years in Australia, and in particular in their first six months. The most important of these for new arrivals are provided under the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS). The key objective of this program is successful settlement for humanitarian entrants (DIAC, 2008).

IHSS provides initial, intensive settlement support to newly-arrived entrants, based on assessment of their settlement needs. IHSS services include: case planning, case coordination, information and referrals; on-arrival reception and assistance; accommodation services; and short-term torture and trauma counselling services. IHSS mandates that humanitarian entrants are met upon arrival, taken to suitable accommodation, provided with a basic orientation, attention for any emergency medical needs, and help with urgent clothing or footwear as needed (DIAC, 2009). The provision of IHSS services are guided by principles established by DIAC to ensure that implementing organisations respect and meet the needs of humanitarian entrants; IHSS Principles are included in Appendix 1.

IHSS services are automatically available to those people who enter Australia on a refugee visa (Category 200, 201 or 204). Special humanitarian entrants to Australia are eligible for IHSS services on a 'needs basis', as they are 'proposed' by a person or organisation already in Australia, who assumes responsibility for the entrants' immediate settlement needs as part of their proposer agreement.

The services are generally provided for six months (but may be extended up to 12 months), and are delivered by contracted service providers which vary from region to region. Following this initial intensive settlement period, humanitarian entrants are referred to general settlement services provided through Migrant Resource Centres, Migrant Service Agencies and other organisations funded under DIAC's Settlement Grants Program (SGP). People who enter Australia as part of the humanitarian program may access SGP services for up to five years, after which they are expected to access mainstream services if they need assistance in their daily lives. Other humanitarian settlement services are provided by community or faith-based groups and non-government organizations, some of which are funded by the federal or state governments.

IHSS service providers are required to meet the detailed specifications of their IHSS contract and achieve agreed key performance indicators (KPIs). The KPIs relate to measuring whether the IHSS service provider has met prescribed requirements, such as

needs assessments and coordination plans for entrants. KPIs also relate to measuring the satisfaction of entrants with the services provided under IHSS. They do not, however, specify how services should be provided.

AMES and refugee resettlement

Background to AMES

Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) was established in Victoria in 1951 to teach English to new settlers, both migrants and refugees. The services have expanded to provide education and training, employment and settlement services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. AMES an Adult Education Institution under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, an act of the Victorian Parliament. AMES is governed by a Board of 12 members. The organisation seeks to enable its clients to achieve full participation in Australian life (AMES, 2008). An organisational chart is included at Appendix 2, and more information about AMES is available at www.ames.net.au.

AMES and IHSS

Since October 2005, the AMES IHSS Consortium has delivered IHSS services in Victoria. The Consortium is a partnership of AMES, Redback Settlement Services, Foundation House, Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau and Brotherhood of St. Laurence. Each consortium partner has responsibility for a particular component of the IHSS program; more information on individual partners is available at www.ames.net.au. AMES is the lead partner and responsible for overall management and coordination. They are also responsible for providing case coordination, settlement support, and information and referral services. Approximately 3200 refugee and special humanitarian entrants were settled in Victoria in 2008 and received assistance from the Consortium (AMES, 2008).

The Community Guides Program – a model for IHSS service delivery

Background

The Community Guides Program is an initiative of AMES Settlement Services, and is an integral part of AMES' IHSS service delivery model. Under this model, 'Community Guides' (usually from a refugee background themselves) are employed to provide settlement support to new arrivals in the entrant's first language. The program has two

main aims – to provide settlement support to new arrivals; and to provide employment pathways to longer-settled refugees. The Community Guides program began in 2005. The program has trained over 300 Community Guides and currently employs 169 Community Guides from 28 countries who speak 55 languages (AMES, 2008).

Community Guides work under the direction of a Case Coordinator, who is responsible for the overall case management plan of each client. Community Guides are directed to undertake specific routine settlement tasks with the client and refer more complex issues back to the Case Coordinator. Tasks are determined by IHSS guidelines and by the client's individual assessed needs.

Structure of AMES' IHSS and Community Guide programs

AMES' IHSS services are overseen by a General Manager, Settlement Services Division. Three managers support the General Manager, one managing business and contract issues, one the Community Guides program, and one the IHSS management team (comprising regional managers, team leaders and Case Coordinators). The AMES IHSS program structure is included at Appendix 3.

Community Guides are recruited from communities from which Australia is accepting new humanitarian arrivals. Guides have often been through the IHSS program themselves, and are referred to the Guides manager as potential Guides by Case Coordinators. Guides undertake two days initial training, followed by monthly half-day meetings which incorporate additional training on particular topics such as housing support or health issues.

Community Guides are employed on a casual, part time basis, and employment is only available if there are arrivals from a particular Guide's community. Their employment as a Guide is intended as a pathway to other employment, either within or outside the organisation. Within the organisation, Guides have obtained employment in positions such as Settlement Information Officers, Housing Workers and Case Coordinator Support Workers. Some Guides are now working as Case Coordinators, having completed, or while undertaking professional qualifications.

The roles of Community Guides and Case Coordinators

Guides and Case Coordinators have separate client allocation and management structures. New arrivals are allocated to a Case Coordinator by their team leader; the Case Coordinator then requests allocation of a Community Guide for the new arrival

from the Community Guides Manager. Community Guides are managed by and report to the Community Guides Manager, but are also directed to undertake particular tasks by the Case Coordinators.

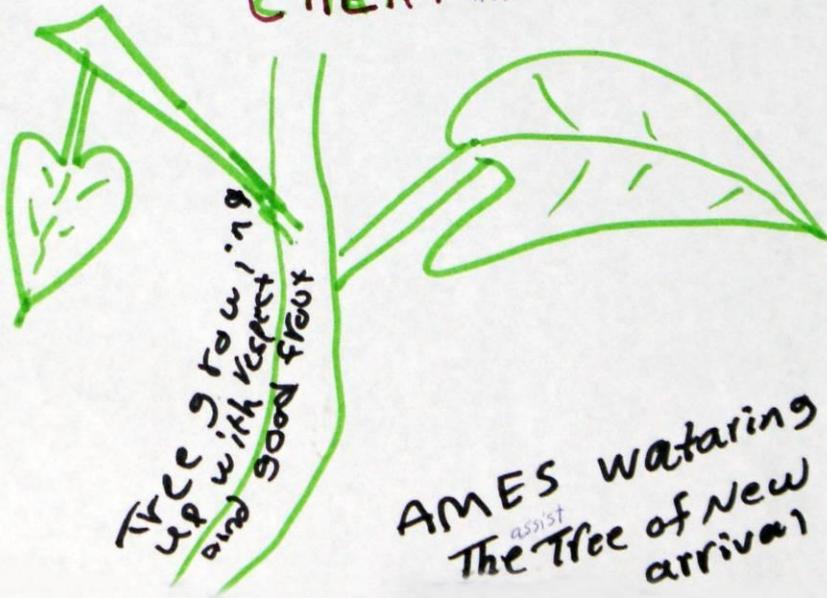
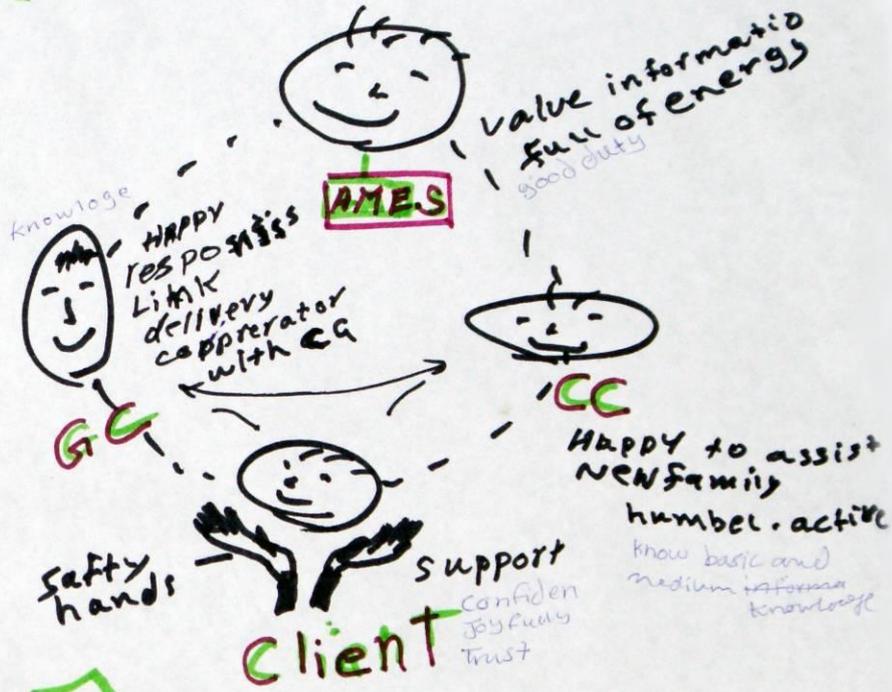
Case Coordinators and Community Guides have distinct roles and work together to achieve the requirements of IHSS. The Case Coordinator's role in relation to new entrants is assessment and program planning, referral and coordination. The Case Coordinator requests the Guide to undertake specific tasks with the client, such as accompanying them to particular appointments. The Community Guide usually meets new entrants with the Case Coordinator within a short time of their arrival, sometimes at the airport and sometimes at the entrant's on-arrival accommodation. The Guide and Coordinator are both involved in the provision of information to the new arrivals.

In the initial reception and orientation phase, Community Guides are expected help new arrivals to settle into their accommodation by providing information about their housing and familiarising them with the local area. Community Guides are tasked to assist new arrivals to register with key service agencies such as Centrelink and Medicare, banks, health care providers and education institutions. Community Guides accompany new arrivals to subsequent appointments using the local public transportation system to instruct new arrivals in how to navigate services and environs.

Some of the orientation tasks and appointments undertaken by the Guide under the direction of the Case Coordinator are mandated by the IHSS specifications: orientation to the new household, attendance at Medicare, Centrelink, and the bank, and completion of health assessments. Others are determined by the needs assessment undertaken by the Case Coordinator: specialist medical attention, school and Adult Migrant English Program enrolment, housing and employment needs. Whether appointments are mandated or needs-based, the Community Guide is the 'hands-on' point of connection with the new arrival, that is, the person providing face to face contact under the direction and coordination of the Case Coordinator.

Community Guides need a good command of English and knowledge of Australian and local 'systems' to teach new arrivals to be able to access services independently. Using their shared language skills, the Community Guides are expected to provide the explanations, orientation and training which facilitates the new arrival's understanding of and independence in accessing services. Community Guides usually also share a similar refugee and cultural background with their clients. A guiding principle of the Community Guides program is to provide services and assistances to new arrivals in their first language, and in a way that promotes their confidence and independence so to facilitate successful settlement and integration.

(4)



The Community Guides research – methodology

Background to the research

This aim of this research project was to evaluate the AMES Community Guides program as a model of providing settlement support to humanitarian entrants. It assessed the effectiveness and value of the model in facilitating successful settlement and in developing capacity within refugee communities. The research methodology was designed and executed by a team from the Centre for Refugee Research at the University of New South Wales. Research objectives and outcomes were agreed with AMES settlement services management in consultation with stakeholders in the Community Guides program: clients, Guides, Case Coordinators, AMES management and settlement service providers.

Aims and objectives of the research

The aims of the research were to:

- Determine the value of the AMES Community Guides program on the settlement experience of newly arrived refugees
- Determine the value of the AMES Community Guides program for the Community Guides

The agreed objectives were to:

1. Determine the impact of the work of Community Guides on the settlement experience of refugees, individuals, families and community groups
2. Evaluate the impact of the relationship between the Community Guides and the Case Coordinators on outcomes for AMES clients
3. Assess the role of the cultural knowledge brought by Community Guides on the overall effectiveness of AMES settlement service provision
4. Document the 'roll-on' value of the Guides as an adjunct to other settlement services offered by AMES, and other unintended consequences of their involvement in the work of the organisation
5. Document the role of the Guides in providing access to a broader range of mainstream service provision
6. Identify gaps and problems in the service provision model
7. Identify ways in which to promote the recognition of the value of the Community Guides within the organisation and to provide career paths for the Guides
8. Identify any additional training and psycho social supports need for the Guides and other staff

9. Document and develop the model into a 'Best Practice' guide to be shared with other Australian states and territories and other countries of resettlement

Methodology

Overview of research methodology

Qualitative research methods were considered to be the most appropriate for this study because a qualitative approach '[builds on] a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting' (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). Qualitative research uses participant responses as a starting point from which broader analytical categories are drawn (Basit, 2003; Ezzy, 2002). The researchers approached this study with a responsibility to listen to the voices of all stakeholders in the Community Guides program as they articulated the issues that were important to them (Muli, 2009).

The research design drew on the ethical and reciprocal participatory research methods developed in earlier and current Centre for Refugee Research projects. It included strategies to foster social participation and to engage refugee communities in identifying best practice models for the provision of settlement support, and to enhance organisational capacity for engagement of all stakeholders in policy and service development. Guides, refugees and AMES staff were engaged as active participants in the research process, rather than passive research subjects.

The research design was submitted to and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the University of New South Wales (UNSW), and conducted in accordance with the requirements of that approval.

Prior to commencing the research, meetings were held with each stakeholder group to identify evaluation criteria important to each group, and to establish what each stakeholder group wanted to learn from the research. Information from these meetings was used to inform the design and conduct of the subsequent research. Evaluation criteria were developed from information gathered at these meetings, and are included at Appendix 4.

The data collection consisted of two primary data collection activities: reciprocal research consultations with refugee community members and with Community Guides, and semi-structured in-depth interviews with members of all stakeholder groups. Four reciprocal research consultations were conducted for four days each. In these consultations, a human rights framework and community development approach were

used to research the resettlement experiences of refugees who have been assisted by a Community Guide, and the settlement and employment experiences of Guides. The groups addressed six key research questions using a range of techniques including human rights analysis, sharing stories, drawing 'story boards' and making presentations.

A total of 90 interviews were also conducted to build on the data collected in the consultations.

For full details of the methodology see appendix 5.

The Community Consultations

The consultations each ran over four days, using the reciprocal research methodology described above. There was one four day consultation with 40 Community Guides, one with 29 refugees from Africa, one with 31 refugees from Burma, and one with 35 refugees from Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Training in human rights provided a framework for discussion of pre-arrival and resettlement experiences. Building on this work, story circles and storyboard techniques were used to analyse the role of the Community Guides program in the settlement experience of new arrivals and the Community Guides themselves.

Interpretation into appropriate community languages allowed the consultations to be held with people at all levels of English proficiency. The consultation with representatives of the community from Africa involved the largest number of interpreters, with seven different language groups being accommodated. At times, even the facilitator and the documenter 'multi-tasked' by interpreting into Swahili and Congolese French.

While participatory action research follows a planned methodology, it can also be responsive to the needs and wishes of the group. The consultation process is guided by a facilitator, and one of his or her roles is to listen carefully and assess and respond to the needs of the group. For this research, each consultation was slightly adapted, both to meet the particular needs of the groups and to ensure that the objectives of the research were achieved.

With the consent and agreement of the participants, the consultations were filmed in addition to being documented in written form. A DVD about the Community Guides has been developed as part of the research output. Some groups chose for some parts of their meetings not to be filmed. Participants were invited to view the draft DVD for their input and approval prior to its release.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted over three separate weeks, with Community Guides, Case Coordinators, AMES management and Consortium partners, external service providers, DIAC representatives and refugee community members. A total of 92 interviews were conducted, with 20 families who received Community Guide services; nine families who did not have a Community Guide (Visa 202 entrants); 25 Community Guides; 17 AMES Case Coordinators; six AMES management personnel; six representatives from other AMES divisions (non-Settlement Services); and nine settlement service providers. Some participants were interviewed in the offices of AMES or in their workplace, but community members were visited at their homes. An interpreter was provided when needed, which was for most community members. The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted for 1 – 1 ½ hours each.

The interviews explored experiences, perceptions, attitudes and opinions that might not have been exposed during the community consultations, and were also used in comparison to the findings of the consultations (Ritchie, 2001). Interviews also enabled input from stakeholder groups who were not included in the consultations. The semi-structured nature of these interviews meant that the participants were asked a sequence of mostly open questions which could be altered and added to as necessary (Bryman, 2001; Sarantakos, 1998). This method allows participants a free flow of ideas and discussion, avoids forcing them to conform to preconceived notions and beliefs, and provides an opportunity for the researcher to explore participants' personal experiences (Muli, 2009). Participants were interviewed about their experiences of the Community Guides program, the effectiveness and value of the scheme, and their specific needs and experiences as stakeholders.

The research consultations and interviews provided the means to: explore the impact of the scheme on Guides, clients, and the organisation; identify gaps and challenges in the service model; identify training or other needs; and document and develop a “best practice” guide for refugee settlement support.

Data from the consultations and interviews was manually coded according to key themes, research objectives and evaluation criteria. The coded data provided the framework for analysis of the research findings.

An additional research activity was a forum in which representatives from each of the consultations made a presentation to AMES settlement staff, AMES management and external service providers. The forum provided an opportunity for refugee community members and Community Guides to themselves present findings and analysis from their consultations, including their personal stories and their experiences of settlement

barriers and service gaps. These presentations were both part of the research process, and an outcome of the participatory action method.

Recruitment of participants

The AMES research project staff took the lead in identifying and inviting refugees, Community Guides, staff and external service agencies to participate in this project, in accordance with the UNSW ethical agreement. Invitations by AMES to their networks of clients and former clients stressed the voluntary and confidential nature of the research process. 'Snowballing' identified further potential participants. Permission was obtained from participants, both employees and refugee participants, before providing the research team with their contact details. The researchers also provided each participant the opportunity to withdraw from the research process before each consultation or interview.

Research challenges

Participant availability

The four-day period allocated for each consultation enables excellent conditions to be established for gathering very rich research information, and was seen as a critical part of the research design. The time frame allows time to establish trusting and positive working relationships, to finesse communication strategies through the interpreters, and to provide sound human rights training as the framework for participants' situational analyses in story circles and storyboards.

However, the time commitment required from participants for the consultations could have limited the number and diversity of people attending this important part of the research. This was mitigated by making an honorarium payment to cover costs and lost work time for participants, and by scheduling the consultations with longer-settled communities more likely to be engaged in education and employment over two weekends rather than four consecutive days. Letters of explanation were also provided to participants to enable them to miss AMEP classes for the duration of the consultations.

It was also a risk that the time commitment might lead to a drop off of participation over the course of the consultations. In fact the opposite occurred, with consistent attendance across all consultations, additional people joining some consultations, and feedback from participants indicating keen engagement with the consultation process.

Recruitment of interview participants who had not had a Community Guide (Visa 202 entrants) was challenging, as many were no longer at the address or phone number on AMES' records. However this evaluation was not designed or intended as a comparative study, and the clients who were interviewed provided very useful information on their settlement experiences, their knowledge of the Guides program, and alternative sources of support they had received.

Responding to group needs while achieving research objectives – iterative research

In two of the consultations, divergence from the planned research process was necessary. For example, in the consultation with clients from African communities, it became clear that there were some urgent issues facing African refugees in Melbourne which participants needed and wanted to talk about. Failing to respond to this need would have denied participants an opportunity to articulate issues of concern to them. It would have also have compromised effective research into the Community Guides program. The research program was revised to provide a safe, accommodating environment for participants to express what was important to them. Once this was achieved, the modified program was able to return to research questions concerning the Community Guides. This is an advantage of allocating four days to consultations; the research process can respond to group needs and wishes.

Achieving effective interpretation

Trust is critical in achieving effective and frank communication in both consultations and interviews. While professional interpreters were not always used, most interpreters had interpreting experience and, importantly, all appeared to have the trust of the research participants. Effective communication between interpreters, participants and researchers was also achieved through providing training for the interpreters before the consultations, and through the extensive international experience of the facilitators in working effectively with non-professional interpreters. Observing group dynamics, checking answers against questions, and observing responses to interpreted information are all cues to ensure the accuracy of interpretation. As the consultations and most of the interviews also involved several people with some English proficiency, they provided an additional cross-check for the interpreter and researchers.

The challenge of achieving effective communication in this evaluation underlies the wider social and settlement challenge to achieve effective communication, interpretation and education for multiple and diverse language groups, including for

those from pre-literate backgrounds. This was an issue raised in several of the consultations and some interviews and which is reported below.

Managing potential conflict of interest

Some of the families interviewed had known the interpreter as an associate of their Community Guide and in a few cases as their own Community Guide. To manage the potential conflict of interest this could cause, the different role of interpreter and Community Guide was discussed with the interpreter/Guide and with each family, and the interview questions were modified to take account of the role of the person interpreting. The interpreters were very sensitive to this and the interviews proceeded well. The sample size for the research was also large enough to accommodate any variation consequent to the relationship with the interpreter.

Documentation

The researchers aim to obtain verbatim documentation of consultations and interviews, which was achieved through assistance from AMES staff and Centre for Refugee research volunteers and interns. Achieving verbatim documentation is challenging so training was provided to documenters before the consultations and interviews to ensure consistency and quality of documentation.

While complex, the methodology was well received by all participants and the outcomes fulfilled all research objectives.

Pre-arrival experience, integration and social cohesion

In this section we examine the importance of understanding the pre arrival experiences of newly arrived refugees in order to inform the provision of appropriate and effective settlement services. Integration is often used as a key measure of effective and successful settlement, but the use of the term is contentious. The work of Ager and Strang (2008) was used when analysing the data as a framework to explore the meaning of integration for the new arrivals. A human rights framework and community participatory methodology was employed for the evaluation and establishes whether this framework is reflected in the Community Guides program.

The impact of pre-arrival experiences

In evaluating the settlement experiences and support provided to humanitarian entrants to Australia, it is important to acknowledge their pre-arrival experiences. Refugees do not leave their countries voluntarily. Due to conflict and persecution they have had to flee, leaving behind homes and families, usually losing all material possessions. Family members become separated and lost. Death of family and friends from hardship or violence is common. Most refugees want to return to their homeland but resettlement to a country far away and often unknown or little understood is often their only chance for safety. Although not a focus of this research, participants shared stories of flight and of life as refugees surviving in camps or urban centres: stories of fear, violence, loss, grief and deprivation².

They sent a lot of people and say, we have to kill everybody, kids, women and men. So they killed children and put them in the mortar and pestle and ground them. That was the time of my first daughter, and we spent 12 days without food, just water. We had to run away.

I left in a hurry because I knew they were going to kill me. I went to an organisation for human rights that hid us. I went and hid with three children. The rest are lost. I still don't know where my daughter is. I was hidden for two years. The group left for the US but I refused to go because I didn't have my children and my husband and there is no point of me going alone.

² Quotes used in this section, 'The impact of pre-arrival experiences', are the words of refugees, unless otherwise noted.

Sometimes 40 people were put in a container, and they died because there was no air; they wanted to send them back to Afghanistan.

Many refugees resettled to Australia have also come from protracted refugee situations, and have lived in appalling refugee camps for up to 20 years. UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as, *'one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance'* (UNHCR, 2004, p.2). UNHCR estimates that six million refugees have been living in protracted refugee situations for at least five years, some as long as 20 years (UNHCR, 2006). Many children and young people were born in refugee camps and have known no other life. The camps are dangerous and violent. Food, education and medical services are minimal. People suffer from serious challenges to their cultural heritage and their ability to maintain family and community life. They struggle to maintain their capacity to create a sustainable lifestyle for themselves and their families.

[In the camp] we have no money; we have no good food, no nourishing food. We have to go very far away and bring the water....dirty water but we have to drink it. Because we don't have enough bamboo and enough leaves [to build shelter], the whole rainy season the roof is leaking and the children have got so many kinds of diseases. And the floor is decayed; the children fall through the floor. And the other thing is Thai police force [us] to labour; [we] have many problems with that forced labour.

A lady was supposed to give birth and she was suffering pain, but she was not allowed to the hospital because she did not have the documents so she gave birth at home and the child died.

I saw some children of ten who don't know how to hold a pencil, how to write their own name in their own language. Most are spending years and years in camps.

The impact of these experiences is not left behind when the new arrival is resettled to Australia. A 2008 Auditor General's report in Western Australia found that recent humanitarian arrivals had complex and specific needs not seen in previous groups, and that *'these needs reflect the conditions in which they have lived before coming here. They have suffered torture and trauma and spent long periods in refugee camps without basic services'* (Auditor General for Western Australia, 2008, p.5). The report also found that if the complex needs of these arrivals are not met, there may be serious social and economic consequences for both the host community and the humanitarian entrant (*ibid.*, pp.15-17).

