

Enhancing the lives of Older refugees

A resource for Aged Care Workers
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Aim

- To provide an overview of the research component of a project undertaken in the Sydney South Western area on care needs of older refugees
- To provide an overview of the resource which is currently being completed as an outcome of this research

Who is an older refugee?

- People who arrived in the past as refugees and have aged in Australia .
 - Includes people escaping from Southern and Eastern Europe after WWII and from later conflicts in South East Asia and Central and South America
- People who arrived in Australia as elderly refugees
 - form a smaller group
 - high settlement and recovery needs.
 - some will have escaped recent conflicts; others may have experienced war trauma a number of years ago

“Refugee-like’ background

- Many refugees through shame and fear may deny their history and may not provide the necessary cues to alert professional carers to their additional potential needs.
- A fear of retaliation and retribution compounded by a lack of trusting relationships may exacerbate this situation.
- Is also a term which may be used to describe a specific group of older people. These are older people who have settled in Australia through migration programmes and who have come from areas of war and/or organised violence.
- These people may not have come to Australia formally as refugees but they may have experienced similar tortures and traumas, and in many instances it should be **assumed** that they have.



Understanding the history of Work with Older refugees in Sydney South Western (NSW)

- **In 2000**, consultation with refugee communities raised issues of older refugee health and access to services
- **In 2003** a state wide forum on the Health and Settlement Needs of Older Refugees was organised - an Outcomes Paper and the Older Refugees Working Group was formed to take up the issues raised by the forum
- **In 2006** The NSW Refugee Health Service published a Discussion Paper "Caring for Older Refugees in NSW"
- **In 2007** South West Sydney and Macarthur hosted an Older Refugees Seminar for Aged Care Service Providers so that they could provide better care to older refugees
- **In 2008** in response to the feedback received from Aged Care Service Providers at the Seminar, the Older Refugee Working Committee – Good Practice Guidelines Sydney South West was established – marked the beginning of this project

Consultations undertaken with:

Carers caring for Older Refugees (Questionnaire)

- It was important to get the views of the Older Refugees about what was important to them when receiving Aged Care services
- The Working Committee acknowledged the vulnerability of this group and proposed to consult with **ONLY** the Carers caring for Older Refugees

Workers working with Refugee communities in the SWS region (Consultations)

- It was thought that 'Workers' would be able to identify key themes and issues raised by their communities in relation to the refugee experience and aged care services

Aged Care Service Providers – Managers and Coordinators (Questionnaire)

- This group was consulted to understand their needs and issues
- Ensure that the guidelines (resource) was user friendly

Consultation - Trigger questions

- What do you think are the specific issues for older refugees?
- What do you think aged care service providers need to know about older refugees from your community?
- Do you have a specific situation where an older person behaved in an unusual way (that you suspect might have had something to do with them having a refugee background).
- What skills would you like to personally enhance to assist you to care for older refugees clients more effectively?
- What would you like to know more about?

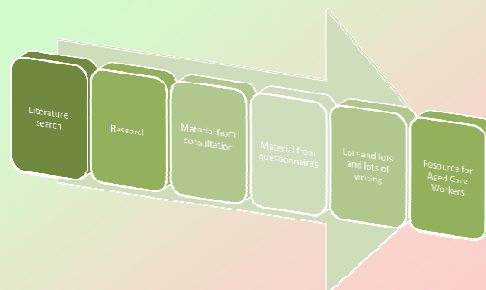
Outcomes of consultation process

- A variety of specific ethnic communities were represented including Polish, Vietnamese, Macedonian, Assyrian, Cambodian, Congolese, Chinese and South American.
- Additionally there were participants who had diverse cultural backgrounds and were representing mainstream or broader multicultural organisations.
- 29 participants attended in total

Material collected

- Includes **issues that are specific to Older Refugees** (including identification of refugees, the emotional impact of being an older refugee and the impact of guilt and loss)
- Additionally much was shared about **the triggers** people have identified which have led to health breakdown in those of refugee background as well as a wealth of discussion around **strategies and skill development** which may enhance the lives of older people who come from a refugee background
- Additionally there were some issues which could best be described as **issues impacting on a wider group of older people** which affect all older people (not only those from an older refugee background)

Process from there



The goals of the resource are to:



- Build the capacity of aged care services to recognise and respond to care needs of older refugees
- Increase the capacity of aged care services to provide care and support to older people from a refugee (or refugee like) background.
- Facilitate culturally competent assessments & care planning
- Improve the development of partnerships across all stakeholders.
- Inform and assist the ongoing development of policies, practices and procedures related to caring for older refugees

A brain storming took place

- Person centred - looking at the person behind the behaviours
- Simplicity
- Structured
- Practical
- Incorporate principles of human rights (UN)
- Current - Relevant
- Sensitive
- Holistic
- Acknowledge resilience of clients
- Increase safety
- Strength based (not problem based)
- Include a component of self awareness (of service provider)
- Work towards being competency based
- Based on building trust
- Enhance good practice

What should lit look like?