Pre-arrival experiences may have a negative impact on resettlement, both on immediate arrival and in the early stages of the settlement process when intense support is available, and the new arrival is likely to be in contact with service agencies. It is critical that service providers can recognise when this happens, and develop strategies about how to respond. For example, new arrivals might find learning English or entering the education system extremely difficult due to interrupted or nonexistent schooling; the experience of unresolved trauma can impede the ability to learn; and chronic health problems may be diagnosed after years of no health care.

However, problems and trauma related to pre-arrival experiences may also (and commonly) emerge later in the settlement process. This can happen either when safety and survival needs are at last realised and the client can finally address their psychosocial needs, or when a problem in resettlement leads to re-traumatising.

By that time I was here for year and half and then they came with a problem that I had to leave the house in two months. I had three children. When I applied like ten houses and I wasn't getting any, all the trauma came up. I was thinking, why I was not getting the house. It was the time that the trauma came up and then I had to see the doctor and the doctor was worried I had heart problems but I told him it was trauma.

In addition to the disadvantage that comes with their experiences of conflict and forced migration, refugees face significant challenges to integration into a new society due to their background. Their cultural, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds are often fundamentally different from the backgrounds of the host population (Casimiro *et al.* 2007, p.56). The skills some bring with them may be different, originating in rural or refugee camp settings, and not easily transferable to a 'technological and urbanized environment' such as Australia's (Lower, 2008). After spending 15 years in camps, skilled professionals can also find that their qualifications and previous experience are unrecognised or redundant (Pittaway & Muli 2009; Kaplan & Webster 2003; Pittaway 1991).

Work is the number one problem. Some of us have overseas qualifications; most of them are not recognised by Australia. Where can we get Australian experience from? – We just arrived. Some doctors are working as taxi drivers, and they have to cope with that.

English, English – without it you are nothing here. I speak six languages but I am nothing. We cannot communicate, not work, not even become a citizen. We need

more help with this, more time and different sorts of classes. The AMES English for work is great.

These are common experiences of refugees resettling to Australia. Yet there is little research into the specific and varied needs of humanitarian entrants relating to their diverse backgrounds, experiences of torture and trauma, living conditions and the duration of their refugee journey; how these elements affect settlement; or whether existing systems and services meet these multilayered needs.

While acknowledging the need to identify and appropriately respond to the needs, problems and challenges faced by those resettling in Australia, it is also very important to acknowledge the strengths, experience, knowledge and capabilities which people bring. Refugees are survivors. They have tremendous resilience. They have a strong interest in and commitment to succeeding in their new life. In a relatively short time, many learn English, find work, pursue higher education, and begin to rebuild their lives for a secure and successful future. Others struggle with one or more of the challenges and barriers to resettlement. Humanitarian entrants to Australia are not a homogeneous group. The challenge for resettlement countries and service providers is to identify and meet individual needs while also recognising and providing opportunities to engage and develop their capacity, and to work with refugees as partners in resettlement. The evaluation examined the effectiveness of the Community Guides program in responding to the pre arrival needs of refugees, and engaging with new arrivals as partners.

‘Integration’: what is it and how do you get it?

A key aim of the IHSS is for ‘successful settlement’ of humanitarian entrants, with a view to them becoming ‘fully functioning members of the Australian community’ (DIAC, 2009). However, the question remains: how can successful settlement be defined or measured, and how can it be achieved? Successful integration of refugee or migrants into the host community is the core goal of immigration programs in several resettlement countries, but there is no single accepted definition or model for such integration (Castles, et al., 2001, p.12).

‘Integration’ is a contentious concept. Unfortunately it is being used by some resettlement countries as a marker of assimilation criteria, and as a basis for refugee selection or rejection regardless of need. This is counter to the 1951 Refugee Convention and is not reflected in Australian policy.

A common principle across many integration programs is that ‘basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions is indispensable for integration’ (Justice

and Home Affairs, 2004)³. This notion has been implemented through policies which mandate integration programs for refugees. These programs generally consist of lessons on language, civic values and cultural history of the resettlement country, and are intended to provide newcomers with the means to engage with other members of the receiving society and fully participate in social, economic and cultural domains of life. This reflects another principle that underpins many integration programs; that ‘frequent interaction between immigrants and member state citizens is a fundamental mechanism’ for integration (*ibid.*). In some countries, consequences of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of integration are serious and linked to economic, social and civic sanctions, including deportation. In Australia, refugees must pass tests of cultural knowledge and linguistic ability before they can acquire citizenship and enjoy its attendant privileges.

Some approaches to refugee integration reveal a view that it is necessary for and the responsibility of refugees to engage with the host community’s members, history and culture, if they wish for equal participation in the host community’s institutions, services and social practices. This approach stems from arguments that diversity challenges the social cohesion of society (Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007 cited in McGhee, 2008; Castles, et al., 2001; Justice and Home Affairs, 2004), and that ethnic and racial heterogeneity undermines the existence of common values in a society (Cheong et al., 2007, p.28). However, this approach marginalises the importance of a number of key issues shown to facilitate successful integration, and neglects the impacts of refugees’ pre-arrival experiences or barriers faced upon arrival.

The conceptual framework of integration by Ager and Strang (2008) was selected as a useful framework for the evaluation of the Community Guides program. Ager and Strang have proposed a conceptual framework for understanding and defining integration comprising ten core domains of wide relevance, based on common understandings of what constitutes successful integration (*ibid.*, p.166). Their framework examines key potential indicators of integration which are: markers of integration; means of achievement of integration; processes of achievement; and facilitators of local integration. Achievement of and access to employment, housing, education and health are identified as discrete domains and are recognized as both markers of integration and as potential means to support the achievement of integration (*ibid.*, p.169). Processes of social connection are broken down into three separate domains which also determine the achievement of integration: social bonds – with family and other members of their community; social bridges – with other communities, including the host community; and

³ This is drawn from a set of principles for immigration integration policy agreed upon by the Council of the European Union on 19 November 2004. The principles are intended to provide the basis for a common framework and understanding of integration across the EU. Australia does not formally subscribe to these principles. These principles nonetheless reflect the general vocabulary and sentiment of ongoing global debates around integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

social links – with the structures of the host state. Language and cultural knowledge, and safety and security are identified as additional domains and considered ‘facilitators’ of local integration (*ibid.*, p.181). Underpinning all of these is the experience of citizenship and rights. A diagram of Ager and Strang’s framework is included below (*ibid.*, p.170).



Ager and Strang suggest that it is problematic to understand attainment in the domains of employment, education, health and housing as simply an indicator that integration has been achieved or as a quantifiable outcome of the integration process (*ibid.*, p.169). This notion of ‘public outcomes’ conceives of integration as having reached the state of ‘full and equal participation’ in social, economic and cultural life, without regard to the mechanisms which led to it. Ager and Strang argue instead that ‘progress with respect to one domain supports progress with respect to another’ (*ibid.*, p.186). Therefore, advancement in every area coexists and complements the others, each serving as potential means to support the achievement of integration itself (*ibid.*, p.169).

As noted above, this framework identifies three forms of social connections as fundamental to integration: ‘social bonds’ (with family and other members of an identified community); ‘social bridges’ (interactions and networks formed across different communities within society); and ‘social links’ (with structures of the host government). In the integration models described earlier, social bridging is preferred over social bonding and social linking as the means by which refugees can access services and institutions and therefore become fully integrated. The responsibility to

learn appropriate language skills and cultural knowledge through engaging with the host community is placed on the refugee. Assistance from government, such as translation and interpretation services, and support from refugee communities, are perceived as sources of 'social distance' which promotes dependency and separatism by preventing language acquisition (Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion, 2007 cited in McGhee, 2008, p.52; Ager & Strang 2008, p.182). This sentiment guides policy initiatives such as integration courses, reductions in the availability of translation and interpretation services and geographic dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers (Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion, 2007 cited in McGhee, 2008, p.53; Bloch, 2000, p.40).

However, social bonding is a critical mechanism for integration especially in the early stages of settlement. Social bonding serves as a springboard to engagement with and participation in the host community. Social support from within refugee communities acts as a coping mechanism by providing a direct social relation to pre-arrival experience, and indirectly facilitates access to and attainment in essential services by providing culturally appropriate assistance and knowledge (Simich, et al., 2005, p.259). Therefore, this form of social connection does not consolidate people of similar ethnicity for the sake of maintaining cultural exclusivity. Rather, social bonding promotes distinct identities which grow out of 'shared needs and aspirations of specific groups' (Zetter, et al., 2006, p.14). This identity enables refugees to negotiate positions from which they can access public resources and participate in public life (*ibid.*, p.15).

It is not simply a common culture which is valued within processes of social bonding, but shared experience and affirmation (Simich, et al., 2003). Family and friends from the same cultural or ethnic background in the settlement country take on particular importance given the turbulent loss of support networks and family separation owing to war and displacement (McMichael & Manderson, 2004). They share the same points of reference and understanding from which they can offer emotional support and validate the experiences and challenges of adjustment faced by newly arrived refugees (Simich, et al., 2003, p.888). A study of British mental health services indicates community is central to refugees' well-being, with 90% of respondents stating that it was the most important source of support in resolving their mental health issues, while only 17% received assistance from formal services (Phillimore, et al., 2007, p.32). This support is crucial for engendering in refugees self-efficacy and self-esteem required for adjusting and adapting to ongoing settlement challenges (Simich, et al., 2005, p.259).

In addition, refugee networks and communities have been identified as key sources of information about services such as employment and housing. A study of Canadian health services suggested community support offered a solution to one of the biggest challenges of 'learning where to go for what' and 'navigating the system' (*ibid.*, p.261,260). This is supported by social learning theory which suggests that 'peers act as

role models valued for their experiential knowledge' (Stewart, 1993 cited in Simich, et al., 2003, p.887). This support and affirmation enables refugees to widen their networks and seek assistance from more formal services and agencies (Stewart, et al., 2008; Lamba & Krahn, 2003).

Successful integration therefore depends on governments presiding over more than just 'social linking' mechanisms that connect refugees to government services. It also depends on governments creating conditions favourable for 'social bridging', such as cultural education within host populations and poverty alleviation; and facilitating 'social bonding' by enabling mutual support and learning within refugee communities. Resettlement is a protection measure for those refugees who are unable to return to their country of origin or to integrate into the country of first asylum. It is part of the humanitarian response to the international refugee crisis to which many developed countries have committed, in the spirit of burden sharing with those developing countries who host the majority of the world's refugees. As such, providing the services and infrastructure necessary for integration, including these three social domains, must be a prerequisite of inviting refugees to resettle. Integration is not the responsibility of the refugees. Successful integration of refugees can be seen as a positive humanitarian endeavour which benefits both the resettling refugee and the host community.

While providing a very useful framework, the interdependent domains proposed by Ager and Strang do not encapsulate the full complexity nor the breadth of the experience of the new arrival. They do not identify all of the imperatives which contribute to or hinder successful settlement and integration. In particular they do not explicitly acknowledge the impact of pre arrival experience as a refugee on the ability to settle. Nor do they consider the role of expectations brought by newly arrived refugees. Staff from Foundation House amongst others, have noted that the issue of family reunification and mental health issues, in particular those linked to torture and trauma, are not given prominence, and yet play an enormous role in successful settlement⁴. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that these domains are intersectional, and cannot be considered in isolation. With those caveats, it is still considered that the model proposed by Ager and Strang provided a useful framework within which to consider the operation of a settlement support program such as the Community Guides, and to indicate the areas of settlement which service providers need to focus on to improve the experience of new arrivals. (Pittaway & Muli, 2009)

⁴ Paris Aristotle and Mardi Stowe, Foundation House.

Human rights and community development

As noted in the introduction, AMES took a courageous step when they chose to have a key plank of their service provision evaluated by an external researcher, and using a human rights and community based methodology. The use of a human rights framework challenges service providers to examine the philosophical basis of the work they undertake. Such a framework ensures the centrality of human wellbeing and self-determination. It has a focus on entitlement rather than charity and articulates the specific duties of governments and service providers. It introduces notions of accountability to service provision and has an equal focus on social and cultural, as well as civil and political rights.

The human rights approach is best applied with a framework of community participation. This framework is predicated on the agency of the service recipients as equal participants achieving effective outcomes, in this case, successful settlement. It is about the active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives. Service providers take the role of enablers and facilitators, sharing their knowledge and experience with the community. It is a process based on the sharing of power to create structures which give genuine participation and involvement. This approach leads to empowerment, a strong respect for existing community systems and strengths, community debate and engagement. If done well, it leads to sustainable community development. Good community development also examines how responsive key institutions are to the needs of local communities.

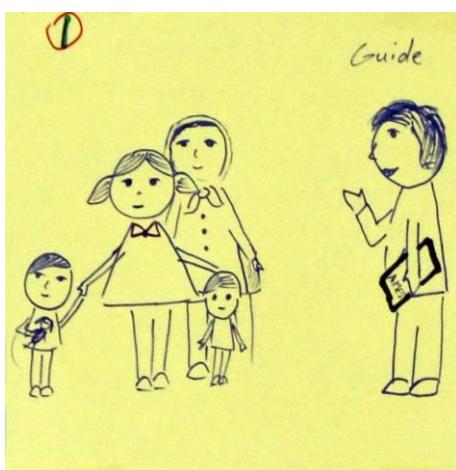
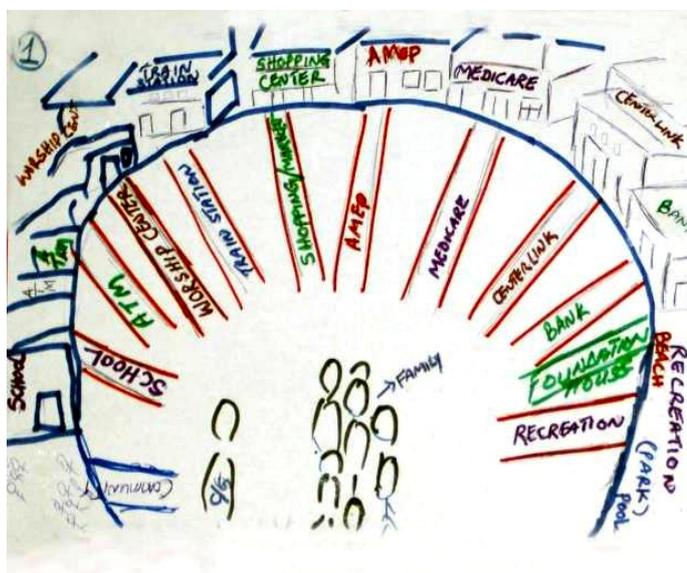
A deep understanding of the pre arrival experience of refugees was used to provide a context for examining the importance of the Community Guides program for newly arrived refugees. The integration framework developed by Ager and Strang (2008) and the human rights and community participation model of service provision has been used to analyse the results.

Research findings

The impact of the Community Guides program on the settlement of new arrivals

The response to the Community Guides program was overwhelmingly positive. All stakeholder groups: refugees, the Guides themselves, service providers, managers, case coordinators, (including those who have worked in other models of IHSS service delivery), all consider that the Community Guides program is an effective and positive model for the delivery of settlement support to new arrivals.

The Community Guide is someone who is trustworthy for the new arrival. As a Community Guide you know how to manage them: you understand how they are thinking and can manage them through the tricky parts, when to strike, when to be quiet. Your insight into how your community thinks is very important; it is crucial. We get good settlement outcomes. When you see the client trying new things, learning, doing things for themselves – it is very satisfying. Community Guide



There is a new arrival family and a Community Guide is available to help them. He is holding the book of knowledge – he helps give us the knowledge. Client

The end product is an excellent service. Families get the best help possible and get linked into the Australian system much more quickly. Case Coordinator

In terms of effectiveness, settlement outcomes are wonderful. You can see it happening on the ground. Service provider

The value of them being there for the new arrivals cannot be measured. And the Guides work so hard. They know their English is not perfect, and they struggle and get insulted, but they go out and do it because they are committed to helping their community, and it works. Case Coordinator

The program is seen both as a cost-effective and time-efficient model of IHSS service delivery:

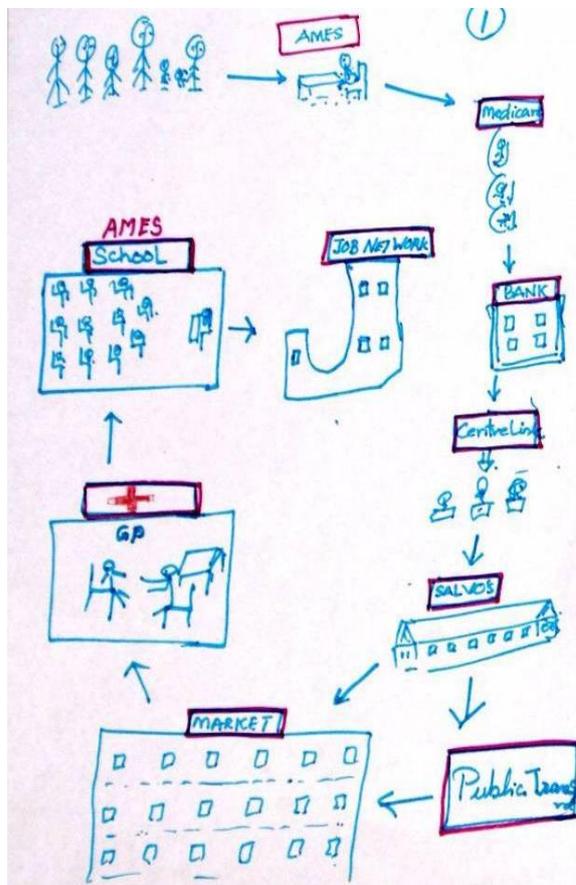
The cost of not having a Community Guide would be so high – imagine the cost it would be to have a full time interpreter with the Case Coordinator every time they visit a client. So this has been good for AMES as an organisation. Case Coordinator

This is the best investment AMES has made in the field for years. The number of families we take is far too much for the Case Coordinator to handle – sometimes so many cases in one week. We could not do it without the Community Guides. Case Coordinator

The role is invaluable...their job is invaluable; we would not be able to achieve anything in this program without the Community Guide. They do about 75% of the work directly with the clients, we rely on them heavily... Actually they are so effective that we can see tangible results with clients from the time they arrive to the time they exit the program, and we know that it is because of the Community Guide. Clients achieve milestones that without the program they would struggle to achieve. Case Coordinator

There was strong recognition of the value of the delivery of settlement support in the new arrival's first language, as well as the value of shared cultural background and refugee experience. There was wide recognition that the program's benefits extend beyond supporting the settlement needs of individual new arrivals, having a positive effect on the settlement of Guides and increasing community capacity in a way that more broadly contributes to the successful settlement of humanitarian entrants.

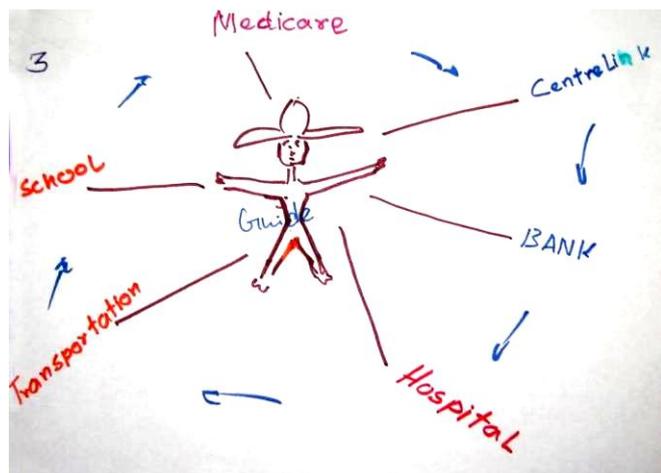
Meeting needs on arrival – practical assistance provided by the Community Guide



This is the clients, this is AMES, this is medical centre, the bank, this is Centrelink, this is Salvation Army, public transport, food market, Medicare, AMES education centre, Job Network. When [they arrive], I pick up the client to go to apply for a Medicare card, and a bank to open an account. Then we go home to see their house, and the next day to the Salvation Army, to get support for the client. Then orientation, how to buy tickets, how to reuse tickets, how to use ATM, I explain [it all] to them. We go to the food market, Big W or Coles, Target, for whatever they need – if they have to buy food and clothes, anything. Then we go to the medical centre to check up for everything. We go to AMES education centre to enroll for English school; sometimes children for primary school or middle school, high school; young adults for English language school. Then we go to Job Network for job assistance. Community Guide

The Community Guide is very helpful because they take us to the bank, to Centrelink, everywhere we need to go. Client

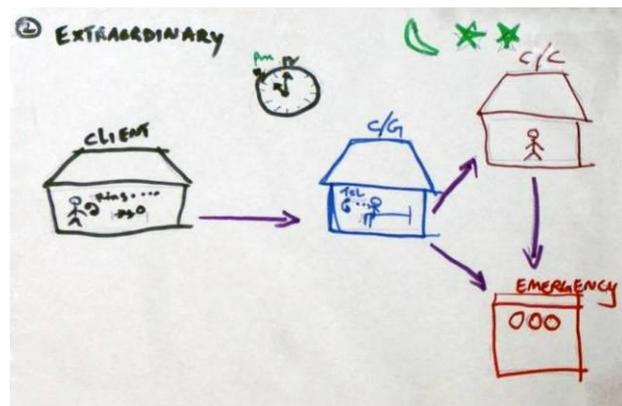
She went with us to Centrelink, to Medicare, the bank, school and shopping. Everything we need to know the Community Guide helps us with. She talks to us and makes sure we understand everything. Client



'Extraordinary' assistance provided by the Community Guide

During the early stages of this evaluation, the concept of 'extraordinary tasks' arose, a concept that resounded across different cultural groups. Extraordinary tasks were described by new arrivals and Guides as something the Guide does above their job requirements. Extraordinary tasks are an immensely positive and also a challenging aspect of the Community Guides program. Participants discussed what these extraordinary tasks were and what it meant to them.

Even on holidays or on the weekend, my son used to be sick and I asked my Community Guide to help my son with the language and she left her guests at home and came to the hospital.



It was 11pm and my mum got the minor stroke. She couldn't move her hand and leg so I called my Community Guide. We didn't know where to go, how to call an ambulance, so she arranged everything and she called us to get our mum ready, and the ambulance took my mum to hospital. The Community Guide told me if you ever have problem, you call me anytime. We are extremely delighted that she was very helpful at that time, the hospital couldn't provide interpreters at that time, so she helped us with the language, it made us so happy. - What would you have done if you didn't have the Community Guide? - Like a dead body, we couldn't do anything, just looking around. Client



Some extraordinary tasks are simple kindnesses such as welcoming the new arrival to their new home and country, or arranging for community members to prepare familiar food to welcome the new family. Other Guides assisted clients in accessing material goods.

Even they help us with the furniture; we had just one sofa, only four people could sit on it, so the Community Guide asked some of her friends and she brought [another one] for us. Client

Some clients described the Guide providing kindness and support way above the role of an employed worker.

I tried to switch on the light but the light didn't come. I don't know how and who and where to contact. For two days we couldn't cook and we were with no food, the children were crying and lastly I cried too. I give the information to my Guide and the Guide arrived at my house. As there was no light yet my Guide brought us to her place and we stayed there for some time [for three days, until the problem was fixed]. That was very good. Client

The evaluation also revealed that Guides frequently need to exercise judgment and use initiative and skills not anticipated by the original task request; things arising in the course of performing an ordinary task often require more than expected of the Guide. For example, a family member may be sick when the Guide arrives, the family seeking advice about what to do. A letter about an unrelated matter may have arrived, and the client asks what it means and what to do. A household appliance may be broken, and the client needs information, or for someone to take action with the real estate agent. A train may have been cancelled, necessitating a change of travel to the appointment. The service provider may be running late, leading to follow-on delays for the Guide and the client. The service provider may require extra activities immediately – an x-ray, an unanticipated trip to a chemist. The client may request help to obtain some necessary household item on the way to or from the appointment. A uniformed person or police car may remind the client of their pre-arrival experiences and provoke extreme anxiety or stress.

These are some of the many, many examples which arose during the evaluation. In each case the Guide's role moves beyond performing a simple, 'ordinary' task, to an extraordinary situation where the Guide needs to draw on skills, judgment and knowledge. In some of these situations the Guide contacts the Case Coordinator for advice and guidance, and it is these situations which highlight the importance of a good relationship between Guide and Coordinator. In many cases the Guide simply draws on their skills and meets the needs of the client. But frequently the extraordinary demand requires extra time for the client, and the Guide is expected to contact the Case Coordinator for advice or approval of extra time or extra activity.

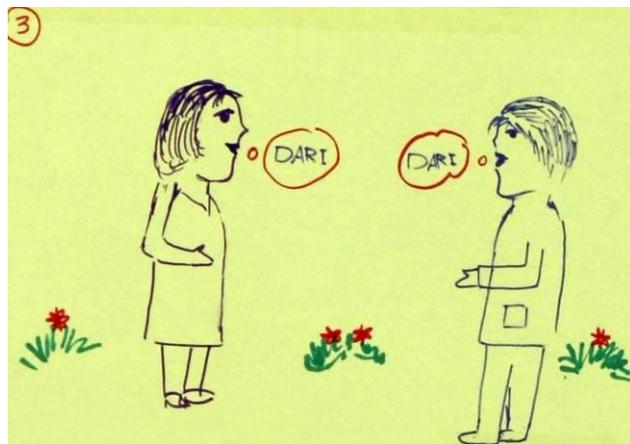
Guides are paid to perform only tasks approved and directed by the Case Coordinator. However, many Guides are sensitive to the needs of clients outside their approved work hours and tasks, and respond to client needs if they feel there is no-one else to help. This creates challenges for the Community Guides program administration and for the Guides, but was something very strongly appreciated and valued by the community. The community calls on Guides not only as AMES employees, but also because of cultural

and community expectations. Guides perform extraordinary tasks not only as part of their employment, but because they are caring and committed community members. This is both a strength and a challenge of the program, and raises boundary issues which are discussed later in this report.

The value of shared language in settlement support

The value of providing settlement services in the client's first language is recognised by all stakeholders, including clients, Guides and Case Coordinators. First language support makes communication with the new arrival effective and efficient.

If I come to Australia as a refugee and I meet someone who speaks the same language as I speak, I will feel that I have met someone who understands me right away. If I met a strange person I would be afraid to ask – because I would be afraid that this person did not understand my English or that his English is very different to mine. Client



To be bilingual or trilingual is such a gift to the community... I think really valuing [the Guide] and making their contribution seen to be of great value, because what the hell would you do without them? How would you communicate? How could you get new arrivals to understand the cultural differences? Service provider

If we didn't have Community Guides, then it would have been a lot harder. Communication really makes a lot of problems disappear. Case Coordinator

People are being introduced to services in their own language, it makes it less scary when they know there's someone there who can speak the language. Case Coordinator

[Because the Guide speaks the same language as the client], if it's something small you don't need an interpreter. For example, even just to buy a Metcard. If it was me having to do it, I'd have to get an interpreter which would take time and money. An interpreter may not even happen because it's not worth booking them for 5 minutes. It saves time and money and makes it better for everyone really. Case Coordinator

We give information. We are the bridge, yes, between these people who don't know anything about Australia. They know they are right to live a better life here, but they are depending on us to show them how they will settle successfully here. Community Guide

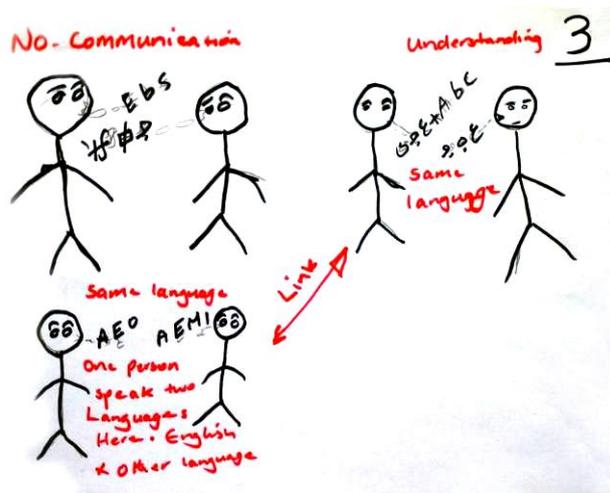


[If we] have same language, same culture, same religion, things like that, it's very very easy to communicate with each other. To cite an example: to attend clinic cause a lot of problem when we don't have interpreters. The Guide who spoke same language could help us save time, and then the job easily done, not left behind undone. And then the patient is very happy, encouraged. And it save expense even. Client

Shared language allows for things to be explained multiple times, enhancing the learning of the new arrival.

Sometimes we have some clients that the first day I will [explain something], the second day they will ask the same question, same on the third day. It's my pleasure to tell them that, because I can remember the first day we arrived, I can't remember anything, people were giving me so much information and I couldn't cope with it. Community Guide

Shared language also enables things to be explained and interpreted immediately, including things beyond practical tasks. The Community Guide spends a lot of time with the client, travelling to and at appointments, which provides opportunities for significant teaching and learning to occur. The Guide will point out places or things unfamiliar to the client and explain their meaning, providing valuable practical and cultural orientation to the new arrival. The teaching enabled by shared language is a critical benefit of the Community Guide role that begins the new arrival's induction into the Australian 'system', and their path to independence.



When a Community Guide is taking a client somewhere, they are going to talk. In this way a lot of incidental learning occurs. Case Coordinator

What is the most useful thing that Community Guides do in settling refugees? It is the incidental teaching during practical tasks. Case Coordinator

The value of shared culture

The shared culture of Guide and client also adds value to the program. The meaning or significance of the Community Guide to the new arrival extends beyond the practical assistance provided. For the new arrival faced with culture shock and the stress of so many new places and systems, the Community Guide is the familiar amidst the deeply unfamiliar.

I have been at the airport and seen people arrive – I have seen the looks on their faces when there is someone they can relate to, someone who speaks their language. They feel welcomed, but overall they feel relief: “Here is someone who understands me”. I am not just talking about language. I have also seen groups without Guides to meet them – they look lost. Service provider

The value [of the Community Guides] is quite exceptional – they are able to break that initial barrier. The Case Coordinator is usually a total stranger, a foreigner who doesn’t speak the language, and might be associated with ‘The Government’. The Community Guide breaks this barrier – looks the same, speaks the same language. Language is a major link even if they are not from exactly the same background. Case Coordinator

It’s better to have a Community Guide of our own background and our own language because you feel comfortable and they understand you better. Because everywhere we saw strangers who didn’t speak our language, whenever we saw a person who was speaking our language we felt so happy and felt so comfortable. Client



When you have the worker from your own community you feel much comfortable to talk. Community Guide are the sun... The sun gives warmth, light, that's why we put the sun here. Community Guide

Once they see people who speak their own language, they feel happy, they feel comfortable. Redback picked up [a client from African background], then called me saying the woman is crying. I said, why? The moment we came with the Community Guide and the Community Guide spoke to her she was okay. She was alone here, she doesn't know anyone, she didn't know the language. We explained about the services and then she was okay. Case Coordinator



It's good especially when you come to a new world and you find someone who speaks the same language and can take you shopping and things. It just makes you feel really good, especially at the beginning. Sometimes the Case Coordinator is not the same race as you, and when you see the Community Guide who looks like you, you feel really good. Client

IHSS is a very complex program because [refugees] have had difficult experiences and they've just escaped and just come to this wonderful place, which presents more difficult issues. It is more traumatic to arrive in a country where all their points of reference have disappeared. When this happens, this person who speaks the language and looks like them, they know and they understand, just to meet and connect with that person makes an enormous difference; to gain the confidence, trust, something they're relating to. This is an enormously complex society, Australia. To interpret the information to the clients without the first language and without the background is impossible, or at the least very difficult. AMES management

A Guide from the same background is also more likely to understand what practical things the new arrival does not know and needs to know, the level at which to pitch explanations, what culturally appropriate goods the client might need and where to buy them, and what community groups and services exist to network the client into.

To Case Coordinators, the value of having things explained in a way that clients understand is huge...[For example], because you know just how to fill out forms and you know everything about them, you might start with "This is how you fill out the form". But the Community Guide will start with "This is a form". We jump straight past that. The Community Guides know exactly where to start from. We could assume that [the clients] don't know anything, but the Community Guides are much more knowledgeable in where to start from [at] the level that doesn't confuse or offend the client. The connection that the client feels okay to ask questions and feels a bit more comfortable because they have the cultural background is a huge benefit to AMES - even if you than if you have an interpreter there, because they're not necessarily from the same culture. The value of the Community Guide is obviously much more than the language. Case Coordinator

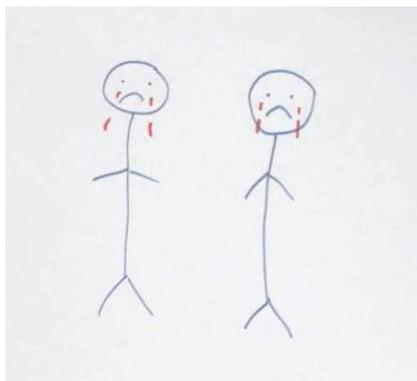


We came the same place, same background, same culture so we know what new arrivals need and what they feel. When we first arrive we feel the same we feel so we know what they need. We think they have a problem with the food, they can't eat the food here some of the family. They feel lonely, they feel sad and lonely, everything is new, they don't know how to stay alive here. We show them how. Community Guide

If the Guide is same ethnic group it is very, very good for us because we don't need to try so hard because we know each other very well. We don't have to [explain anything]. And we can speak our problem exactly. Maybe if not the same ethnic group it is very hard to explain what you want to say and also we would feel 'anaa' [beholden]. We don't want to bother you, it's "You are so kind, I don't want to bother you". Client

In a lot of ways [the Community Guides] have a lot of knowledge more than I do. For example, I had a client who really needs to be connected to other women in the community; the Community Guides know about women's groups, community networks that I wouldn't know about. I would know about Centrelink, Medicare. Because Case Coordinators work across different cultural groups, it's hard to get your head around all the different groups and all the social networks. The Guides bring something that I couldn't bring as a Case Coordinator. Case Coordinator

The value of shared refugee experience



Because the Community Guide was a refugee he will understand my suffering before we start talking about it. He understands – we are both crying together over the suffering we have shared and we can laugh together. He knows all of the horror- he knows how we feel – he feels our sorrow. We do not have to explain everything. He knows the things we sometimes cannot say. Client

Community Guides, Case Coordinators and clients recognise the great benefit of the empathy and understanding consequent to shared experience as a refugee. The knowledge of their shared experience gives the client comfort and enhances trust.

We need a Guide who has a refugee background. Because as we are refugees and he's also a refugee he knows our feeling, our problems already. He has compassion and concern about us. And then, we don't need to hurt him by talking about all our experiences. Client

It is very important to have same refugee background. He also had gone through all our trials and persecutions and our heartfelt difficulties, everything already... He knows automatically what our needs are. Client

They know very well how refugees feel when they come from the camp to this place. Client

After a few months they start crying and they are homesick, then I tell them I was a refugee; I think they feel much secure, she was like us okay. When the people cry I start crying because I see my life in their lives, the torture and trauma they suffered, I think it means a lot to them, they feel somebody understands them, especially if it's torture and trauma issues. Very often they say, "You know how it's like, you know those things". Case Coordinator from refugee background

It is the language –the power of having someone who can speak the language there to help you! Not having to stand in banks with people treating you as if you are stupid or deaf: "Go home if you can't speak the language". But it is not just the language. It is having a familiar face from your community – someone who knows your culture, but more importantly, knows where you have come from and what you have been through. They are more than Guides, they are advocates. Case Coordinator

New arrivals benefit from someone who knows not just where they have come from, but also what they have come from; what they have experienced, what they might need or feel; what might continue to affect them. The Community Guide understands that the transition to a new country is not just from one culture to another, but also from conflict to peace.

When we are in Delhi, Mizoram, Thailand, Malaysian refugee camps, we have a lot of experience, something happening in our lives. Because of that experience, [refugees] may have a lot of things in their psychology. For example from Malaysia, when they see the taxis on the road, the design of the taxis here and the design of police car in Malaysia is similar. They know that this is Australia, but [the taxi] reminds in their mind so they feel unsafe sometimes. If Community Guide is from that background, he understands what's happening with that client. If Community Guide is not a refugee, he does not notice. Community Guide

In Thailand we have to show police [an identity card]; we are afraid, we cross the road to go past the police station. Some people when they see the taxi driver [in Australia] they run away; the uniform colour makes them remember Thailand. We have to call them to come back. We explain and help them understand, Thailand and Australia are different. Community Guide

The Community Guide as a role model – a source of encouragement

The Guide's own experience and success in resettlement also gives the clients encouragement. The Community Guide is a role model – what is possible for the Guide is possible for the new arrival.

It's a big bonus, because the new clients can see in front of their eyes that their Community Guide was at some stage just like me, and look at them now, they are showing me round, they have some money coming in. It gives the client a lot of hope. The Community Guide can understand what the client is going through, and for them the clients feel like they have someone who understands them, because they were just there just a year ago. It's really important: they feel validated and understood. Case Coordinator

I tell them I have the same problem when I came here, you will be fine. You have family and kids and school, and Australia is best country to help you, with education, health, jobs; and then they just settle in. Case Coordinator from a refugee background

[The Guide] will have been much more experienced as a person living in Australia. The Guide is used to the system here. They know what we need to do as new arrivals. Client

Guides should have refugee background because he has experience already and he knows how to settle in Australia. He can help us out of his experiences here. Client

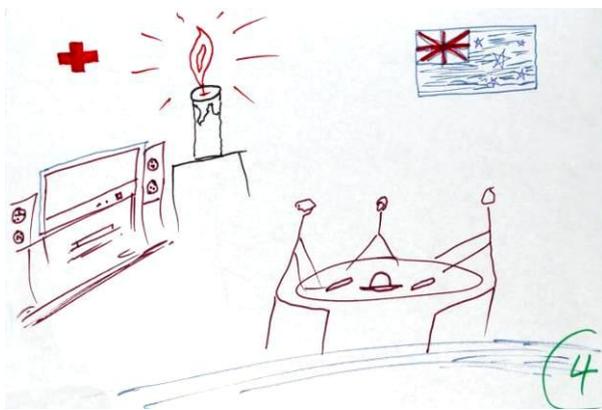
A refugee family arrived last year and I was appointed as Community Guide to them. After three months they think English [is too hard]; when then could not speak they felt very frustrated. And they were living with friends – their link – and they couldn't find a place to rent and they feel frustration, depressed. But when I told them when I arrived here I couldn't speak English and I couldn't find a house but slowly slowly... And I encouraged them and I think they feel relief when I told them my story and encouraged them. Community Guide

It's very important [that the Community Guide is from a refugee background]. If [the clients] know this person was just like them when they came here, and now they're able to help others, this gives them a lot of good thoughts about what will happen in their own future Case Coordinator

It's a huge thing to be able to know exactly where someone has been through, not just that these people have been refugees but they've settled in Australia as well. They can not only reflect on their refugee experience before they've come to Australia, but they know how hard it is to start your life from scratch, they can reflect from both sides; as Case Coordinator, I can't do that. Case Coordinator

What does the Community Guide mean to the new arrival?

Clients frequently described Guides as a source of 'light', comfort or nurture, across all refugee communities and in both interviews and consultations.



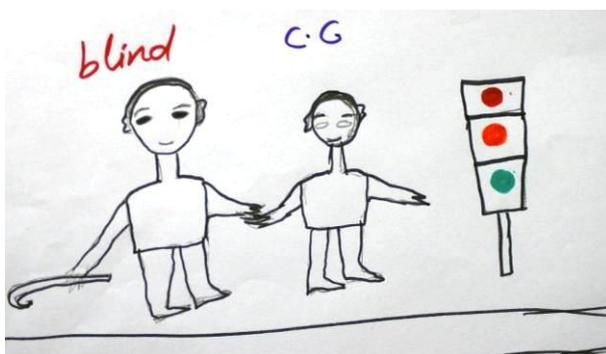
When refugees come from an Arabic speaking country, we are like blind. Guides make our life easy and put a smile on our face. Client

When we first arrived we feel like we are in the dark, we find our way in the dark then we meet our Guide and we are very happy. Client

This is the Community Guide and these are newcomers because we are just like a child. If the Community Guide did not hold our hand we could not find our way. Client



In a new country, the new arrival cannot see, he cannot hear, he cannot know anything. The Community Guide is like leading the blind man, it's very important. Client



Our Community Guide is like a guiding star to community. For the new arrivals, they have the light: they are in the darkness, they see the star and they see the future... Our Community Guide is like a lamp, for the communities. When they arrive in the new country they will feel lonely, lost because this is a very new environment, very new country, new lifestyle. We also give them encouragement, if they feel sad or discomfort for to adapt to the new lifestyle in the new country. What is our value to them? Giving encouragement, sharing experience, giving them more support.

Community Guide



We are never going to forget our Community Guide – six months is a long time – they will be in our hearts forever – beautiful memories. They are family members. Client

The overwhelming conclusion is that the Community Guide program is more than effective in achieving positive settlement outcomes for the new arrivals. Not only does it fulfil the KPIs and objectives of the IHSS program, it has an added value which is difficult to measure in commercial terms.

It provides a sense of welcome, security and familiarity which is critical to the successful settlement of people who come from harsh protracted refugee situations.

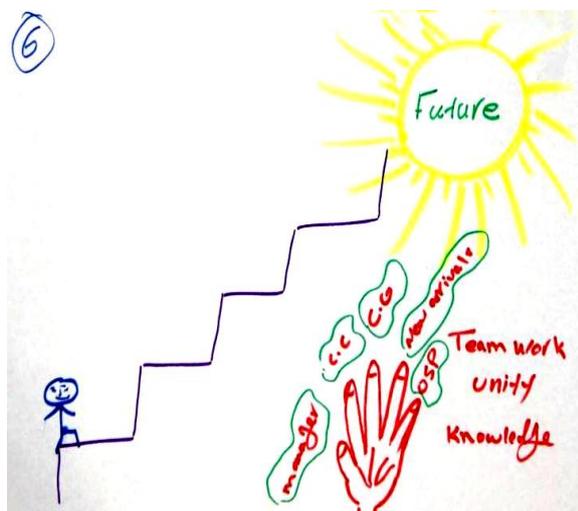
The impact of the Community Guide role for Community Guides

AMES has done me a very big favour. It has opened doors. It has been invaluable to me, given me experience I never dreamed of, supported me all the way.
Community Guide

It puts hope in their hearts, this channel to employment. Case Coordinator

The primary goal of the Community Guides program is to improve the immediate settlement experience of newly arrived refugees receiving IHSS services. However, the program also aims to address the needs of Community Guides who are themselves refugees and humanitarian entrants. The program is also undoubtedly fulfilling this supplementary role. Guides report that their employment and experience as a Guide has been personally beneficial, and that the training, knowledge and confidence gained has helped to improve their own settlement.

Community Guides expressed a strong feeling of empowerment from working in AMES. The program provides them with opportunities for learning new workplace skills, networking in settlement services and the broader community, and expanding their knowledge of Australian systems and environs. For many Guides it is their first opportunity for employment in Australia and enables them to acquire the local work experience required by many employers. Some Guides report improved language skills. Job satisfaction has built up confidence and well-being amongst Community Guides in a way that strengthens bonds across and within communities. Employment with AMES has acted as a pathway for Guides into education and training, as well as a pathway into employment within or outside AMES, in many cases with other settlement service providers. Community Guides perceived their employment as a Community Guide as a stepping stone to a bright future.



The Community Guide is stepping towards a brighter future. We work together with manager, Case Coordinators, Community Guides, new arrivals and other service providers. We all work as a team, unity, knowledge. If you take a client to a certain service to help them, we first need information beforehand; that builds up our knowledge. We feel very proud and it's a remarkable thing to do and we get pleasure helping clients and being a bridge between clients and other service providers.
Community Guide

As well as appreciating the role that

Guides play in supporting the settlement of their clients, Case Coordinators also recognise the value of the employment experience for Guides.

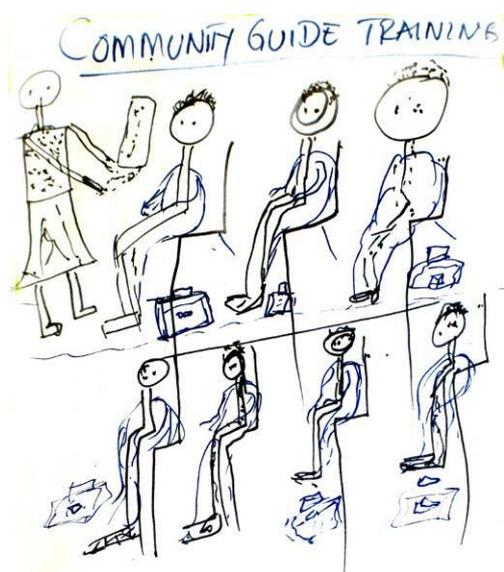
Over time I got to know and I worked with quite a number so the positive things are that I cannot do my job without the help of Community Guides, they are the ones who do all the legwork, I depend on the Community Guides communicating a lot of things with the clients, they help communication between me and the client. It's just fantastic how they can eventually in the long run get into employment, one way or another, doors open to them. Case Coordinator

We get to work with a number of communities and the Guides get to work with different personalities. It is good preparation or the wider workforce. Case Coordinator

For them – after the places they have been, the suffering they have experience, to have the job as Community Guide, to be respected and helping others – it is everything to them. Look what they have survived. We must respect this. Case Coordinator

Knowledge of the Australian 'system'

Community Guides discussed how working with clients to access services increased their own knowledge of how Australian systems operate. They described how being trained in processes and procedures on behalf of the client, especially related to housing, health, employment and education, had developed their ability to negotiate these sectors for their clients' benefit as well as their own.



They [AMES] give us training: training about how to rent property, what needs to be done; housing; sometimes health; how to eat properly; healthy and safety if an emergency happened in the house; what to do if emergencies happened. Things I never learned before; I never knew it before. We learnt them so we can explain them to the clients. It helped me in my own life. Community Guide

We receive a lot of training and this helps us to help our clients and help ourselves. Community Guide

From working as a Community Guide I know all the processes, the condition report, everything. It's great to know. Community Guide

Accompanying clients from their homes to appointments across different localities has also enabled Community Guides to increase their general knowledge of the availability and locations of specific services, and improve their overall knowledge of the environs of Melbourne.

They gave us Melways and trained us on how to use it. This really helped me get to know Melbourne. Community Guide

It has helped me to know my way around Melbourne, even more than people who have lived here for over ten years. Community Guide

Community Guides described the advantages of learning more about the culture of Australia, and their increased language skills and confidence stemming from regular interactions with service providers and AMES staff. For Community Guides, these interactions helped in developing the confidence to build and maintain relationships with the broader community in Australia.

I'm learning a lot of things especially in how to keep time and how to encourage my people to keep time... [Being] late is no problem in my country. Community Guide

It helped me gain confidence to learn my community environment. I decided that if Australia was going to be our new home, we had to go out there and learn our new environment. Community Guide

Being a Community Guide has given me confidence to network with those who are not from my background. Community Guide

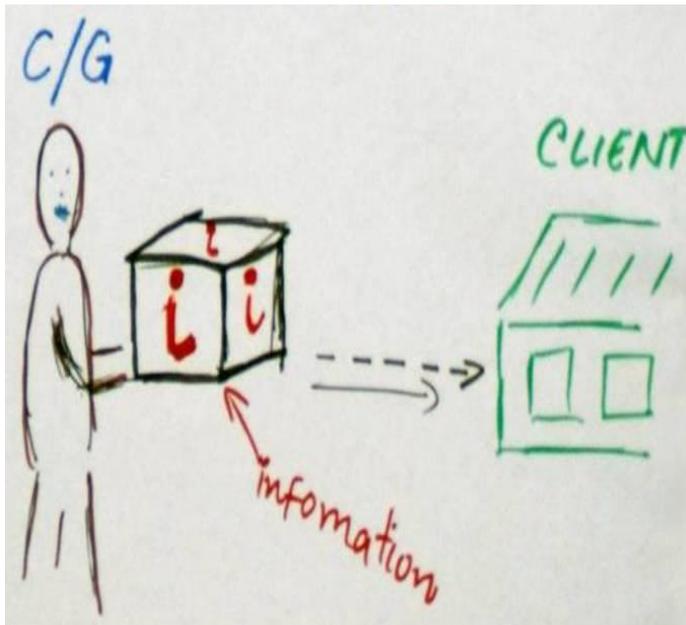
Community Guides as facilitators of increased community knowledge

Community Guides gained a strong feeling of purpose and wellbeing from their work as Community Guides, not only from being in paid employment, but from witnessing the direct and immediate effect of their actions on the progress of clients. Community Guides described how providing guidance and assistance to new arrivals from their own community gave them a lot of job and personal satisfaction.