- Small
- Neat
- Colourful
- Spiral bound
- Damage resistant
- Tabbed
- Worker centred
- Include personalised examples
- Practical
- Include case histories
- Be humane
- Include diagrams
- Have alerts / pictures
- Flow charts
- Pathways
- Include information about other common aged conditions (i.e. Dementia, delirium and Depression)
- Include fact sheets
- Have links to resources and information that people could access to increase their knowledge

The hierarchy of caring for older refugees

Goals to fit hierarchy

Care Goals for staff

What it looks like??

- Person centred
- Challenging
- Informative
- Cultural briefings
- Story telling
- Emphasis on communication skills

Did you know?

Did you know? In Sierra Leone it is estimated that up to 75,000 people were killed during the civil war while a further two million people were displaced both internally and throughout the region. Many civilians were killed. The mutilation of victims became the signature of the rebel fighters, particularly the removal of limbs. The sexual assault of women as a weapon of war was also common. Sierra Leonean arrivals to Australia may have been personally affected by acts of violence or have witnessed attacks on family members, friends or neighbours.

Did you know? In Afghanistan, life does not belong to just one person... Every decision is connected to the family. One cannot over emphasise the importance of the family, place on allegiance to the family, with strict obediences to the father's authority and elders in general. Traditionally, life's activities were focused within a walled compound consisting of the landowner and his extended family. Even in more modern families the "wall" still remains symbolically.

Did you know? In Vietnam tensions between the two parts of the country soon escalated, and war between them broke out in 1957. Foreign forces including the United States, Australia and New Zealand, supported the south against northern forces and opposition guerrillas in the north. 10 million people in the south were displaced and around 2 million were killed in brutal aerial and ground attacks, and by chemical weapons and mines.

Personal stories

In August 1999 Safar Ali awoke near a roadside amongst a pile of 12 blood-soaked bodies. He had been unconscious for many hours and could hardly believe he was alive. With his muscles swollen and some of his joints dislocated, walking was impossible so Ali crawled to the road and waited for a passing vehicle to take him home.

Sixty-two year old Ali had been beaten by Taliban soldiers who caught him trying to escape across the Afghan border into Pakistan. As an ethnic Hazara and Shiite Muslim, Ali was regarded as inferior by the Taliban who then controlled most of Afghanistan. He had suffered decades of war in his country but since the Taliban had emerged from Afghanistan's post-communist chaos in 1994, his life had become intolerable.

Personal stories

The evacuation of Phnom Penh was in April 1975 when Pol Pot came to power. The Khmer Rouge told [us] that the Americans will bomb soon so to survive we have to get fast out of the city.

We learned later that they just want to punish people who live in the city because we were the enemy of state. They said people who [worked] with the government would be called back in a few weeks when they install the new regime. Who is to know that they kill because they want to clean the old regime and start the new one?

The streets were full of people. People died along the street, some woman gave birth to a baby on the street.

They evacuate three or four million people in a few days. It was shock and disbelief. It was terribly chaotic, there was no planning. A big tragedy unfolded, we did not know what to say except follow orders. There's always a gun fired to the air, to push and order people to move on. It was horrible, horrible



Historical Information

Main countries of origin of refugees settled in Australia 1930 - 2008	
2000-2008	Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Iran, Congo DR, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka
1990-2000	Bosnia & Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic (now Serbia, Montenegro), Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, China, Iraq, Afghanistan
1980-1990	Vietnam, South America, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Lebanon
1970-1980	Vietnam, Laos, Chile, El Salvador, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, Turkey, Poland, Lebanon
1960-1970	Czechoslovakia
1950-1960	Hungary
1947-1950	Europe – Poland, Ukraine, Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia)
1930-1940	Germany, Balkans (mainly Croatia)
1930-1940	Germany – Jewish refugees

Where to from here?

- First draft stage
- Approved by steering committee
- Graphics and Proofing
- Launch of completed resource
- Contributing to enhanced quality of life for older refugees

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