When we came here in AMES as a Community Guide we came empty, but now as we go to the community we have knowledge to empower the community. It is to say I am a driver of a car. I am the driver, and all the new arrivals, they are in the car; that is the illustration. The case coordinator fuels the car, you get the information from the Case Coordinator, but you as the Community Guide drive the car. Community Guide



I like working with my community, they are very happy people, they saw the sun shine on them, the light opening on them, they feel happy and confident, when I take them to Medicare, bank. They think I have [much] knowledge. I'm very happy, very confident. Some clients feel I am angel for them, they feel they are sleeping in peace, they [have no] cares because I will take them where they want to go. They feel trust. We are part of the new arrival family, we are not just Community Guide. Community Guide



We are people who give information. There is a Community Guide holding a box of information. What did the client need? How can they settle successfully? Without information it is just catastrophic. We play a great role to help these people... within 3 days you can see a change coming. They cannot see anything without our gift or without our knowledge, they could not know anything really. Being a Community Guide we teach other people, we encourage people who have no idea about [Australia] at all. When the people come to know something because of us we are satisfied... that makes me happy. Community Guide

When you see a person ask you questions, or relying on you, you say something to them and they agree with you, it makes me feel I am doing something positive with my life. Community Guide

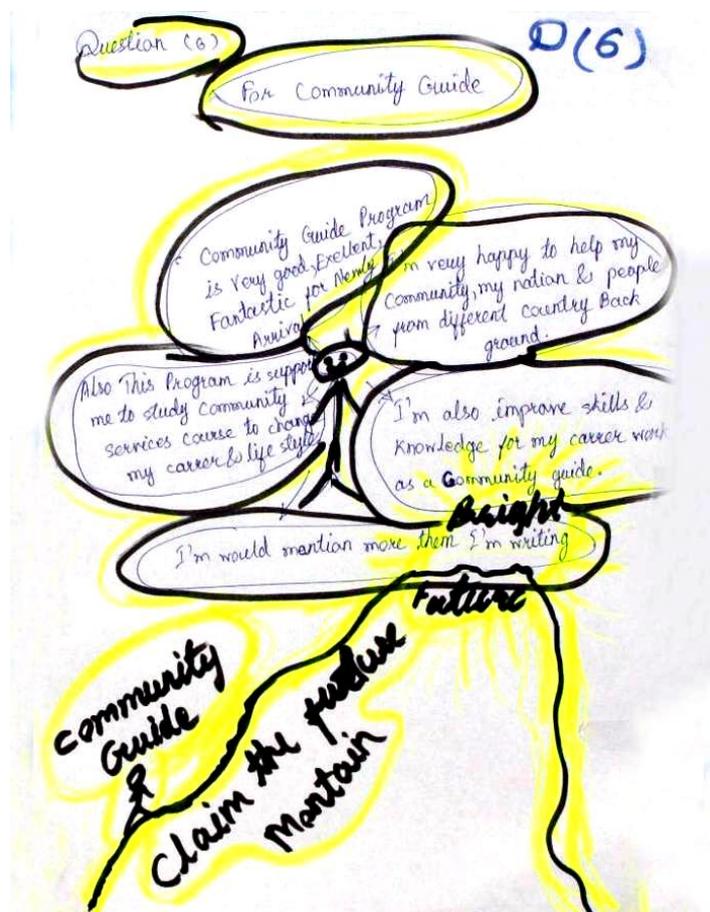
Being a Community Guide we teach other people, we encourage people who have no idea about [Australia] at all. When the people come to know something because of us we are satisfied... that makes me happy. Community Guide

Community Guides expressed a sense of responsibility to contribute to the welfare of their own community. They perceived their work in AMES as a means to identify and engage with factors affecting the needs and outcomes of others in their community. Their role allowed Community Guides to pass on their knowledge, experience and training in a way that strengthens and expands the capacity of community members to settle.

I believe in helping people especially disadvantaged members of my community... Being a Community Guide was an opportunity to assist. Community Guide

Working as a Community Guide allows me to give back to my community... it has helped me understand my community and identify issues that can be addressed by service providers. Community Guide

Acquiring new work skills and local work experience



When we work as Community Guide, we receive knowledge, skills; also we receive the listening skills, because we communicate with each other, agencies, and we also receive reading skills, communication skills. If you work as a Community Guide, you already know a lot of people, so you got a friend in the Australia, and also you can bring the clients to another place, so it's easy to know if you want to get there, you can get there already, so this is also what we receive. This Community Guide program is fantastic to all Community Guide, to the agencies, to the clients. Community Guide

Since many humanitarian entrants to Australia have lived in protracted situations for years, they often have not had experience with the work practices and technology which are embedded in most Australian workplaces. Their training and experience from AMES and on the job have enabled Community Guides to learn and practice knowledge and skills such as office and computer skills, time management, case management, communication and negotiation skills, problem solving and assertiveness. Community Guides also improved their written and spoken language skills and report writing skills by liaising with clients and with Case Coordinators and settlement agencies on behalf of clients. These skills were acknowledged by Community Guides as significant in finding other jobs and accessing further education.

If you want to look for another job, the first thing they ask is your experience and skills... we get this from AMES, and knowledge about everything about how and what we can do in the future. Community Guide

Being a Community Guide helped me understand the Australian workplace.
Community Guide

With Community Guides it's an opportunity to work with people who otherwise would not be working at all, to give them exposure to get with networks, to learn transferable skills. Case Coordinator

They get knowledge, a lot of knowledge, and also they get paid. Not only rely on Centrelink payments, it's not enough for the family, so while they're receiving Centrelink payment, they're also getting payment from employment. They are improving their English more and more, they have skills, they are getting skills, more and more. Case Coordinator

Pathways into education and employment

A lot of the Guides come with very fantastic skills and experience and knowledge of the areas, and it has been wonderful for providing opportunities for allowing them to practice these. Encouraging them to go ahead with a new life, and it isn't the end of the world, and they can do what they like to, and they can feel like there has been a fair go, and they have been given the opportunity. Having this experience really opens their eyes in terms of their personal pathway, they get to know so many service providers, big employers, so many different people from different social and welfare areas. Case Coordinator

As with other refugees and migrants, Community Guides face barriers to recognition of their overseas qualifications, skills and work experience. Many reported difficulties finding opportunities in the Australian workplace to work in their previous professions or fields. For some, working as a Community Guide provided valuable exposure to the human services sector through working with both settlement and mainstream service providers. This allowed many to reconsider their vocational choices and subsequently change careers, having gained local experience as a Community Guide.

Some Community Guides, I've got one who is an engineer; here he is doing this. At least he's working, but it's not what he expects. It's hard for anyone who comes from a refugee background to work in their field. The system is just ridiculous, they expect people to have documents and certificates for your qualifications. In a wartime situation people are just trying to keep their families safe, you're not going to think about paperwork. Case Coordinator

I did pathology but kept getting asked for experience so I just gave up. I speak a couple of languages so [AMES] asked me to be a Community Guide and I transferred to a new direction. I'm happy about it. Community Guide

I have a background in pharmacy, but the Community Guide work did make me decide to do the [Social Work] course... it did really help me and give me the motivation to make this decision and go for it. Community Guide

Community Guides accessed a number of pathways to employment within AMES Settlement. As the Guides program has evolved, positions have been developed in AMES Settlement division which utilise the skills of experienced Guides and provide Guides with additional training and experience, while also employing them on a contract rather than casual basis. In this way, Community Guides have gained part-time or full-time employment as Settlement Information Officers (although this program is not continuing) and as Case Coordinator Support Workers. Some Guides have gained experience as acting Case Coordinators, while some who have also acquired relevant formal qualifications are now working as a Case Coordinator.

Many steps I have passed. It's been very good. I was working as a Case Coordinator Support Worker for one year. I have been acting as a Case Coordinator; four months for my student placement and the rest as locum. Community Guide/Case Coordinator

Other Guides have obtained employed in other AMES divisions, for example as Housing Officers and teachers aides. Working in AMES also offers networking opportunities with service providers and for some Community Guides, this has led to employment in other social service agencies.

Working for AMES and networking meant for me that I met other people in other organisations and got the job at [an AMES consortium partner organisation]. Community Guide

I get to meet people in the other settlement services and I have a good relationship with them and that might help me when I finish study. Now I am studying community development. AMES has helped me so much with everything. Community Guide

Guides and former Guides have also used their experience as a Guide as a springboard into education; sometimes into a course related to human services work such as community development or social work, and sometimes into alternative fields. In some

cases Case Coordinators were the source of mentoring and support that propelled a Guide into further education or work.

[Case Coordinator] told about my financial options and my education – she told me about the traineeship vacancy and about another job. When you work in AMES, it helped improve my confidence. It helps you connect with other people; other agencies; other jobs. Former Community Guide now studying in an alternative field with a paid traineeship.

These findings are not to say that the Community Guides program does not present some challenges for Guides. Guides have many suggestions for changes or improvement to the program which are discussed elsewhere in this report. However, the evidence from this evaluation shows that, as it currently operates, the Community Guides program facilitates employment and personal pathways which contribute to improved settlement outcomes for Community Guides. The program helps the Guides' settlement while also meeting the needs of new arrivals and, with the larger AMES settlement team, meeting the requirements and aims of the IHSS program.

I get excited to see that settlement pathway of new arrival ending up in employment, sometimes the Guides are our ex-clients, and I personally get so excited to see the client get a job and that not necessarily all of their settlement issues are resolved, but indeed that employment is contributing to the light down the tunnel, in many aspects: motivation, self-esteem. Case Coordinator

In addition, evidence shared in the consultations and research also shows that the Community Guides program is contributing to developing capacity within refugee communities.



'Community development in action' – an unplanned benefit of the Community Guides program

The Community Guide is also the clients' link to the community – it is community development in action. Case Coordinator

It is a fantastic settlement model, and there is contribution back to the community: to give the community the feeling that there is a bit of a cultural coherence, that someone from your community is supporting the new arrivals, as well as linking with the Anglo society. It's challenging but it's fantastic and also it sends the message to the mainstream, to the broader society, that these are settlers, and they're working now and the community is helping them and supporting them; that's what I'm really excited about. Case Coordinator

Many participants in this research described a ripple effect of the Community Guide program – the program increasing total knowledge and capacity in, and contributing to strong development of, refugee communities. These are some of the multiple ways that the Community Guides program contributes to the development of refugee communities.

Effective settlement support links new arrivals to Australian institutions and services.

Certainly Community Guides are interested to learn about the range of services and opportunities; that thing of spreading the word of what's around within their communities. I can see they're a very good resource. Service provider

Community Guides help to link new arrivals with their community, increasing their 'social capital' which plays a vital role in successful settlement in a new country (Lamba and Krahn, 2003).

What disempowers a migrant is not having access to any shortcuts. You were in your own country, with not a lot of money, but you knew somebody, or you could sort something out to make life a little bit easier. If you come here and you don't know anybody and your Community Guide doesn't know anybody, and all you have is an interpreter, and you don't have any local knowledge, it's difficult. The first thing is to cut a few corners. It makes the new arrivals' lives a bit easier if you have the local context. Service provider

Increased knowledge and experience of Guides flows further through their networks, increasing the total knowledge and self-help capacity of the community.

I think it's a wonderful initiative for building community capacity, not from scratch but increasing the community capacity. I say that because the opportunity to identify and employ people from within those communities, it's giving back, helping with the skill building as well. Service provider

The program develops capacity of Community Guides so they go to the community and pass on the things they're learning, but Community Guides do not cease utility once they finish their work here, it's good community development. I've seen them become significant members of their community, helping the community to resolve issues. AMES management

The program facilitates Guides' and new arrivals' increased interaction and confidence with broader social structures and mechanisms.

We had to find everything out for ourselves [before the Community Guide program was established], it was a really long process. [But now] thanks to the Community Guide it's very easy for the community to feel a part of society. Client

Community Guide employment and employment pathways are valuable for individuals and for their communities.

I think for the community to see their community working, I think that gives them hope. To be a part of the community, I guess the Community Guides having been in a similar situation to the new arrivals, can really give hope to them, and helps the community build, rather than workers coming in and saying this is how it's done here. It feels like a smoother process, so the community can heal together. I feel that it works like that. AMES management

I think it's fantastic that a lot of them have come here and in a short time they're so resourceful and they're able to share that and lend that to new arrivals. I think it helps the community to develop faster. It can help them to become better members of society, they're much more accepted, and they'll move faster if they have income and speak English. Service provider

For many of the Guides, it may be the first opportunity to work. It enhances their knowledge of how the systems work here, they get training and put it into practice as they work with entrants in regular communication with the Case Coordinator. There's a whole learning process which goes on for them, both in terms of employment experience

that goes on your resume, and a capacity-building aspect which they can bring back to their own community. Case Coordinator

Community Guides facilitate linkages, access and information sharing between refugee communities and services.

It's given us a link to community leaders that we wouldn't have had before, which is important around talking to them about other issues and consultations... I think it's been an unintended consequence, to connect into a community who had connection with language before but were not understood as a group, I think it's been invaluable. That's the hardest thing, the communities are so difficult to know. AMES management

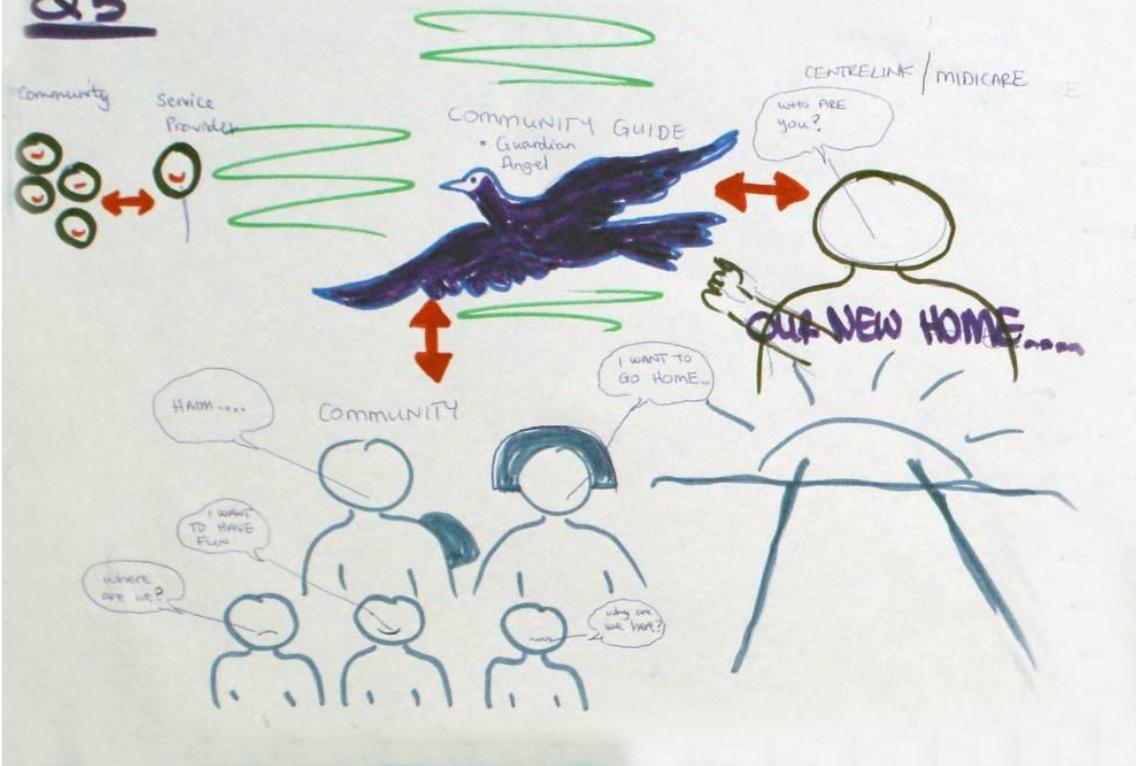
I know that if we call a community meeting we will get three people. If Community Guide's call a meeting the room will be full. It is not just the language – they also have authority in the community, many are community leaders. We should draw on their knowledge more. They could tell us how to frame services to reach the people more effectively – they know. AMES management

The Community Guides program creates opportunities for refugee communities to have a 'voice'.

I think it's also a good model for presenting the community voice too, directly, not just necessarily through a service provider. It's very powerful when a group can speak on their own behalf. I think that should be encouraged, that's part of the successful settlement and their empowerment. It's encouraging them to raise issues and understanding that in some matters it can be changed, in others it may be difficult and take a long time. Service provider

I think it's a wonderful model that encourages and supports community building. I congratulate AMES on their commitment to address that area and to embrace that area of not only the building of the newly arrived communities, but also the Victorian communities, because we're learning from them. By giving confidence and opportunity to these people, they can help shape services, and identify service gaps, and I guess help build confidence in new arrivals that they can contribute. It helps that strength-based approach; we're talking about social inclusion, and it's a very good social inclusion model. It's looking at needs, barriers and opportunities, identifying aspirations as well, and saying: where can we go from here? Can we link in with industry to provide some mentoring? Can we link in with council to tap into the aged community? It's that ability to think laterally. Service provider

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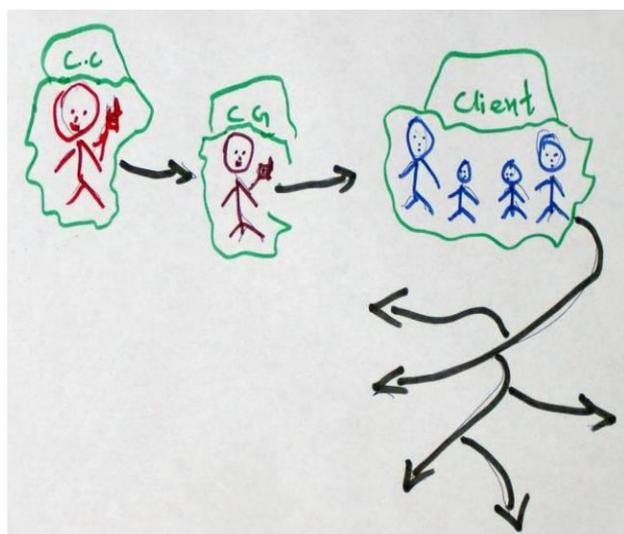


Case Coordinators and Community Guides

Perceptions of the role of the Case Coordinator and Community Guides

Case Coordinators and Community Guides work together to achieve the goals of the clients' case plans developed by the Case Coordinator. Clients, Case Coordinators and Community Guides shared similar understandings of the roles and responsibilities of the different groups in the delivery of settlement support.

The first day we arrived here the Case Coordinator asked the Community Guide to guide us and take us where we needed to go and the Case Coordinator gave the Community Guide instruction on what was needed. Client



What usually happens is, immigration department will contact AMES, AMES will allocate family to any one of the Case Coordinators, Case Coordinator will contact the Community Guide. They go to where the family is being accommodated and meet with the family, and deliver the information. So the work will be for the Community Guide, [to] deliver and go with the family to the various service provider locations. Community Guide

I look at the client and the client's needs, I prepare the coordination plan, and I'm constantly monitoring the client with the Community Guide and I'm constantly reassessing the needs of the client, it's a circle, it's the same thing until we get to the exit point. Whenever I have a job the Community Guide needs to do, I will communicate with the Community Guide, I will explain to them where they have to go, when. Case Coordinator

The Community Guide's role? - Orientation, collecting clients and getting them from A to B; teaching them how to use public transport; how to use the bilingual phones at Centrelink; how to use money, the ATM card, how to go to the doctor – how to use their Medicare card. I also ask them to do intensive stuff – like how to use Telephone Interpreter Service. They might also have an unofficial role with budgeting. Case Coordinator

The Case Coordinator gave us advice and information to help new migrants in connecting with government agencies... Everything we get advice about from Case Coordinator; the Case Coordinator gives us full information. I will bring the family to necessary offices, agencies, schools, hospitals. The role of the Community Guide is to complete the work. Community Guide



Case Coordinator views of the Community Guides program

While all case coordinators have their own experience and opinion of the Community Guides program, several common positions arose in their interviews:

Community Guides are effective and help the Case Coordinators to do their job well

Case Coordinators attribute the Guides with playing a significant role in achieving good settlement outcomes for clients, a critical element of AMES IHSS program that enables the Case Coordinator to assess and manage their caseload effectively:

I do not know the real words that can describe how effective they are... without them we cannot go a step... actually they are so effective that we can actually see tangible results with clients from the time they arrive to the time they exit the program, and we know that it is because of the Community Guides. Case Coordinator

My overall impression is honestly I don't know how it would work without it, I don't even know how it would work in other states. Case Coordinator

They bring something that I couldn't bring as a Case Coordinator. Case Coordinator

To me it's such a fundamental part of how the program works in Victoria and to me basically it's just makes the whole experience of families coming here that much easier. Really someone who can speak their language much more familiar to the client's arriving, make things much, much easier for them. Case Coordinator

[The Guides are] effective in many ways, not only in the perspective in that it makes our jobs easier as Case Coordinators. It definitely does, it really makes it easier....But in the client perspective it makes it easier to see someone: it's a reflection of me, looks like me, speaks the same language as me. That makes it less daunting to be in a new country, a new culture, someone can show you where to find that particular spice, that really makes it easier, it really benefits the client. Case Coordinator

Without them [Community Guides] the settlement process would be nowhere near as good. Even though there are limitations [in the present scheme], it just would not be as good. Why? Birds of a feather... the client won't tell me something, but they will tell the Community Guide. The Community Guide has built the relationship. Case Coordinator

The clients feel very comfortable that Community Guide is a person from their own background, who explains things as they go for each task. I find them really effective, from a Case Coordinator perspective as well. Let me put it this way, if the Community Guides were not there, then Case Coordinator would have had serious trouble. They may not have been really able to implement their daily tasks or do their tasks as successfully or as well as they would have liked to do. Case Coordinator

Over time I got to know and I worked with quite a number so the positive things are that I cannot do my job without the help of Community Guides, they are the ones who do all the legwork, I depend on the Community Guides communicating a lot of things with the clients, they help communication between me and the client. Case Coordinator

The role is invaluable...their job is invaluable, we would not be able to achieve anything in this program without the Community Guides...they do about 75% of the work directly with the clients, we rely on them heavily. Case Coordinator

I just feel it's very good also for the Community Guide and the client. We're all winners actually. Case Coordinator

Guides are a link between the Case Coordinator and client

Case Coordinators felt that because the client is able to communicate and feel comfortable with the Guide, this creates a conduit for information flow between the Case Coordinator and client. The Guide has a 'foot in both camps' and provides the linkage between them.

They are generally very effective because they are able to understand and deal with and ensure that Case Coordinator is aware of cultural barriers (gender, religious, language) that may exist with the new arrival. So [the client is] closer to the Community Guide and actually the Community Guide acts as a link between the Case Coordinator and the client. Initially the Community Guide has to inform and make Case Coordinator aware of cultural expectations of the community. Also sometimes you find that a client may be shy to talk to the Case Coordinator, so the link with Community Guide is vital. Case Coordinator

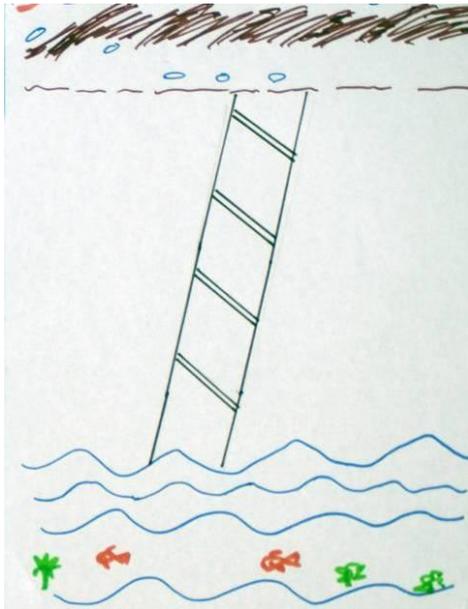
We go to the family and there may be gaps in the initial assessment. They might inform Community Guides, not because they don't trust us, but because they don't think about it at the time. But they just come, and when the Community Guide gets very important information, good Community Guides will make sure they pass this information on to the Case Coordinator. Case Coordinator

They are of help: they go to families with appointments, they are members of their own communities, they pass us information that we might not have known. They say a lot of things on the way to appointments; this information gets to us from Community Guides. Case Coordinator

The Community Guides are helping a lot with linking; they are sometimes very useful because they pick the things we can't. [Clients] tell them secrets like "I'm married", "my husband is in camp", and they say, "Tell the caseworker". Then she comes to me, and I say, "We'll engage you with a migration agent". Case Coordinator.

This is supported by views of the clients and Community Guides.

Some of the families they find it very hard to link with Case Coordinator. For me, between Case Coordinators and Guide they need to learn from each other about their job to support the newcomer. Client



The link with the Community Guide and the Case Coordinator is very important. We have to work together... it is like a bridge; we are the connection between the Case Coordinator and the newly arrived migrants. [In this picture] we draw the bridge, the beach and the sea or river; the bridge can connect so the people cannot fall into the water. If there is a bridge, a strong bridge, so people will walk easily and with safety. That's why we draw the bridge to represent the link between the Case Coordinator and the newly arrived migrants. That's the Community Guide role.
Community Guide

The Community Guide's two-way cultural interpretation is valuable to the Case Coordinator

Many Case Coordinators reported that Community Guides were instrumental in guiding their own interactions and relationships with clients. Case Coordinators sought the insights of Community Guides to understand culturally specific protocols, and used knowledge gained from Guides to ensure culturally sensitive and appropriate case management plans.

To be successful [as a Community Guide] you have to understand both communities. You need to understand what is acceptable in both communities.
Community Guide

They are generally very effective because they are able to understand and deal with and ensure that Case Coordinator is aware of cultural barriers (gender, religious, language) that may exist with the new arrival. Initially the Community Guide has to inform and make the Case Coordinator aware of cultural expectations of the community. Case Coordinator

The Community Guide is the point of connection for the Case Coordinator on cultural awareness. The Community Guide will guide the Case Coordinator on appropriate etiquette, so that we do not unknowingly disrespect the client. Case Coordinator

I will ask the Community Guide: how do you treat this particular culture? Starting from the greeting, all the way to saying goodbye. In some cultures, it is offensive for a man to be shaking hands with a woman, or the other way around. All these impressions can make a difference. Case Coordinator

This cultural knowledge is especially valuable where clients are from new and emerging communities. Case Coordinators appreciated how Community Guides, as members of these communities themselves, provided insights into populations for which there is relatively little information.

Community Guides can pull us back if we do something that is not very culturally sensitive which does not come up in the community profiles... They inform us as Case Coordinators of cultural values. It really puts us more in the picture of where the client is coming from, and this is really very valuable especially working with new and emerging communities. Case Coordinator

Beyond etiquette, the cultural knowledge of Community Guides also brings an additional level of specificity to the implementation of settlement programs. Case Coordinators are able to recognise and incorporate specific issues into a client's case management plan using Community Guides' understanding of clients' culture and experience.

Sometimes you get people with severe post traumatic stress and the tiniest information about the environment back in the camp helps out a lot... in coordinating settlement services. We can target referrals and construct a little bit of risk management interventions in our plan as well. Case Coordinator

In terms of linking [clients] to services and showing them around with understanding of their culture, it makes it easier... because they are their own people. They can say culturally for this family it's not appropriate. We can tailor our services to different communities. Case Coordinator

Community Guides also helped Case Coordinators to explain processes and procedures at a level and address appropriate to clients' understanding of Australian culture and systems.

To Case Coordinators, the value of having things explained in a way that clients understand is huge. Case Coordinator

Community Guides are good value

Case Coordinators acknowledged that the Community Guide role enables them to assess and manage a higher number of clients without having to provide all the hands on service provision and without having to constantly use interpreters.

The cost of not having a Community Guide would be too high for AMES – imagine the cost it would be to have a full time interpreter with the Case Coordinator every time they visit a client. So this has been good for AMES as an organization. Case Coordinator

The big benefit is the speed of things happening, if we didn't have Community Guides, ultimately I would have had to go with clients to a number of places, less case load for me, because I would have to be out on the road with the client. Case Coordinator

Being a Community Guide is good for Guides, and this is a valuable aspect of the program

Case Coordinators recognise that the employment provided by the Community Guides program has benefits for the Guides, and therefore their clients. They enjoyed seeing their clients make the progression into employment, clients being one of the key sources of referrals when the program is recruiting more Guides. Guides also reported and valued the mentoring, support and encouragement towards education and employment provided by several of the Case Coordinators.

A lot of the Guides come with very fantastic skills and experience and knowledge of the areas, and it has been wonderful for providing opportunities for allowing them to practice these. Encouraging them to go ahead with a new life: it isn't the end of the world, and they can do what they like to, and they can feel like there has been a fair go, and they have been given the opportunity. Case Coordinator

For them – after the places they have been, the suffering they have experience to have the job as Community Guide, to be respected and helping others – it is everything to them. Look what they have survived. We must respect this. Case Coordinator

It's just fantastic how they can eventually in the long run for themselves get into employment, one way or another, doors open to them. Case Coordinator

I get excited to see that settlement pathway of new arrival ending up in employment, sometimes the Guides are our ex-clients, and I personally get so excited to see the client get a job and that not necessarily all of their settlement issues are resolved, but indeed the employment contributing to the light down the tunnel, in many aspects, motivational, self-esteem. Case Coordinator

Challenges in the Community Guide–Case Coordinator relationship

Case Coordinators overwhelmingly support and value the work of the Community Guides, and Community Guides recognise the importance of the role and direction of the Case Coordinator and appreciate their support. However, both Guides and Case Coordinators were aware of occasional tensions in the relationship between some Guides and some Case Coordinators. These challenges relate to conflicting approaches to boundaries, and to notions of being valued and recognised by other stakeholders.

However, tensions in this relationship should not be overstated. In many ways they are a natural consequence of a relatively new and developing program, as the different stakeholders work towards equilibrium to achieve the best outcomes for all stakeholders, principally for clients. It is important to identify the sources of tensions so they can be mediated and resolved. This is discussed in other sections of this report and in a separate report to AMES management.

Service providers and Community Guides

I think the Community Guides are fantastic; it's a fantastic service that works well. I think they're really terrific. Service provider

They really are the unsung heroes of the whole program. Service provider

Service provider awareness of the Community Guide program

The service providers who participated in this research were aware of the Community Guides program and most were clear about the different tasks and responsibilities of the Community Guide. However, some Guides reported that service providers do not always know what they do or why they are with the client.

Sometimes we go there with the family and the service providers ask "who are you?" we feel a bit degraded, here I am bringing their family. Our role is not acknowledged very much. However, once they do know, we are very appreciated. There is not enough awareness in the community and the service providers. Community Guide

However most service providers shared very positive views of the Community Guides program, and Community Guides often receive feedback from service providers which encourages their sense of value and worth in the settlement of new arrivals.



These are the service providers - they think that we are a gift; we are a gift box from the sky. When I went with a client to a service, she asked me, what's your relationship to the client? I said I was a Community Guide. They were very excited and happy. Who came up with this idea? We are glad there is someone here to help us with the clients. Community Guide

Recognising the value of shared background

Service providers (including those outside of the IHSS Consortium) praised the role of Community Guides in facilitating positive settlement of new arrivals. They recognised the value in the shared of background and language of clients and Guides.

I think it's very good. I think it's a valued and complementary service. The support element is very valuable – that additional person they can call on if they need support, but it's a friend. It's recognising that they're there as a worker and a Guide and support but also someone who is a little bit different from the case worker. I think it's a positive program. Service provider

[With a Community Guide] our clients are feeling more comfortable about asking questions and settling in general. It is a good transition for people to start their lives in Australia. We do get a lot of good comments about that. Service provider

The program benefits all stakeholders

Many stakeholders described the multiple levels at which they had observed the Community Guides program assisting in the settlement of refugees, from the individual to Guides, to Case Coordinators and the refugee and wider community.

I think it's a very positive program: positive in the sense of providing opportunities for newly arrived communities, and identification of well-linked people in those communities who can help that transition of refugees into the community. Also I think it's useful for recognising that a few contacts are required to support the settlement process and recognising that the case worker has a whole lot of people to support as well. So it really complements the work of the case worker. Service provider

There's benefit for the client, there's benefit for the service providers, partner organisations and there are benefits for the community, not just that the ethno-specific community, but as well the broader community. Service provider

Service providers also recognised the value of employment pathways for Guides.

It's also providing pathways for some community members who are Community Guides into other employment. It's difficult as a new arrival to get employment. The Community Guide experience also gives them an opportunity for work

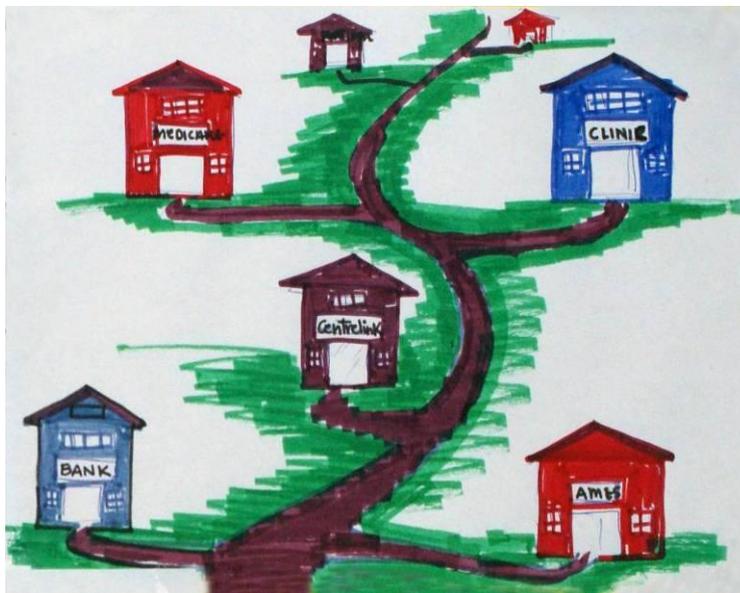
experience, improving their knowledge about services and systems, it also gives them an opportunity to be active in their community to interact, not only in their own communities as well which are good for job seeking, confidence building; networking too. Service provider

It's identifying people from the community who may have the language capability, the interest to help others in their community... from that perspective it's good, giving the opportunity for new arrivals to get work experience. It's a recognition of the importance of the connection... that one-on-one contact. Service provider

They also reported how the Community Guides affect their own services, both in improving the client's access to services, but also in some cases, giving feedback and information to services that enables them to better target their services to meet the needs of new arrivals.

Community Guides improve clients' access to services

Many service providers saw the trust, interpretation and social support offered by the Community Guides program as facilitating clients' access to and understanding of services. This is consistent with the way Community Guides see their role.

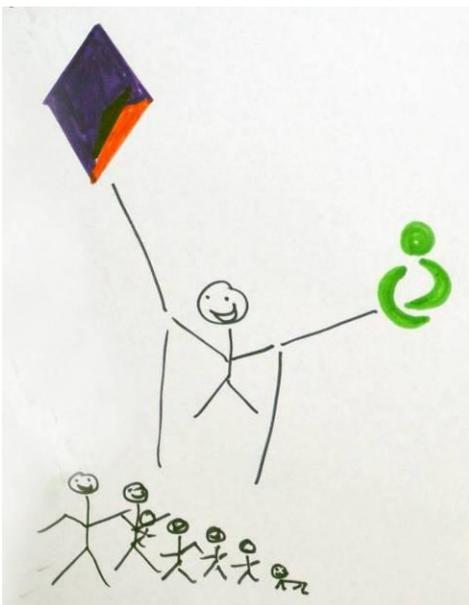


Being able to go places with someone who speaks their language also helps alleviate some of the confusion. We don't communicate well with the people sometimes, nobody has explained what it's about. The Community Guide can explain all of this to them: why they have to go to the doctor. The relationship builds out of necessity. Service Provider

Also when people get letters, they say what's this letter, what's that letter, it's that person they might go to and ask in the community as well... Certainly to the client, it's that importance of having a contact that can make connections to that service,

to help them with that feeling that it's all too much information, but someone who they can approach to clarify things. Service Provider

When there are new arrivals that come in with a Community Guide, in situations where they are of the same cultural groups that helps, in terms of the transition and using the services in a different way. It helps encourage confidence to use the government services as well. It also means that Community Guides impress on them the importance of being on time. And it's also when they're coming in, sometimes large family groups, they could be supportive in that situation, not helping us to do the interview, but to explain things, or taking a little bit longer. Community Guides with English proficiency [also] provide assistance with forms - not that saying that's not [this service's] role to help with form filling but where customers can be supported beforehand, that's a help to us as well. Service Provider



These are like loops or string: you can see it's not connected here, between the service provider and clients... You need this loop to be connected, but they can't do this by themselves because there are some barriers: language or whatever, so who can make this reconnect? Just only one person: one Community Guide: we connect that loop between service providers and our clients. [We] are like ambassadors; we connect people, who cannot connect themselves. Community Guide

Community Guides provide feedback to service providers

Service providers also reported that Community Guides can facilitate better understanding and connections which enhance service provision. Feedback to service providers from Community Guides takes the form of providing cultural information to enable services to be culturally appropriate, or providing feedback about the clients' service needs, often through the Case Coordinator.

You don't really know what they like [to eat], and the Community Guides would make it known, why are you buying them bread and jam and they don't eat that... So we can try to be culturally sensitive. Service provider

In those roles, Community Guides become more aware of what resources exist, gets the conduit there, the service providers themselves, it helps improve their services too because they are also able to take note of these workers who are giving a helping hand and are also keen to ensure that new arrivals do avail themselves of services. With some services we're about a half a step ahead. It helps service improvement. Service provider

They've served us a positive feedback mechanism. When somebody goes to the doctor and they have a blood test, immunisation, everything is going well, and another person goes and nothing is happening, then they talk to the Community Guide. This gets back to us quickly, they say "How come this family is not immunised?". Sometimes the doctors forget, the nurses miss out. I've had cases like that, and we've tried to fix it. Service provider

The clients change, their needs change... The Guide, because they're in the same community, they're more switched on to what's happening. Service provider

The high value placed on the work of Community Guides by service providers external to AMES, and the obvious value they add to the work of those service providers, is an additional, unexpected and extremely positive consequence of their role. It is providing a model of service provision which could be useful for a wide range of agencies working with people from a refugee background.

Discussion and analysis

This evaluation has identified the unique value and effectiveness of the AMES Community Guides program. It clearly fulfils the aims and objectives established by AMES for the program, and meets IHSS Key Performance Indicators. It also adds value to the service provision of other agencies. Measured against the framework of Ager and Strang (2008), the program can be seen to address and facilitate access to many of the domains which they describe as essential to integration. It also highlights key factors which are not included in their framework, such as the need to focus on the importance of family reunification and access to effective mental health services as key aspects of successful integration and wellbeing.

Additionally, the Community Guides program is an active agent in community development and the achievement of the human rights of service recipients. For a small and relatively low-income project, the impact of the outcomes is immense. The AMES team is to be congratulated for envisioning the program and having the courage and innovation to implement it.

As with all new programs there are several gaps in service delivery and challenges for the Community Guides and the organisation. These are also discussed later in the report.

The Community Guides program as a key to 'Integration'

The framework developed by Ager and Strang (*ibid.*, p.170) proved extremely useful in providing a deep level analysis of the value of the Community Guides program. Once again, we stress that we are using the notion of integration as a humanitarian endeavour, with the major responsibility lying with the provision of services to facilitate this. We also acknowledge that there are shortcomings in the framework. However, as a basis for analysis it provides a structure which has not been previously available and which is internationally accepted as a viable model.



Using the indicators identified in the figure above, an analysis of the findings presented in this report shows that the Community Guides program is instrumental in assisting new arrivals to access each of the domains specified.

Through their day to day work as specified in their job descriptions and the KPIs of the IHSS, Community Guides introduce new arrivals to the access points for the means and markers of integration, those of employment, housing, education and health. They do not have the mandate to fulfil these means, but through their position as role models, and the leadership roles that they take in the community, they encourage and enable new arrivals to achieve these means.

In terms of the three domains of *social connection*, those of social bridges, social bonds and social links, they play a critical role. As the first strong connection with the new arrivals and with their existing links with community, they are ideally placed to assist in the building of *social bonds* between new arrivals and existing community members. Owing to their own position as employees in a multicultural organisation and the links they have made with other communities, most importantly with the host community, they are also able to assist in the building of *social bridges*. These are critical to wellbeing and in countering the social isolation which can make settlement so difficult. *Social links* with the structures of the host society are built through their work with the Case Coordinators and other AMES staff and the wider service provision community. New arrivals reported the immense value of a Guide who was knowledgeable about the range of formal organisational infrastructures with which they must interact. They also

talked about less formal structures such as markets, shopping areas, beaches and places of worship.

The *facilitator of language and cultural knowledge* is the central plank of the Community Guides program, and clients have reported its critical importance to their on-arrival experience. Community Guides also contribute significantly to the second facilitator of *safety and security*. The full realisation of *rights and citizenship* as a basis for integration can only be achieved when new arrivals feel confident in the other domains of integration.

We are not suggesting that the Community Guides program is a magic formula for achieving full integration. Some of the challenges to the program are discussed below. Other challenges to the full realisation of the program's potential are posed by the broader social structure within which the program operates. While this was not part of the research brief, so much of the data collected related to this issue that it has been addressed separately later in this report. Despite these caveats, the data collected and presented in this report clearly demonstrates that the Community Guides program has a significant and positive contribution to the successful integration of new arrivals into Australian society.

Gaps and challenges in the Community Guides program

It is a new program – there are some problems – but it is a great program and it can get even better. Case Coordinator

The overwhelming evidence from this evaluation is that the Community Guides program is a very successful model for providing settlement support to new arrivals, with flow-on benefits to Community Guides, service providers, and wider refugee and mainstream communities. But as with any program, it faces challenges and has some gaps. This evaluation will contribute to the identification of these challenges and gaps and indicate the potential to resolve them. Some of these challenges are outlined in the following section and are addressed in more detail in a separate management report. Some challenges relate to broader settlement problems, such as the availability of housing or employment, which lie outside the immediate control of AMES. Others relate to program itself, and provide opportunities for the further improvement of an innovative and expansive model of refugee settlement support.

Potential for dependency

A common concern in the human services sector is the potential for dependency in the service provider–service recipient relationship; therefore, promotion of competence and discouragement of dependency is a principle of IHSS. However, Case Coordinators and service providers did not report particular examples of or concern about dependency as an issue in the Community Guides program. They are aware of the potential, in particular in the cross-over with the issue of boundaries, discussed later in this section.

In contrast, the Community Guides program saw learning and the gaining of independence as a corollary of the program. A focus on teaching and learning in the quest for independence appears to have been embraced in the ethos of the service.



It's very hard to buy the train ticket, how to catch the train, how to withdraw the money from the ATM... The Community Guide shows us and then we can try and do it ourselves. Client

When we arrive we are like a child – if the Guide did not hold our hand we would not find the way. We will learn the rules one day, like they did. Client

If we don't know what is going on we ask the Community Guide to interpret, but we don't need the Community Guide to do everything. Client

When a Community Guide goes to a family they are really telling the client what they are entitled to and what their rights and how to access their rights in this new environment, and that he [the Community Guide] is not the powerful one and the client is not powerless – rather they work together to ensure that the resettlement process is good. Community Guide

When we meet our Guide and it is someone from our own community we were so happy. We need to help ourselves but it is good that the Karen people help us. It is like a community circle. Client

Because we are new we don't want Community Guide to help us forever because we would like to stand on our own. We don't want to depend only on Community Guide because if we look always to Community Guide to help us we will become a lazy man, lazy girl, lazy boy. Client

Concern about the potential for dependency should not override the recognition that individuals, even from apparently similar circumstances, may have widely varying needs. Withholding support for fear of dependency, in the absence of careful needs assessment throughout the settlement process, could have very negative consequences for a newly arrived refugee whose needs are not recognised or met. One of the potential strengths of the Community Guides program is that the team of the Case Coordinator and Guide is well placed to identify the changing needs of their clients. The Guide's stronger language and cultural links to the client and the Case Coordinators professional knowledge and networks act as complementary skill sets in identifying and addressing client needs and achieving good settlement outcomes with the clients.

Numbers and turnover of Community Guides

At times there is a high turnover of Guides, as some move on to other employment or education. This also occurs when the intake of some refugee groups reduces and groups from other regions are accepted for resettlement. This necessitates the recruitment and training of new Guides and requires Case Coordinators to be flexible and patient as they work with less experienced Guides.

We are always sad when the good Guides go because we come to rely on them so much. Case Coordinator

Because Community Guide is not full time employment, they look for other jobs. You find a Community Guide working with us for two months and then they're not available. Sometimes they study full-time, and always you may find a situation where a Community Guide has been assigned to a family, but after two weeks they are not available. Case Coordinator

Good Guides are able to leave to full-time job or more study – that's fantastic for them but leaves us in a hole. Case Coordinator

However, as discussed earlier in the report, employment as a Community Guide *as a potential pathway* to other employment or education is a very positive strength of the program, and all stakeholders recognised the benefits of this for individuals and refugee communities. It also enables AMES to have a flexible workforce that is appropriately matched to the current intake of humanitarian entrants. For AMES, the importance of this is to have excellent systems in place to recruit and train new Guides and to provide appropriate on-the-job training and support. This is necessary both for the new Guides and the Case Coordinators, who are likely to have to provide additional instruction and guidance to less experienced Guides. With good systems in place, Case Coordinators, Guides, new arrivals and other stakeholders will continue to feel very positive about the program, even with this challenge of high staff turnover.

To recruit new people to the Community Guide role – It is easy because you get to know people. You can tell from early on who might become a Community Guide. They are sort of bursting, busting through. It's fantastic, it's just fantastic to see them make so much progress. You feel like a parent sending their child off to school when you can recommend one of your clients into the Community Guide program. Case Coordinator

Intake of new refugee communities into Australia also necessitates recruitment of Guides who may not have been in Australia for very long and whose English may not meet the minimum standard identified as necessary for the Community Guide role. Again, high quality and flexible training systems are necessary to ensure the learning and development needs of the new Guides are identified and met.

Boundaries

In their training and in their interactions with the Community Guides management team, Guides are requested to only perform duties 'as instructed and planned by the Case Coordinator' (AMES 2009). Guides are instructed to be available to their clients only during regular work hours, and to request advice and approval for any interaction with

the client that is not directed by the Case Coordinator. However, many participants in this research discussed how some Guides sometimes provide support to new arrivals over and above the requirements and direction of their paid employment. Clients largely see this as a positive aspect of the support provided by their Guide, but it is a vexed issue for both Guides and AMES. It can lead to concerns that the Community Guide fosters dependency in clients (discussed above), and that the boundaries between a Guide's actions as an employee and as a member of his or her community are too blurred. It can also lead to exploitation of Guides by other stakeholders.

Guides sometimes perform tasks which have not been requested by the Case Coordinator because a need arises and they can meet that need. For example, as cited earlier in this report, small or large challenges may arise in the course of the Guide undertaking an ordinary task requested by the Case Coordinator. The Guide may have skills, knowledge and experience which enable them to meet demands above those anticipated by the organisation without particularly thinking about it – and without necessarily being acknowledged for it. In some cases the Guide will contact the Case Coordinator for advice or approval, but frequently it will be more expedient just to deal with the issue.

I call the Case Coordinator, but sometimes I don't call because I know what to do, I know myself. Community Guide

However, the issue of boundaries is more often tied up with issues of community obligation and the blurring of the roles of employed Community Guide and community member.

Boundary issues and community obligations

Community or cultural expectations and obligations play a significant role in the demands placed on Community Guides by their clients and other community members. Sometimes this is imposed on the Guide by the community, and sometimes embraced by the Guide:

If they know you before coming to Australia then they assume that "whatever I need I will tell the Community Guide and they will help me"... it is very difficult because you worry that as a community member, if I don't do it who will do it, and how will I be seen by the community? They will wonder, "what kind of man is he?"
Community Guide

If one is not careful, the Community Guide can be everything to the community...their guide, their teacher, their everything. Sometimes they expect a Community Guide can even get you a job, you become a service provider – they send people to you to find them jobs – they think you know everything and everyone, you as a Community Guide they think you have all the answers. But sometimes the community can overwhelm you with responsibility. Community Guide

Because I am both a community elder and a Community Guide, I have an obligation and responsibility to my community first. Community Guide

Some families think the Community Guide should be there every day, every appointment, and even Saturday and Sunday because some of them are coming from a refugee camp, where weekend has no meaning. Case Coordinator

The client sees us as family and as friend – we are the bridge to their new life. They need us all of the time, not just between 9am and 5pm in the week. Community Guide

Guides also do extra things to support clients because they care about them, as individuals or as members of their community.

As a community member you do over and above [what you have to do]. Imagine someone comes from your country and you've been identified as someone who can help - how can you not help? Community Guide

Clients perceived a difference between what could be expected of a Guide as a member of their community compared to an Australian worker, and valued the support they received from the Guide.

Because my Guide loves his nation, he is available day and night if his people want help... I would like to say my Guide sacrifices all this time for me. I am very happy because my Guide, he didn't take all the culture of Australia... If my Guide takes on Australian culture, when I need help after 8pm he might not help me because he is reminded about the Case Coordinator. My Case Coordinator is Australian, he is open from 9am to 5pm; even during 9-5 when I contact him he is busy busy, busy all the time. My Case Coordinator tells me leave a message, leave a message all the time. And also I don't know how to leave a message. Community Guide

Some Case Coordinators were critical of the Guides for failing to stick strictly to the 'rules' of the program under any circumstances. Guides frequently felt that the

settlement needs of the new arrival were not properly understood by others, and that their responses were appropriate to the needs of clients.

Past 5pm, whatever they do is not Community Guide work, unless I give them the job. It is volunteering, it has nothing to do with us. I just feel anything can happen.
Case Coordinator

They say 'stick to the guidelines'...there is more than to just sticking to the guidelines! The moral support and cultural shock of the newly arrived family cannot be put in guidelines. Community Guide

Once I had to help a new arrival look for a new house. I spent several Saturdays helping them but the Case Coordinator said this wasn't part of the job and that we are not supposed to work on Saturdays. Community Guide

They [Community Guides] don't turn off their phones. They're told to do that because some of them really do get overloaded. But the demands of a newly arrived family are quite high, and naturally they're worried and concerned, they've got lot of questions. Service provider

Other Case Coordinators felt that at times it was necessary for the Community Guide to work outside normal work hours to support the client, and support the Community Guide to do so.

[My pregnant Afghani client] said, if I go to hospital, promise me no man will ask me anything let alone check up on me. The midwife said there are no guarantees. She said I'd rather die and not go the hospital. I said nothing will go wrong, no man doctor will talk to you. My Case Coordinator said doesn't matter how long it takes, since she is very vulnerable and scared, you can be with her as long as you don't mind. I didn't mind at all even though it was a very special time of the year. I told my family I'm a Community Guide, I'm a community member, this lady is relying on me, she's only going because I'm going with her. I cancelled all my family commitments. I stayed with her on Friday, Saturday and Sunday and I didn't ask for any money. It was three years ago, we still have very good friends and she always mentions that, even if I see her every day she thanks me. Community Guide

Some service providers and Case Coordinators also reported being aware and appreciative of extra work done by the Community Guide to support the client.

I see them at the agent's office, I see them at the airport, I see them at houses, some other Community Guides turn up because they hear about brothers and

sisters arriving, so they do go way out of what they're required to do. I would hate to think it's a straight 9 to 5. I have no objections. I think it's good that they want to work with their communities. Service provider

Community Guides receive phone calls late at night – for example because someone is sick – in my personal experience they just sort it out. Case Coordinator

Clients valued the extra-ordinary support of the Community Guide. The Guide may be the only person the new arrival knows who speaks functional English, so may receive a request from the client to help with language outside their formal Community Guide duties.

Even on holidays or on the weekend, my son used to be sick and I asked my Community Guide to help my son with the language and she left her guests at home and came to the hospital. Client

At times, clients also need help with reading letters or completing forms, and call on the Guide for assistance. Sometimes this may be in the course of the Guide's formal duties, at Centrelink or the bank for example, but many clients also spoke about the Guide helping them, sometimes outside working hours, to complete tenancy or other forms relating to housing, or helping them to understand a letter or a utility bill, or even junk mail notices delivered to their letterbox.

For AMES Settlement, the demands placed on Guides by the community have several implications, all of which AMES is and has taken steps to address.

- The Guide frequently becomes the focus of community demand *because* of his or her work as a Guide – they become identified as someone who can help.
- There will be times when the Guide will *choose* to assist the client as a community member outside the parameters of their role as a Community Guide.

I see them all really keen to work in their community. I don't get the feeling that it's a job for them. They work a lot of hours outside of what they would normally do. They might only work ten hours a week for AMES, but they help 20 odd hours a week. Service provider

A Community Guide said to me he drove to Mount Gambia because he heard the community was suffering on their own, and there was no one assisting them there from within their own community. He and some of the others drove down for a

week, talked to them, set them straight, figured out their problems, and drove back. Yet one of them has a full time job. Service provider

- Potential exists for AMES and the community to inadvertently take advantage of the Guides' capacity and willingness to assist the client outside the ambit of the client's case plan, to the detriment of the Guide.

Sometimes we think Community Guides are doing more than their role, and that's really commendable for them but that's a danger for burnout and issues for not getting sufficient support. Service provider

To address these concerns, AMES has implemented several strategies to give guidance and direction to Guides and to clients as to the limits of the Guides role and responsibilities. AMES addresses the issue of boundaries in the induction training, and needs to continue to ensure appropriate and effective training is in place to enable Guides to make informed decisions about assisting their community outside their employment; that they have skills to manage requests for help; and are aware of their responsibilities to encourage independence and report issues affecting the settlement of the client to the Case Coordinator. Guides and Case Coordinators also need to continue to ensure clients are well-informed about the Guide's role and employment limitations.

It is also important that there are checks in place to assure the Guide's wellbeing in the event of excessive community demands. Such checks also protect against potential for dependency. Checks exist through the oversight of the Settlement management team and also through the Case Coordinator.

If he assumes that he can do everything for the client then he will be caught-out. The Case Coordinator should work better at assisting Community Guides to clarify boundaries. Case Coordinator

Equally, recognition of the pre-arrival experiences and consequent highly variable 'neediness' of new arrivals is critical, for AMES and for settlement services more generally. Some clients will need more support than others; a one-size-fits-all approach will not achieve good settlement outcomes. A flexible needs-based approach to service provision is to be commended and will assist in avoiding demands on the Guide outside their employment.

Boundary issues and service providers

Boundary issues are not limited to expectations from community members. There are many times when the Guide does more than is expected of them when attending appointments with the client, because failing to do so would disadvantage the client.

Interpreting was a very frequent example raised during the research. The Guides and most clients are aware that the service provider is supposed to organise a qualified interpreter. However, if an interpreter does not attend an appointment, Guides frequently come under pressure from the client and from the service providers to interpret. They may be acutely aware that if they are not able to interpret, then the appointment time for everyone will have been wasted.

I had an appointment with a specialist, there was no interpreter available, I asked her please if she could help with the translation, and she said this is not part of my job but I will help you. Client

We're not expecting them to interpret, although most of the times we rely on them as interpreters. Finding an interpreter could be the right way but sometimes because of the low numbers, we can't delay the services and because of that reason we resort to the Community Guides. Case Coordinator

Particularly with the hospital, because they don't have interpreters available like this, they assume someone here will be the available... I've had to say stop, he is not an interpreter, legally if you say something and he gives the wrong information, he's in trouble and so are you. I've seen it a couple of times, it tends to happen, even the families assume since the Community Guide speaks the language they can also interpret for them at the hospital. Case Coordinator

Employment conditions

The employment of Guides on a casual part-time basis provides a flexible workforce capable of meeting the needs of the variable humanitarian intake, but employment on this basis does not suit all Guides and many participants suggested more regular or predictable employment would be preferable.

It is not reliable for Community Guides. Sometimes it will stop and there are no jobs. Even though they are getting Centrelink payments, sometimes their payment is cut off [because of] the case work. I'm sure every Community Guide would prefer

working full-time if they find a job somewhere, they will leave this job. Case Coordinator

As a Community Guide, it is not good for the future. Everybody knows, I know, just only the casual work, but anyway I would like to suggest to do like a contract, one or two years, working with AMES. Community Guide

Unfortunately [Community Guide job] is casual, we have to look for another job, for me I look for another job and I got it, I work with [a partner] organisation. Community Guide

In addition to the creation and encouragement of employment pathways discussed previously, AMES Settlement has introduced other strategies to address concerns about the irregular work. For example they have implemented a central allocation of clients to ensure all Guides have some employment, and a minimum pay period of 3 hours per call out. Employment issues are further discussed in the management report.

Duration of and eligibility for Community Guide support

Support for all humanitarian entrants

People come with the 200 and 204, they are lucky... A lot of 202 have the problems, if I have a chance I would find something to support them, like Community Guide or something like that. Client

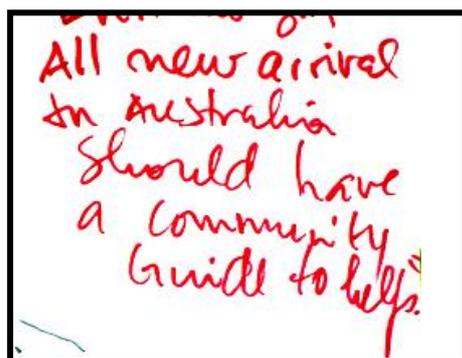
All refugee entrants to Melbourne are eligible to receive the support of a Community Guide. However, while the AMES IHSS team provides support to sponsored (visa 202) entrants and their proposers on a needs basis, many participants from stakeholder groups felt that all humanitarian entrants would benefit from the support of a Community Guide. Allocation of different funding for different humanitarian entrant categories is a departmental policy issue outside AMES' direct control, other than the opportunity to advocate with the department based on the position of management and other stakeholders. Many stakeholders saw the unequal funding of humanitarian and refugee entrants as an equity issue.

Some 202 visa, they don't get Community Guides... they have already family here. But [the family] can't support them fully because they are very busy: they have to go to school, they have to go to work, they have something problem between new arrival family and the family. So they need the Community Guide, they need the case worker and finding the house. Client



The question is: why can't I get this for 202s? If you're going to provide a program to assisting refugees, why would you discriminate between 200s and 202s when they have the same experiences, except that they know someone in the country? If [the 202 sponsors] are working they don't have the time to help the new arrivals. Why don't we make it available for all visa categories which are humanitarian entrants? Case Coordinator

[My] special request is that 202 visa have Community Guides... Their family members are already in Australia, but they can't help them, they are still learning English... they are new also. 202 visas need the Guide, they don't want much, just two or three weeks for the main things: apply Medicare, enrol school... No Community Guide is a problem: please, please, Community Guide for 202 visa for early time... Finding the house for new arrival families it's very hard, not for 200 visa. Please find the house for 202 visa. Client



The proposers... are not supported and yet in many cases these proposers are themselves new arrivals. There are not enough resources for this visa class and yet they go through the same trauma that the other refugees go through. The AMES program is very effective but they need to be inclusive of the 202 visa refugees and the proposers. Case Coordinator

Duration of intensive support

Guides, clients and Case Coordinators all had concerns regarding the duration of the settlement support for some clients. It was felt that many clients were sufficiently well settled at six months, but that some required longer either because they had unresolved settlement needs at a personal level or because they had not been able to access all the necessary services within the six month intensive settlement period. The need for some kind of ongoing case management was also identified to ensure best settlement outcomes.

What about the continuity of the settlement service past the IHSS? At the point of the exit... the client can be really unhappy because they're exiting and we're trying to explain the next service, but the Community Guide is not there in the next model. If we exit at the six month mark, it's not enough for the client who is not really marked as independent. There is no case management in that service. There's expectations of a high level of independence for the client, and that independence is very much linked with the help of the Community Guide. Case Coordinator

All my clients are saying that six months are not enough because the referral is sent [but] the health nurse won't see them for another month or so. By the time they do all the referrals and send them to all the organisations, doctors, optometrists, whatever, it will take a long time because there are waiting lists for everything in Australia. Then the six month period is finished. After that the appointment will arrive, and they can't go, because the appointment is in the city, but all the appointments they've been into are nearby. Community Guide



The Community Guides Program makes people very happy. But many people need more time. We are all different. After two visits some people say "thank you – I can manage myself now." Other people need a lot more time. It depends on what has happened before they came. Some people can get an extension, but it is not enough. Community Guide

The Case Coordinator – Community Guide relationship

As discussed in other parts of this report, the Case Coordinator and Community Guide work together closely to achieve case plan goals. However, some tensions and misunderstandings exist between individuals from both groups, sometimes stemming from lack of understanding of roles and demands, and tensions over boundary issues.

I know that the Case Coordinator is working inside in the office; I think the Case Coordinator is doing a lot of work, but I don't know. Community Guide

Some of the Case Coordinators do not understand the pressures on us from the community. Some of the other workers [service providers] don't know what we do, or where we come from. We would like to be a close part of the AMES team. Community Guide

Feedback from clients indicated they understood that the Guide takes direction from the Case Coordinator, but did not reveal awareness of any challenges in the relationship between the two. This is an evolving relationship as the program changes and develops, and the great majority of participants expressed strong support for their counterpart group. However, the existence of any tensions in such an important working relationship requires some review. This is further addressed in the management report.

Service provider understanding of the Community Guide role



*Here, staff from office look very happy when they see the Community Guide coming in, welcome very warmly and smile for them, and other service providers know our names because we always go there and are very friendly to them; very nice to work with them. But [in the second picture]: he or she looks surprised, don't know what a Community Guide is. I strongly want to recommend Community Guide name tag or ID or something to impress them, because some don't know what Community Guide is, and what they are doing, and who they are working for. Even when we explain them we are from AMES – what's AMES? We need to explain what we are doing. Some of them are **very** surprised when they see us, they have never [heard about] this job we are doing, looking after new arrivals.* Community Guide

Service providers interviewed for this research were well aware of the role of the Community Guide, but even among this group there were some misunderstandings about the extent of the Community Guides' role and responsibilities. Several participants suggested having more identification and giving educational material to services visited. This would enable the Guides to do their jobs effectively without being challenged and would provide appropriate information about the actual role of the Guide. Such information should also include contact details for other AMES settlement staff.

Other issues

The information from this research shows that the Community Guides program has provided a valuable pathway into employment for many refugees resettled to Australia. This could be developed even further, especially given its patent value to refugee communities, and is discussed in more detail in a separate management report.

AMES Settlement is cognisant of the gaps and challenges discussed and as indicated by an action research methodology, have already implemented changes and improvements to the program as issues have emerged during the course of this research.

However, the most significant challenge to the AMES Community Guides program is the broader environment in which they operate. The Guides are often asked to solve problems which are beyond their control and outside of AMES' mandate. They work within the context of the resources, services and infrastructure which are established to support the successful settlement of their client; and within the context of barriers which prevent this from being achieved.

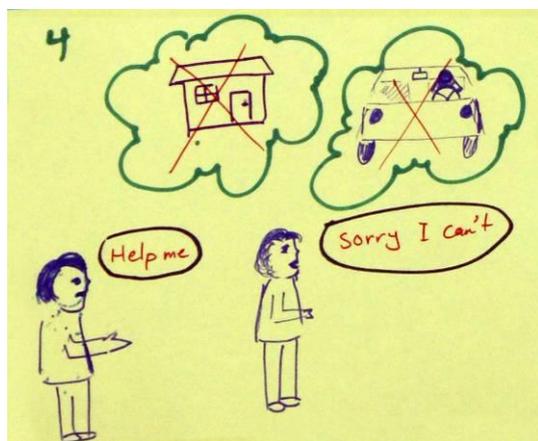
Broader barriers to successful settlement: areas in which the Community Guide cannot help

Participants in this research identified many barriers to the settlement of humanitarian entrants to Australia. Some of these barriers are tangible, such as the availability of suitable housing; others are less tangible, such as a sense of security. Identification of barriers to settlement is an incidental finding from the Community Guides evaluation. The following section outlines some of these findings but does not reflect the breadth and depth of settlement barriers identified in the Community Guides research. Nor does it exhaustively analyse and cross reference the findings about settlement barriers according to the integration domains described by Ager and Strang (2008). However, a brief discussion on settlement barriers is included in this report as they have a significant impact on settlement outcomes, and therefore also on the Community Guides program.

How do settlement barriers affect the Community Guides program?

The whole community and services are not prepared to respond adequately to needs of new arrivals. So this program is not able to achieve all its outcomes. It is outside AMES' control. Case Coordinator

The AMES IHSS team and Consortium members facilitate the access of new humanitarian entrants to the 'system' and to services that will enable them to settle and rebuild a life in Australia. However while they can facilitate access to what exists, they cannot provide what does not, such as an appropriate job. Nor can the IHSS program or Community Guides alone address some of the social and institutional barriers which many humanitarian entrants face, such as discrimination and racism, family breakup, the effects of torture and trauma and split families.



The Guide is helping the refugees but sometimes it is out of their hands... The Guide can do good things but not everything.⁵

The work of Community Guides and other settlement team members will be affected by

⁵ Quotes used in the following section are the words of refugees, unless otherwise noted.

the ease with which new arrivals can obtain or achieve what they personally need to settle. A client's unmet needs – secure housing, for example, or news of lost family members, acceptance in their environment – will negatively affect their settlement and increase demand on the settlement service providers, both individually and at an organisational level. Good settlement outcomes cannot be achieved in the absence of what people need to settle.

As discussed in other sections of this report, Ager and Strang (2008) have proposed a useful conceptual framework for considering the social integration of new settlers. This discussion looks at the identified settlement barriers in terms of the 'core domains' proposed in their framework.

Barriers to the foundation for integration: citizenship and rights

Citizenship

Citizenship, a sense of belonging and security and access to all the rights of citizens, is foundational to the achievement of social integration. While the refugees who participated in this research were very glad of and grateful for their rights and relative security in Australia, the criteria for citizenship were seen as punitive.

Even to get citizenship you have to do a test on a computer and I cannot read and write, how can I do it?

Four years is too long to wait for citizenship. Also the test, make it easier or make it in our own language, provide facilities so we can pass it. There are special needs for different people, many people are traumatised.

Lack of a right to a passport was a particular burden for people who had been living in protracted refugee situations without rights in their country of asylum and denied safety and citizenship in their country of origin. One participant expressed how he would be ashamed to travel (*"like a criminal, belonging nowhere"*) until he could get citizenship and a passport.

Access to law and justice

Many participants described challenges they have faced in negotiating with police and legal systems in Australia. They felt they had inadequate knowledge or training in police and justice systems in Australia and that this has led to problems within families and communities. In some cases the new arrivals were caught up in legal situations and in others they described situations in which they had been the victims of crime but had not sought or obtained redress. It was felt that law enforcement agencies were not always well equipped to recognise the needs and challenges faced by new arrivals nor to respond to them appropriately as either perpetrators or victims of crime. This was an area in which the Community Guide is sometimes caught up but able to do little to help.



Barriers to the 'facilitators' of integration

Barriers to safety and stability

Ager and Strang's (2008) research into the integration of refugees into new communities showed that a sense of personal safety and stability are important to enable refugees to achieve a sense of inclusion or belonging. They found that many positive community relationships (including relationships with service providers) are disrupted when the refugee family is forced to move somewhere new, and that short term accommodation and insecure tenancies cause instability in refugee settlement (*ibid.*, p.184). Insecure, temporary and overcrowded accommodation was the common experience of refugee participants in this research, as discussed later in this section, creating a barrier to stable refugee settlement.

Barriers to language and cultural knowledge

This evaluation provides evidence that the Community Guide program plays a significant and valuable role in providing new arrivals with a means to access the cultural

knowledge, and understand the cultural expectations of their new community – the Community Guides are cultural interpreters and mediators. The shared language of the Guide and new arrival also serves to reduce barriers to key information both about and in dealing with providers of essential services. Community Guides also assist in linking the new arrival to the language schools, which then enable their acquisition of English, which is necessary for social interaction, economic integration and full participation (*ibid.*, p.182). However, until participants are able to achieve an operational level of English competence, they continue to experience language difficulties as a barrier to settlement.

Learning English

Learning to speak and understand English was seen by participants as a principal key to successful settlement. Not having adequate English language skills limits access to services and society and diminishes their capacity to access all rights, such as employment and citizenship.

English, English – without it you are nothing here. I speak 6 languages but I am nothing. We cannot communicate, not work, not even become a citizen. We need more help with this, more time and different sorts of classes.

When he arrives, here he has freedom of speech but because of the language barrier we want to speak up but we can't. For example some new arrivals start working in manual factory but [it's] very difficult to understand their bosses. And when they go to Centrelink they want to explain what they are feeling, but they can't. We are arriving here and we have 100% freedom, but because of the language barrier we want to but we can't share information.

Many struggle to balance the need for employment and adequate income, with the need to continue language studies or access other education which will enable them to move into employment. For many, the 510 hours of tuition is not enough, especially for arrivals without literacy in their first language.

I have to attend 510 hours of English class, but the 510 hours isn't enough to learn English. That is why we were given extra hours but it still isn't effective, with our little knowledge of English it is very very hard to find a job.

One month after I started AMES education, Job Network forced me to find a job. I haven't even finished 510 hours... it is very difficult to study and find a job and the lack of English makes it even more harder. Some of my friends finished 510 hours

and then they got jobs but didn't really understand their boss, to do this and do that and were very upset in the workplace. I'm going to finish my study of 510 [soon] but my English is still not very good. And then friends want to finish their study but they are not allowed, they have to go to work. Some attended school once or twice for a week and that was all their opportunity, so it was very hard.

New arrivals want to learn well and quickly. However, they recognise the extra difficulty faced by those who have come from environments where they have not had any education, and that they need extra time for learning English.

We arrive in Australia and the English man want to communicate with us but we have no idea what he is talking about. We are illiterate, so we need more time, special program, not a group, that can be arranged for us.

Problems with interpreters

In the absence of language skills to effectively interact with Australian services and institutions, new arrivals rely on the quality and professionalism of interpreter services. Many stakeholders reported challenges in interpreters being available to attend all necessary doctors' appointments (for example), but all were satisfied with the face-to-face interpreter support they received when it was available. However, several participants reported appalling experiences with telephone interpreter services.

Sometimes interpreters say it precisely, it's ok. But sometimes the interpreters get upset and they scream and shout at us: "don't say that, don't say that". Sometimes they have distortion and additions what we say, they don't convey the message.

We have been traumatised and when we use the interpreter, it is our only chance to tell our problems. It is not good if the interpreter won't say something, especially when the interpreter is booked by the immigration office.

It terms of equity and access, it is critical that new arrivals can freely access professional and competent interpretation; failure of interpreter services compromises the human rights of refugees and is an unacceptable barrier to settlement.

Barriers to social connections

The Community Guide as facilitator of social connections

Ager and Strang's research found that *social connections* were commonly identified as the defining feature of an integrated community (*ibid.*, p.177); that is, social connectedness is critical for the achievement of successful settlement. Social connections are those which link the new arrival to family and their own community ('social bonds'); to other communities including the host community ('social bridges'); and to the structures of the host state ('social links'). As discussed earlier, Community Guides play a vital role in facilitating all of these linkages. However, some of these domains of integration create barriers to settlement outside the ambit of the Community Guide's role. Social bonds (links to family) are negatively affected by families split by conflict and resettlement, by concern for the settlement outcomes of Visa 202 entrants, and by family breakdown. Social bridges (links to the host community) are affected by discrimination and racism and by the difficulties of acquiring English language. Social links (to the structures of the host state) are affected by the challenges of accessing appropriate housing and employment.

Barriers to social bonds

Family breakdown

Evidence from the consultations demonstrates that changes in roles, status and rights of various family members are causing stress and family breakdown within some refugee communities. There is conflict between accessing rights and freedoms and being aware of responsibilities, both in a legal and family sense.

The family is broken now, for some, because [the old social] order is no more... because people... take this culture now, [they take] this society as leader.

Things have changed, and marriages are broken... Now there is no peace between husband and wife... Even the father who is the boss, the authority, is weaken, he can't say anything now. Everything collapse now. Many divorce in family... We thank you Australia for everything, but these are very serious issues we are experiencing here.

While many Australians including new arrivals acknowledge that recognising rights of all family members does not inevitably lead to family breakdown, the pain of some

research participants adapting to different family roles and family breakdown was palpable.

Some individuals are affected by the enduring impact of trauma or other pre-arrival experiences which affect how individuals respond to situations in Australia. These are the difficult situations that Community Guides (and the larger settlement team) is sometimes faced with.

The father came to Australia first and called the children. Unfortunately the father did not deal well with the children. The father did not know the children because the father was at the [war] front. The father was very strict. He controlled them more than he needed... and the children were taken from the father. We went to court and told that the family have their own culture and give them a chance to keep the family. The judge permitted the children to go back and we advised him to treat them gently but unfortunately he failed. Now the father is somewhere and the children are somewhere else.

Participants' evidence indicates that interventions of law enforcement and community services are not always well equipped to recognise and respond to the particular needs of new arrivals. There were suggestions that children misuse their rights and that government services take actions, for example in removing a child from care, based on the ethnicity or perceived circumstances of the family. Community members were not aware of any mechanisms to provide consultation and input from the affected communities to the relevant services.

Family has no power... Children have more freedom than [they] should... you cannot control the child. The school is teaching him something, they say you are free; you can do whatever you like. He feels he is mature, and can do whatever he wants.

The child is protected by law, he has good education, he gets good health, but he loses culture. He loses the culture easily. He does not know his background. He will go to the street and get some drugs, because he is out of his family culture.

The direct receipt of Centrelink benefits by children was another source of great concern to participants, and contributed to conflict and separation in participants' families. They note a need to have more information, education and support for families, including children.

They have their rights but they don't know their responsibility. And Centrelink don't ask them for their responsibilities, just their rights.

I was happy when I arrived in Australia but after three or four months, my sons left me because they are getting Centrelink payments and they rented their own place. I even told Centrelink and they said they can do nothing this is a free country. Their payments should be linked with study, if they are not linked to study they just leave.

None of this is suggesting that new arrivals are or should be subject to different standards than all other Australians. Participating groups suggested more education is needed for new arrivals in Australian law and citizen's rights and responsibilities.

There is also a need for much more research into this area as well as opportunities to discuss and support to deal with the family transition to the new community.

Split families – financial support, mental pain

Most resettled refugees are forced to leave behind family or friends, whom they may never see again. Those left behind are also often a source of guilt and anguish for those in Australia, affecting the person's health and their capacity to feel happy and settled.

Whenever I speak to my young grandchildren in _____, they are always cross with me and tell me get lost, you went away, ran away and left us here alone, why did you go and left us here. It makes me so sad, I feel so guilty. My GP and all the doctors know about my problem, that I have problems, I scream at night because I feel so bad.

Many support those remaining behind through sending money from their already limited income.

They send support to family back home who are still living in limited ration, which cuts their income... and they suffer as well, which you cannot ignore.

New arrivals also apply to sponsor those left behind to join them in Australia as soon as they are able to complete the forms. If their application is successful they have the happiness of a reunion, but accompanied by the financial, social and emotional demands that being a proposer of a new arrival entails. As is common in research with newly arrived refugee populations, family reunification emerged as a key factor in the ability of new arrivals to settle successfully and to integrate into their new country. It is critical to their sense of wellbeing and security.

Barriers to social bridges

Discrimination and racism

Many participants reported incidents of racism, sometimes subtle and occasionally violent. While racism and discrimination are illegal in Australia, it is very challenging to prevent such incidents. However most participants who reported incidents of racism were not aware of how or who to report incidents to.

Australians here, they are not receptive to the refugees, they feel very much alienated to their host communities.

In Australia [there is] no justice because we as migrants can lose our jobs but no follow-up on why; no justice [with] police because you can just be pulled out when you are walking or driving and asked who you are; [and] no equal opportunity – some are very qualified and educated but they do not have a job.

This is my story. I take [my children] to the market on Saturday. We have got our bus ticket, everyone has their ticket. All the people are standing, the bus is crowded. When we got to our house we wanted to get down from the bus. There was a lady standing there I said excuse me I want to get my kids. She was hearing me clear but she didn't have time for me. As far as I'm concerned this is a free country. I am a permanent resident so also I've got some right. But this woman did not let the bus driver pull up. I just touch the woman and said oh excuse me I want to get my kids. She said oh don't touch me you have dirty hands, you pig. I was saying sorry, sorry. I don't want to say anything, but that has happened to me three times.

Now we come to racism. The Australian government has done so much for us... We are noticing a bit of racism, maybe the government don't know about it but we are experiencing racism. For example, this happened to me and other women. When we went shopping for our children there was someone standing at the door and checking the bags of black people, it was very embarrassing, let me show you. I saw her pointing to another woman saying check that bag, check that bag. So I said check my bag, you think we are thief, because we are black. I wasn't a thief in Africa, why would I be a thief here.

Experiences of racism alienate the new arrival from the host community, impact on their sense of safety and security (thus affecting that 'domain' of integration), and potentially impact on their access to the 'markers and means' of integration, particularly housing and employment.

There's a problem because we have no car we use public transport and we go group by group and sometime the Australians open the car window and throw something at us. Her son is 7 years old, when he walk by the road a man throw at him a beer bottle and some of the broken glass hit him he's bleeding and then he said ... and he went away. It is not sometimes. It comes again and again, often.

So it's very hard for them to find proper accommodation, maybe it is expensive, or the agents have a phobia, or they do not have enough income, or there is something hidden between landowner and the agent, they think refugees maybe damage my house.

While some groups said they did not report incidents of racism or discrimination (and did not know that they could or how to do so), others had tried to do so but the response, for example of police, was dismissive and inappropriate. In one interview a family recounted that they experienced harassment from youth in the area, who gather to drink in a park opposite their home. One day the family returned home to find a skinned dead rabbit pinned to their door. They called the police and the police attended, but just laughed at the incident and asked the family how they would cook the rabbit.

Barriers to social links

Concern for sponsored humanitarian entrants

There was general concern in the community that community members who entered Australia as a sponsored entrant do not get properly linked to services and structures of their new country; without the support of a competent and well supported sponsor, they fall through the gaps. Participants felt that as new arrivals themselves they were not well equipped to support another new arrival.

When my family member gets here I am a blind person in the system of settling. How am I going to help my family member? How can the blind help the blind? I would really appreciate them [Community Guides] helping all people because most of them are getting lost and the [problems] mentioned today will keep on going.

Barriers to 'markers and means' of integration

Barriers to health

Participants did not raise physical health as an issue of significant concern; they were connected to health services through AMES settlement and learned to attend appointments with the support of the Guide. One problem cited however was the long time required to get necessary appointments; a problem because, by the time of the appointments, intensive settlement support has ceased and they cannot get assistance to attend an appointment at a location they have never visited before. Health care may be compromised not because it is not available but because the client can't access it. However, access to and acceptance of mental health care was raised as a major issue of concern. Some Community Guides discussed the need for more information and training in this area. They spoke of the excellent services available, but also noted that the perception of what these services offered sometimes posed a barrier to uptake.

Some of the clients they have depression and they don't want to go to Foundation House, because the Case Coordinator will explain to them Foundation House is for trauma, and basically they will think psychic, they won't think it's just talking, so they won't go to the services, they will think oh you're mental. Community Guide

Community Guides and refugees discussed the need for a wider and less formal range of psychosocial support services tailored to the needs of specific cultural groups.

Barriers to education

Again, AMES Settlement and the Community Guides play a critical role in facilitating access to this important means to successful settlement. However, some barriers cited by participants include:

- Experiences of racism in the school system for youth from some communities;
- Mixed age classes discouraging some participants from continuing in language classes;
- The impacts of gaps or absence of education during the refugee journey increasing the challenge of education in Australia, including for learning English;
- Conflict between demands of Job Network to be in employment, wanting to stay in language classes or other education to improve long-term employment options.
- Conflict between the need to earn income and wanting to stay in language classes or other education to improve long-term employment options

Barriers to employment

While the Community Guides program plays a significant and successful role in achieving access to employment for Guides themselves, Guides have an indirect role in facilitating access of their client to employment, linking them to the services that can assist them in job seeking. However even with the assistance of the employment services, participants in this research identified several barriers to employment

Recognition of prior learning and experience

Many of us have overseas qualifications; most of them are not recognised by Australia. Most companies do not recognise this, but where can we get Australian experience from? We just arrived.

Some doctors are working as taxi drivers, and they have to cope with that. We need more programs to teach the new arrivals, how to write resumes, cover letters, how to go to interviews. Job Networks are wonderful, but still we need more programs to help.

Some Community Guides, I've got one who is an engineer, here he is doing this, at least he's working but it's not what he expects. It's hard for anyone who comes from a refugee background to work in their field, the system is just ridiculous, they expect people to have documents and certificates for your qualifications. In a wartime situation people are just trying to keep their families safe, you're not going to think about paperwork. Case coordinator

Conflict between demands of Job Networks and language learning

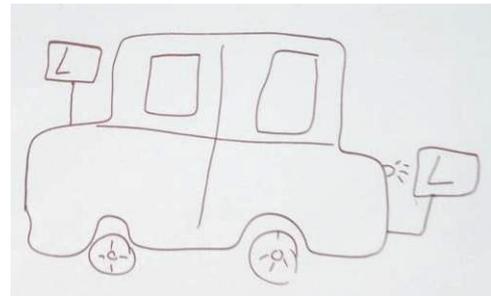
She came with her sister and when they arrived Centrelink promised they would not ask for three years. The next month they started sending letters. One person is a carer and the other is very sick and will never work, they are both learning English, but they keep sending letters asking them to apply for work.

We have language barrier, we want to study, and we don't want job network to interrupt our study. When I was in [my country] I already got a lot of stress and trauma, and here we would like to relax a little, but we don't want stress of job network, it makes more stress and trauma

What I desire is the ability to live and understand what people say, I'm going to finish my study but it is very difficult. And Job Network pushed me to get a job in a farm: "lazy people, why don't you go to work, why don't you study". - Is that what Job Network said to you? - Yes! We have a lot of experience in working, we are not lazy people!

Lack of accessible or suitable employment

New arrivals may come from environments where the work skills are different to those needed in Australia, or in which they have not been able to access paid work and so keep their work skill current. Consequently there were few jobs suitable to their current skills, few vacancies in those areas, and few opportunities to be given employment in the absence of local work experience. Many participants discussed that many jobs they could get were night jobs and far from their homes, so the need for a car as transport becomes paramount; but because they don't have a job they are not able to afford either driving lessons or a car. Male participants from Africa also discussed that their employment was often determined by their physical characteristics – they were employed for their size, not their brain.



Employment is intricately linked to other domains of integration. It provides income and so enhances access to domains such as housing and health. It enables employees to meet and interact with the host community, strengthening social bridges. It provides opportunities to improve language skills and increase cultural knowledge and competence. It contributes to self esteem and to a sense of belonging and stability. (*ibid.*, p.170). Along with barriers to housing, barriers to employment were identified as one of the most significant issues affecting their settlement in Australia.

Barriers to Housing

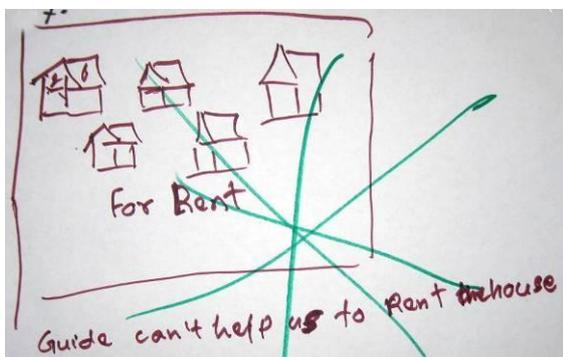


A necessary thing to have when you are in Australia is to have a house: if you have a house you are secure.

Housing availability and affordability

Asked to identify the needs of refugees on arrival in Australia, secure housing featured very prominently. The challenge to find secure, long-term, affordable and suitable housing was the single biggest problem for all client groups. A national housing crisis exists which has a critical and direct impact on the most vulnerable groups of the population, including refugees (Kothari, 2007; Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia, 2008; Foley & Beer, 2003). A 2008 Senate report into housing affordability concluded that stocks of rental housing are critically low, that public housing is overstretched and needing more stock and more diverse tenants, and that funding for housing and rent relief was poorly targeted. The international and national literature indicates that housing plays a critical role in the successful settlement and integration of refugees, and that without appropriate and affordable housing, refugees will remain on the periphery of Australian society (Dickman, 1995 cited in Foley & Beer, 2003).

For refugees, problems are particularly acute for singles and small families, who may pay up to 75% of their income in rent, and for large families, as few suitably sized and affordable houses are available on the rental market. Since the problem is a structural one it is often very difficult for the IHSS providers to resolve.



We need a big house because we are eight altogether, we can't afford food because of five in the house.

I am only here by myself and my problem is finding a house. Centrelink is not enough.

The money from Centrelink for myself and my husband is not enough to rent on our own.

Why housing has particular significance for refugees

The housing crisis affects other Australians especially those on low incomes and from vulnerable groups. But refugees face another layer of need and vulnerability in their housing needs. They have been forced to flee and to abandon their real home, usually all their material possessions, and have been denied a home, a house or any kind of security for very prolonged periods as a refugee. They have suffered torture and trauma and have experienced loss and deprivation unimaginable to most Australians. To have a safe place of their own represents much more to a refugee than to someone who has never known such loss and denial of home.

If you have a house you are secure. We were not secure before we came here.

House is about dignity and security, a safe place to live.

Most important is finding a house. When you have been a refugee a home means everything. It is our security it is safety. Please help us with housing especially when we just arrive and are scared and lonely.

The lack of secure and suitable housing inhibits capacity to settle, for example to settle physically into schools, employment, community groups and neighbourhood. There is no sense of arrival or welcome. The new arrival feels they cannot properly start to rebuild a life until they have a secure home.

But even though we are now in Australia we still feel like we haven't arrived and we are still travelling. Because we do not have peace, and our lack of peace comes from that we don't have a house.

The problem is finding a house, I have been with my sister for eight months, she is my sister but it's not my place. I can't rent, all the application is refused because limited wages by Centrelink and secondly I am sick. [I need a house] so I can move on; I have not started my life in Australia yet.

I have been in Australia for 2 years and I have been shifting houses 3 times, where I am renting, they come and sell the house they say I have to find a different house. Moving, moving. This is a big problem.

Lack of housing also affects other aspects of new arrivals wellbeing and settlement, including mental health.

I was fed up with the housing issue, it was like I was going through stress for me, with a large family I needed to settle, I was a burden on my sister, I was worrying a lot, and after the death of the girl, all those problems, I was still grieving, I needed to rest, but then I had to go here and there, sent to the agency they turned me down, and I was downhearted, and that was one of the problems, there are a lot of houses, they are vacant, but sometimes 50 persons apply for one house, I was downhearted and wasn't feeling good.

When I applied for ten houses and I wasn't getting any, all the trauma came up. I was thinking why I was not getting the house. The trauma came up and I had to see the doctor and the doctor was worried I had heart problems but I told him it was trauma.

Overcrowding and housing stress

Stories of having no choice but to live in overcrowded houses with multiple families, sometimes with an unwilling or already over-stretched 'link'⁶, were common. Forced sharing and lack of suitable housing is stressful for links and for new arrivals. It leads to separation of family members and to breakdown in relationships both within families and with links.

To find a house is very difficult. I came to Australia for six months I don't have my own house - many houses for one, two weeks. Til now many families don't have a house. Many share with other families. In those families where many are living together – many problems. Because we have only three bedrooms for three families and one toilet; in the morning we have to wait for a long time. 15 people for six months.

Last year one of my cousins has a problem with renting. She had a baby and she was sick so she was taken to hospital, and when she was in hospital her kids were evicted and we find it very hard because we don't have place for the kids to live. So when she was discharged from hospital she had no place to go and her kids were in different houses

When you first arrived in Australia did you go straight to live with your sister? – *Directly to sister.* – Was it a 200 or 202 visa? – *200.* – Did you have a choice? – *Blindly, straight to sister.* – Did you talk to Community Guide about this housing problem? – *She said there was nothing she could do.*

When we arrive here we are already tired, we have psychology problems. If we live with other people - we don't want to do this but we have no choice.

The problems of accommodation are often complex, with pre-arrival experiences, pre-embarkation training and local circumstances making some situations almost intractable. The Community Guide may be caught up in trying to support the new family in very difficult and overwhelming situations outside his or her control.

There is a family arrived in Australia, refugees for 14 years, in two countries. They lost their mum in the second country, and they lost two of their brothers. After 14

⁶ The new arrival's 'link' is their contact person in Australia, as named by the resettlement applicant during the processing of their application. While a refugee accepted for resettlement to Australia does not need to know anyone in Australia, most applicants do have some connection to a person who is already a resident in Australia. This person, their link, may be a close family member or it may be someone they hardly know; a person from their village, or someone they met in a refugee camp. It is not necessarily a close connection to the applicant, but in the absence of other housing options the new arrival is sometimes placed in accommodation with their link.

years they came to Australia. They thought [there would be] a house for them, but they had to stay with the link and they didn't know the link that much. They were crying, [they said] they put us in here and we are not happy; they told us we're going to have our own house to live in. I said ok be patient, they are going to look for a house for you. They were crying. My Case Coordinator was looking for a house for them, but there were too many arrivals. My Case Coordinator found a house for them but they said no, we are not happy, they are not helping us. They said tomorrow, you're going to come with us and book the tickets to another city. I want to tell you something, if you go to a different city it's going to be similar. My Case Coordinator booked them another house, sharing accommodation. They were very religious people and the other family were different, Buddhist and Muslim. They couldn't sleep, they couldn't cook, they couldn't do anything. Community Guide

While some new arrivals secure suitable housing on arrival with the assistance and support of the AMES Consortium, the problem was seen as an ongoing one by participants, particularly due to insecure and short term tenure, discrimination by landlords, and the lack of services to support those looking for accommodation after the initial intensive IHSS period. Another worrying development is the demand from landlords for six or 12 month rent in advance.

On arrival, refugees get a lot of support for the first three months. The problem of shelter starts after that, when the support is finished. So it's very hard for them to find proper accommodation, maybe it is expensive, or the agents have a phobia, or they do not have enough income, or there is something hidden between landowner and the agent, they think refugees maybe damage my house. So it's hard. There is a long queue for public housing. Rent is very high, refugees cannot afford because they are low income. Community Guide

Refugees pay 50% of their income for rents, because the rent is very high: they will have problems, you have the relationship between food, shelter and water, and they can't pay the bills later on, with the income they get from Centrelink. Community Guide

When she moves from this house, if she have to find another house, the agent ask her for a six month advance, or one year advance, but how can she get the money? Now all landlords ask like this.

So many people have problems finding a house. Just the main thing is a house, some family living with the daughter. Now it's more than one month and they are still finding a house, the landlord have a problem, the new arrival family apply,

they say you can pay for six months, one year. How they can get the money for one year, it's nearly over \$10,000?

Several participants felt that the government had some responsibility to ensure appropriate housing, and that settlement would be improved if they could access safe secure and affordable housing.

Australia is not a poor country it is a rich country. Australia brought me here and didn't give me a house I'm given a house for one month and told to fend for myself. I am working like a slave, because all the money still goes back to them, it goes back to them because of the house. All the pain I came with from the camp I still have because I am being treated like a slave.

A lot of depression is about that housing. Last time we went [to the housing department] it was a two to five year waiting list. What am I supposed to do? The govt brings them here and where do they live? They can't sit in accommodation with all the different people. When they have their own house they settle a bit more. They are more comfortable. Community Guide

It is recommended that DIAC and agencies such as AMES, agencies concerned to achieve good settlement outcomes for humanitarian entrants, be strongly involved with government at all levels in advocating for long and short term strategies to solve the housing crisis. It is particularly important to strongly advocate for the needs of humanitarian entrants as one of the very vulnerable groups identified in the 2007 UN housing report (Kothari, 2007).

This research also demonstrates a need for immediate additional housing support for all humanitarian entrants, to avoid the placement of new arrivals with an unwilling and overstretched link and to ensure stability and safety necessary for successful integration.

Analysis of the effectiveness of the Community Guides program has to acknowledge the impact of these external settlement barriers on the long term outcomes of the program.

Recommendations

In light of the overwhelmingly positive results of the evaluation the key recommendation of this report is *that the Community Guides program continue as a major plank of AMES IHSS service delivery model.*

It is further recommended *that serious consideration be given to adapting the model for use in other areas of AMES service delivery.*

In light of the fact that the program has so many positive outcomes in terms of well being, integration and community development, it is recommended *that a similar model be considered by Government as a basis for all service delivery to new arrivals and refugee communities, both under the IHSS scheme but also under the Settlement Grants Program.*

However, as noted in the report, some areas of weakness and challenges to the program have been identified. In order to address these and to strengthen the program we further recommend that:

Potential for dependency

- a clear definition of 'dependency' be developed, with guidelines to assist staff in understanding what it means, and judging whether behaviour is dependent or a consequence of genuine high client needs because of the severity of pre arrival experience or challenging settlement issues.
- a training module be developed to assist Case Coordinators and Community Guides to respond appropriately when client is thought to be exhibiting signs of dependency.

Numbers and turnover of Community Guides

- the particular learning needs of Guides with lower levels of English be identified and addressed.
- additional training and support be developed for these Guides.
- training or other strategies be developed to support the Case Coordinators in their role of support and supervision of Community Guides.

Boundaries

- the issue of expectations and boundaries be explored in a forum with Community Guides and Case Coordinators, and that a very clear and transparent model of what these boundaries are developed.
- a training module be developed based on the outcomes of the forum, which focuses on the issue of boundaries and how to deal with expectations from the community which exceed these boundaries.
- a mechanism be put in place by which Community Guides can make a case to the Case Coordinator when they feel that it is essential to exceed these boundaries in a particular case.
- a simple explanation sheet for clients about the role of the Community Guide containing a little more detail than the current materials, be developed and translated into all appropriate languages.

Employment conditions

- a review be undertaken of the training and on-the-job support needs of the Guides and training be tailored to meet new and emerging needs. We commend the recent introduction of the competency booklet as a tool for skill building and recognition and recommend that this be used as the foundation for the review.
- a review be undertaken of employment issues such as numbers of Guides employed, and the development of clear exit strategies as part of pathways management.
- given the strength and success of the employment pathways, these need to be more clearly defined and developed, and linked to building on the strength of the Guides and the value they add to the program.

Duration of and eligibility for Community Guide support

- the flexibility already built into the scheme by AMES to provide services for a longer period to those new arrivals with very high needs be made more transparent, and this be clearly stated in guidelines for Case Coordinators and Community Guides.

- this be discussed with all Case Coordinators and Community Guides to ensure an equitable application of the guidelines.
- a system be established to record high levels of need over and above the expectations of IHSS and the ability of AMES to respond to this. This will provide invaluable information to DIAC for future policy and service provision planning.

The need for Community Guides for refugees arriving on 202 visas

- That a formal position be developed on the need of all humanitarian arrivals, in particular those with 202 Visas, for the services of Community Guides and extended IHSS service provision, and raised with DIAC.

The Case Coordinator – Community Guide relationship

- the role and relationship between the Case Coordinators and the Community Guides be articulated in more detail in the job descriptions of both groups.
- that a training module be developed to assist Case Coordinators to optimise their use of the Community Guides program. Given the excellent working relationships developed between many of the Case Coordinators and Community Guides, it is suggested that this could be peer-developed and run.

Service provider understanding of the Community Guide role

- in addition to the existing pamphlet available to external service providers, some simple educational materials for service providers about the Guides could be produced and distributed.
- Service providers could be invited to a short forum to discuss the role of Community Guides and the optimum way to work with them.
- any materials distributed to service providers must clearly state that Community Guides are not interpreters, and must not be asked to take that role. The materials must state that Community Guides have been instructed by AMES to refuse to act in this role.

- a printed statement stating the position of AMES could be given to Community Guides which they could then produce for service providers if they feel they are being pressured to take on the role of interpreter.

It is hoped that these recommendations will assist to make this already extremely successful program even more effective.



The Community Guides are AMES way of growing the future – it helps the community and the guides. We need a lot of these plants because a lot of refugees coming – and they need water – good planning is the water.
Community Guide

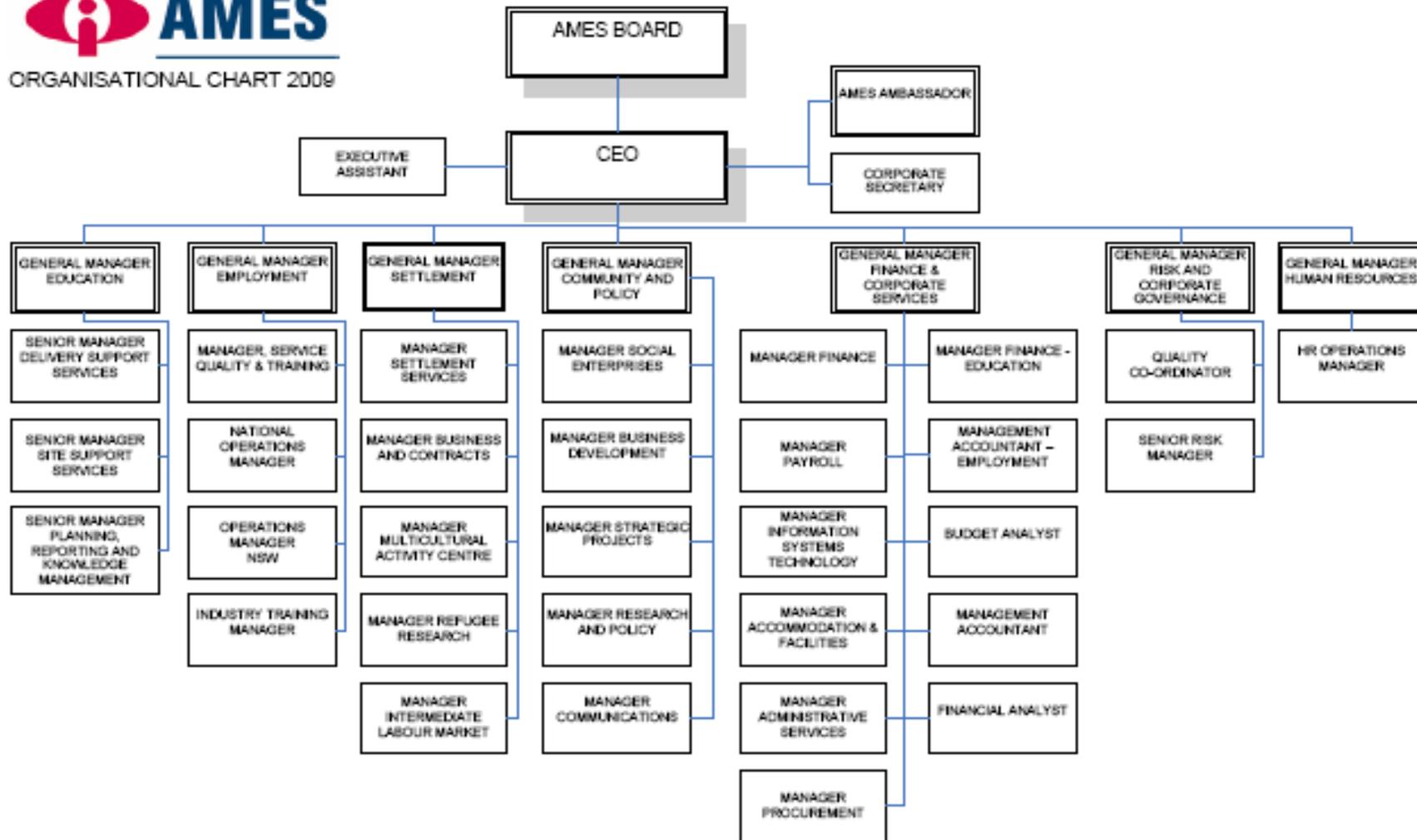
Appendices

Appendix 1:

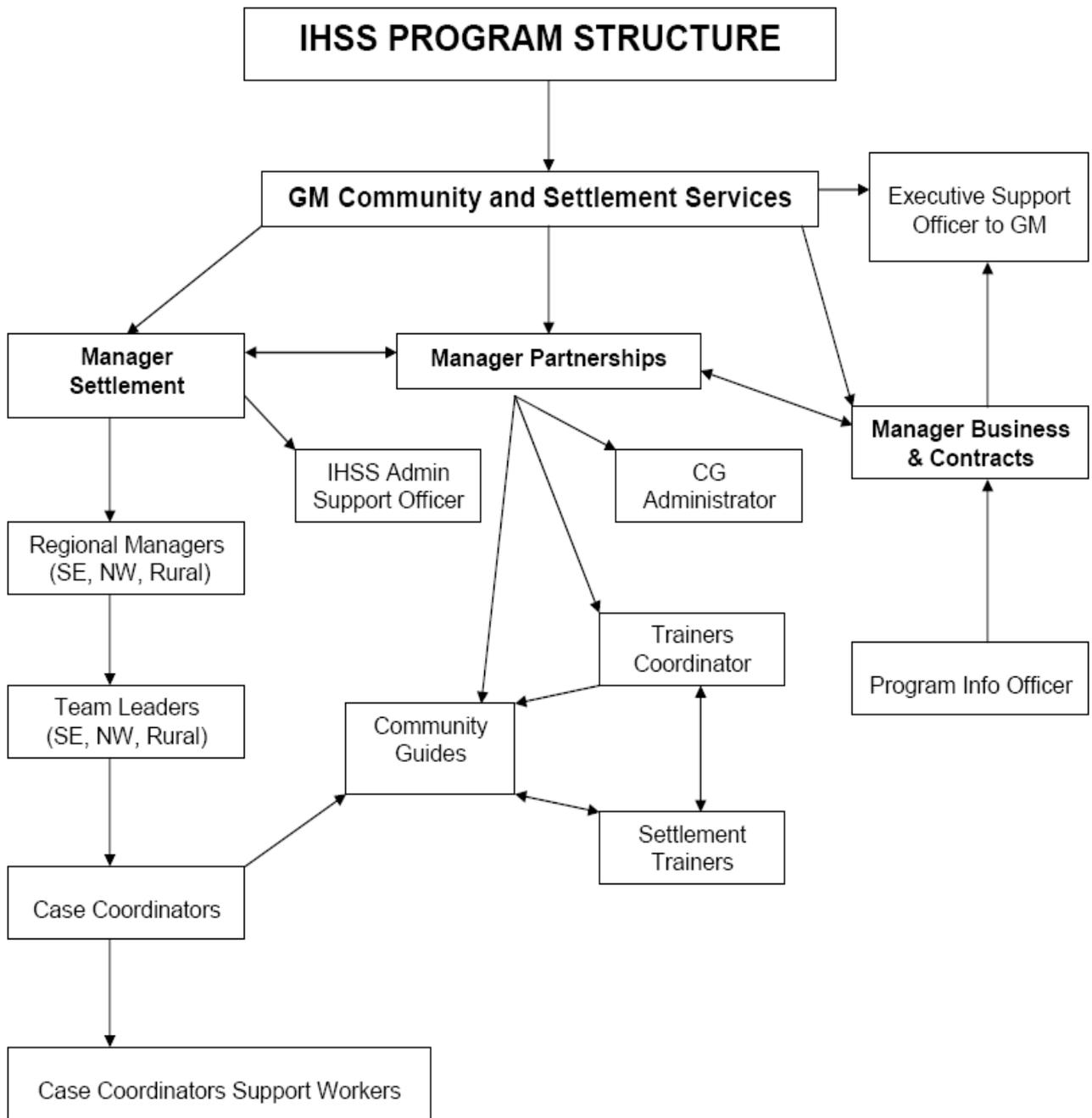
Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy Principles

- Humanitarian entrants are individuals who have the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity.
- Humanitarian entrants are informed and involved in making choices and decisions.
- Services are designed and administered to promote humanitarian entrants' competence and to discourage dependency.
- The health and well-being of humanitarian entrants are protected.
- The best interests of children are a vital concern.
- The least intrusive and the least disruptive option which offers the highest degree of stability and certainty is selected.
- Traditional, cultural and religious values are respected.
- Services and decisions are ethical and humanitarian entrants are not exploited.
- Services promote participation of humanitarian entrants in the wider community and their understanding of legal obligations.
- Organisations providing services are accountable to those who use their services and the Australian Government.
- SHP entrants are enabled to access services in a coordinated way which minimises gaps and duplication between services received.
- Services are delivered in a manner which is sensitive to the situation of newly-arrived humanitarian entrants.
- Services to humanitarian entrants are delivered to a consistent standard across Australia.

Appendix 2: AMES Organisation Chart 2009



Appendix 3: AMES IHSS structure



Appendix 4: Evaluation Criteria

Centre for Refugee Research - AMES Community Guides Research – Themes for evaluation criteria – 6 November 2008

The aims and objectives agreed for the Community Guides research are outlined below. These are followed by a table summarising the broad themes that arose in discussions with stakeholder groups (AMES management, Case Coordinators, Guides and community members) on 30 September and 1st October 2008, and matching them to the research objectives. The themes reflect beliefs, questions and concerns of the stakeholder groups. They should not be interpreted as research findings but are the issues that will form the basis for what will be “tested” in the research, through consultations with refugee communities and Guides and interviews with all stakeholders. A summary of the main areas of interest for each of the stakeholder groups is included at the end of this document.

Aims

To determine the value of the AMES Community Guides program on the settlement experience of newly arrived refugees.

To determine the value of the AMES Community Guides program for the Community Guides.

Objectives

1. Determine the impact of the work of Community Guides on the settlement experience of refugees, individuals, families and community groups
2. Evaluate the impact of the relationship between the Community Guides and the case coordinators on outcomes for AMES clients
3. Assess the role of the cultural knowledge brought by Community Guides on the overall effectiveness of AMES settlement service provision
4. Document the “roll-on” value of the Guides as an adjunct to other settlement services offered by AMES, and other unintended consequences of their involvement in the work of the organisation
5. Document the role of the Guides in providing access to a broader range of mainstream service provision
6. Identify gaps and problems in the service provision model
7. Identify ways in which to promote the recognition of the value of the Community Guides within the organisation and to provide career paths for the Guides
8. Identify any additional training and psycho social supports need needs for the Guides and other staff
9. Document and develop the model into a “Best practice” guide to be shared with other states and other countries of resettlement

Theme	Subtheme	Client	Com guide (CG)	Case coord (Case Coordinator)	Mngmt	Links to objectives Comments
Community Guides are the linkage between	Client and Case Coordinator		✓	✓		Objectives 1, 2 4 and 5.
	Client and AMES	✓	✓		✓	The notion of Community Guides enabling linkages between clients and other stakeholders and the wider community was one of the strongest themes emerging from discussions with stakeholder groups
	Client and their community		✓	✓	✓	
	Client and “the system”	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	
Effectiveness of Community scheme Guide	Settlement outcomes are achieved		✓	✓	✓	
	Shorter time needed for settlement with Community Guides				✓	
	Clients are linked to or competent to access support services <i>on exit</i> from AMES			✓	✓	Note that while general observations on the last two of these subthemes may emerge during this research, a comprehensive comparative study of differing models of service provision is beyond the aims and scope of the project.
	<i>Do</i> clients learn adequate skills and get correct information?			✓	✓	
	CG scheme compared to other service models for settlement support		✓	✓	✓	
	CG scheme compared to arrivals who don't receive services (eg 202s)			✓		

Value of Community Guide Scheme for clients	Client <i>satisfaction</i> with CG			✓	✓	Objectives 1, 5 and 6. The <i>effectiveness</i> of the CG scheme relates to things with practical or measurable outcomes, while the <i>value</i> of the scheme relates to less tangible and social benefits.
	CGs as Role model for clients		✓	✓		
	CGs like a “bright light”	✓✓				
	CGs reduce social isolation	✓		✓		
	CGs provide practical help	✓			✓	
Value of Community Guide Scheme to Community Guides	CG Job satisfaction		✓	✓	✓	Objectives 6, 7 and 8.
	CG Employment path		✓	✓	✓	
	CG Employment equity/adequacy		✓	✓		
Value of Community Guide Scheme to AMES	Cost effectiveness				✓	Objectives 2, 3 and 4. Note that while some comments will be able to be made about KPIs and cost effectiveness, a comprehensive comparison of different service models is beyond the scope of the project.
	Effect on KPIs				✓	
	Enhances Case Coordinator role			✓		
	Guides as cultural interpreters – enable more appropriate services			✓	✓	
	Regional teams capture and use information from CG scheme for continual improvement				✓	
Objective 4.						
Value of CG scheme for communities –	Community capacity building				✓	Objective 1.
Boundaries	CG understanding of their role /compliance with boundaries		✓	✓	✓	Objectives 6 and 8.
	Whether CG “doing for” the client rather than fostering independence			✓	✓	
	Client demands excessive		✓		✓	
Value of CG’s having refugee background / same language/cultural background	Enhance speed of settlement		✓	✓		This has been kept separate from the “Value to clients” theme : can someone from a different background offer the same support? Same language? Same community? Is this important?
	Enhance social support/comfort		✓	✓		

Training	Adequacy of current training,		✓	✓	✓	Objectives 5,6,7 8 and 9.
	Identification of additional training needs			✓	✓	
	Selection criteria for CGs			✓		
CG/Case Coordinator role and relationship				✓	✓	Objective 2
Guides as cultural interpreters	Interpret “the system’ to clients	✓✓	✓		✓	Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5
	Two –way interpreters – provide cultural information to AMES				✓	
Confidentiality challenge					✓	Objective 6, 8. Complex and multi-faceted relationships of Guides within their small CALD communities potentially present particular organisational and individual challenges.
Perception of CG role	By communities			✓	✓	Objectives 1, 4 and 5.
	By services – Centrelink etc			✓	✓	
	By funder - DIAC				✓	
Barriers to settlement	Adequacy of support period – IHSS and consortium partner periods	✓	✓		✓	Objective 1 and 6. This project is not a study of the barriers to resettlement, but the operation of the Guides scheme has to be evaluated in the broader settlement context, taking into account external factors outside AMES’ control. However, it is likely that participants will identify constraints that impact on settlement and a Forum with external service providers will give participants an opportunity to discuss these.
	Pre-arrival orientation – high client expectations		✓			
	Housing and language - critical for new arrivals	✓				
	Educational placement of new arrivals by age not knowledge level.		✓			

Centre for Refugee Research - AMES Community Guides Research – Themes for evaluation criteria – 6 November 2008

The following notes very broadly summarize the outcomes of meetings with stakeholder groups in September 30th and October 1st 2008. (Please note that the following comments are not research findings, but information from stakeholders that enable the researchers to set the themes and evaluation criteria for the research). One of the strong themes emerging in all of the meetings with stakeholders was the notion of the Community Guides as the key link between the client and all other stakeholders, as well as the link between the client and “the system”.

Issues of interest to AMES clients

CRR research staff met with AMES clients 1st October 2008 to gain an initial understanding of what clients of the Community Guides scheme think of the current scheme, and what they might want to learn from an evaluation of the scheme.

The community members spoke positively of the help they receive from the Community Guide, with one participant describing the Guide as a “bright light”. They emphasised the importance of the role of the Guide in linking them to “the system”, helping with practical issues such as housing, medical issues, education, banking, travel and Centrelink. Clients spoke of the Guides as people who help with things – not as people who do things for them.

Clients emphasised the importance and value of receiving help from someone in their own language and own community - to help not “feel lonely”. The Community Guide role in reducing isolation and providing support was presented as very important, not just the practical assistance Community Guides provided.

One difficulty discussed in relation to the scheme is the length of support is inadequate for some clients – several people in the meeting said they or someone in their family still needed support after the Community Guide was no longer able to help them.

Clients also identified issues not related to the Community Guide program that cause them difficulty– such as housing and language.

Issues of interest to AMES Community Guides

Case CoordinatorR research staff met with AMES Community Guides 30th September 2008 to gain an initial understanding of what the Community Guides think of the current scheme, and what they might want to learn from an evaluation of the scheme.

The Community Guides spoke positively of the scheme, they were confident that the scheme was good for clients. There was a strong sense that support from a Community Guide is likely to be more effective than can be provided by people from other backgrounds – they felt that as well as the language advantage, the Community Guide understands the culture and history of the client, and empowers the client as a role model.

The Community Guides also spoke about how the scheme is good for them – for example provides a pathway to employment, confidence, work references, and makes them feel good about themselves.

Some problems identified related to the operation of the Community Guides scheme, such as the length of time for supporting the client being inadequate, or the inflexibility of support that can be provided for some clients or consortium members – needs to be longer for some clients and to be flexible depending on the needs of the client.

The issue of client expectations and boundaries was raised by several Community Guides. There was a feeling that new arrivals sometimes have very high expectations because of what they have learned through their pre arrival orientation – this can cause difficulty for the Community Guide. Some also spoke of how they have to be everything for the new arrival – father brother counsellor doctor.

Another area the Community Guides highlighted as causing problems in their communities, but outside of their control, was the educational placement of students according to their age rather than according to their skill or knowledge. Some said this caused the student to give up or drop out of school.

Issues of interest to AMES Case Coordinators

CRR research staff met with AMES Case Coordinators on 1st October 2008 to gain an initial understanding of what Case Coordinators think of the Community Guide scheme, and what they might want to learn from an evaluation of the scheme.

The Case Coordinators expressed concern that the Community Guides scheme should be of value to clients, Community Guides and case coordinators. They were interested to find out whether the scheme results in good settlement and knowledge for clients and also whether clients are being helped to become independent.

Case coordinators also expressed concern to know whether the scheme is working well for the Guides – whether it provides job satisfaction and is a good pathway to employment or education. Issues of Guides having access to enough employment

through the scheme were raised, as was whether Guides need more or different training to enable them to do their job well.

How the Community Guide role impacts on the Guide's position in the community, how the community perceives the scheme, and the nature of the relationship between Guide and client were also raised as questions. Case Coordinators would also like to know what is the perception of the scheme by other settlement services.

The relationship and roles between Guides and Case Coordinators, and how the two groups work together, was raised by many of the case coordinators – both positive and challenging aspects need to be explored.

Case Coordinators were also interested in how the Community Guide scheme compares to other models of settlement support, and what the settlement outcomes are for SHP entrants under the 202 visa category, who don't receive Community Guide support, compared to those who receive Community Guide support. However, while general observations on these questions may emerge during this research, a comprehensive comparative study of differing models of service provision is beyond the aims and scope of the project.

Issues of interest to AMES Management

Case Coordinator research staff met with AMES management on 30th September 2008 to gain an initial understanding of what management think of the Community Guide scheme, and what they want to learn from an evaluation of the scheme.

The responses of the management group expressed concern to know that the Community Guide scheme was good for both Guides and community members, but also that it was helping to build capacity in the refugee communities. They would like to know what outcomes the scheme has for all stakeholders, and to understand whether a different settlement outcome results from Community Guides providing settlement support compared to Case Coordinators or someone else.

The management group also raised questions relating to the impact of the Community Guide scheme on AMES performance – such as its cost-effectiveness and impact on Key Performance Indicators. Overwhelmingly though, the management team was keen to know whether the scheme was having positive impacts for clients and Community Guides.

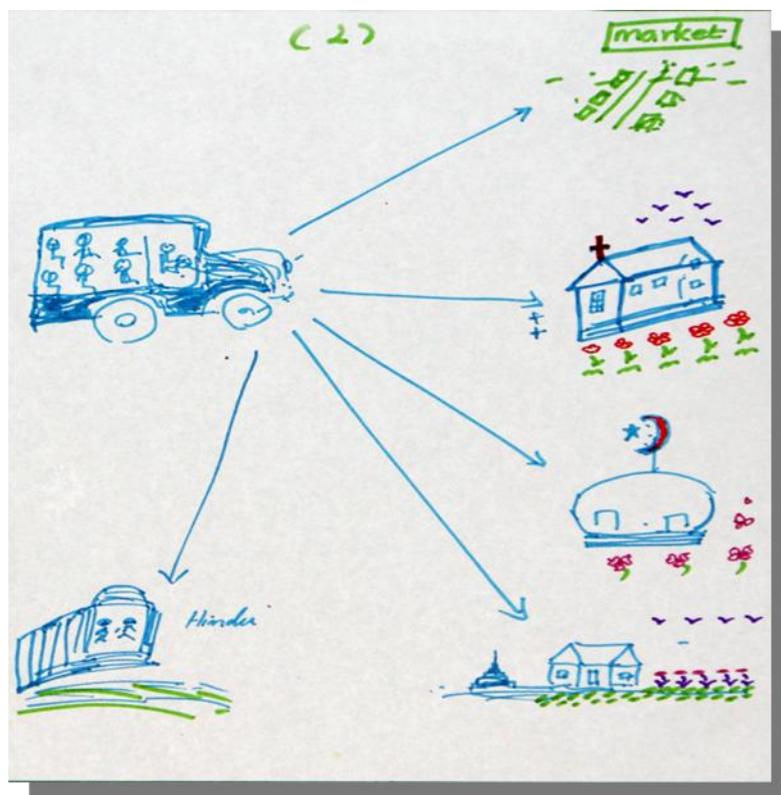
Some of the challenges raised by the management team were similar to concerns raised by the case coordinators and Guides – concerns to know more about the challenges of

boundaries, the training needs of Guides, and that clients are becoming independent and are well linked to the wider community and services on exit from the Community Guide program.

The concept of the Guide as a two way cultural interpreter was raised by the management team – the Community Guide providing information to AMES about new and emerging communities that enables AMES to develop services and programs in a way that best meets the needs of these communities. The Management team would also like to explore how Regional teams capture and use information from the Community Guide scheme for continual improvement.

Appendix 5: Research Methodology

Participatory action research – the process of reciprocal research



When we arrive we are afraid – everything is new and strange. We have drawn the Community Guide as a bus – like a bus – he takes us everywhere.
Client

The participatory action research methodology used in the Community Guides research has been developed by Eileen Pittaway and Linda Bartolomei from the Centre for Refugee Research. It grew from their work examining the occurrence and impact of systematic rape and sexual abuse on refugee women and girls in refugee sites around the world, and subsequently in Australia. It is a method developed for use with community groups, and was strongly informed by input from refugee women from community based organizations on the Thai-Burma Border. The refugees discussed the fact that they were tired of constant requests to participate in research projects, for which they perceived little or no direct benefit to the research participants. They requested that human rights and gender training be provided as part of the research process, and that they themselves be trained to undertake their own research projects.

The focus of the method is the collection of information from often vulnerable populations in a way that is empowering, that is not harmful or exploitative, and that has the potential to bring about social change. It is very effective for use with

marginalized and disadvantaged groups who have valid and historically-based reasons for distrusting people in authority, including researchers, academics and representatives of Government and other institutions. The reciprocal nature of the method transforms people from subjects of research to participants in research. It moves from the notion of 'harm minimisation' as the ethical base of research to the notion of reciprocal benefit, and from researcher-directed projects and outcomes, to participant- and community-directed outcomes. Strict confidentiality agreements are negotiated, and all participants, facilitators and documenters sign a group confidentiality agreement.

In this model of participatory action research, training in human rights provides a context to guide participants through an examination and articulation of issues of concern to their communities. The human rights training is the springboard for subsequent situational analysis by the participants.

'Story circles' are used to enable participants to share stories relating to particular issues, positioned within the human rights framework. These can be participants' own stories, or those of friends, family or community members. This gives participants a degree of safety, as they can share information without necessarily identifying the story as their own; participants often share information which they may previously have withheld or not had an opportunity to relate. The stories yield a large amount of rich data on the experiences of participants, and the impact of these experiences on individuals, families and communities.

The research process then moves from a focus on personal experience to situational analysis and problem solving. This involves a 'Storyboard' technique, in which participants use a series of drawings to conduct situational analyses including proposals for action, response and interventions. This method can and has been used with people of all levels of education, including people who are pre-literate. The Storyboarding technique was introduced to the work of the Centre for Refugee Research by Carole Shaw during work with refugee communities on the Thai-Burma border, and has proved to be effective in sites around the world. Working in small groups, participants focus on one of the issues from the story circles, and prepare a series of posters which illustrate and analyse the issue. The posters can be drawings, a mix of text and drawing, or collages of pictures taken from magazines. The focus is not on artistic ability, but on preparing a clear message to be presented to the larger groups.

Storyboards are used to explore the nature of an issue, its impact on communities, identification of existing relevant services or service gaps, potential solutions to identified problems including which individuals or groups may be able to assist, and hoped-for outcomes. The Storyboard technique allows participants to name problems and issues within their communities in a positive and empowering environment. It

recognises the skills, knowledge and experience and human rights of participants. The underlying premise is that all people have capabilities and capacity to understand and analyse community issues if the resources are available to support them.

The questions which inform story circles and storyboarding can be altered to suit the needs of particular groups and projects. They were adapted for this research, to explore the experience and impact of the Community Guides scheme on individuals and communities.

Storyboard question:

Are there things a Community Guide CANNOT help with?



We would like to bring our immediate family members to our country but [the Community Guide] cannot help at all... they cannot help with DIMIA making decisions. They cannot help us for filling forms to rent the house. Client

The Guide is helping the refugees but sometimes it is out of their hands. They can't always help with Centrelink or the law. The Guide can do good things but not everything. Client



Key to the success of the methodology is verbatim documentation of

- issues identified in the Human Rights training,
- story circles,
- description of and feedback from the group about the storyboards, and
- feedback and clarification from the facilitator.

The verbatim documentation provides rich data for reflection and analysis, to facilitate necessary iterative changes during the consultations, and for subsequent research analysis. For this research, themes arising in the consultations also informed the interview questions for the various stakeholder groups.

A positive outcome of this process of reciprocal research occurs when the researched community is given the opportunity to present outcomes of the consultations to service providers, NGOs and other people in power. The storyboards are an excellent communication vehicle and the facilitators can assist the groups to prepare their presentations. Often this is the first time that the researched group will have had the opportunity to interact with those who have power over their lives. For the Community Guides research, a forum provided an opportunity for representatives from each consultation to make two presentations, one to AMES settlement staff and one to AMES management and external service providers. Representatives for these presentations were selected by the participants in each of the consultations, and the group agreed to the key messages to be brought forward.

This methodology enables research findings to be shared and changes incorporated into practice during the research process, and not just after a final report is completed. During the Community Guides research process, AMES settlement management began introducing some changes in the Community Guides program, based on feedback from the forums.

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