

“ Don't assume you know everything about us (refugees), interact with the community, with its leaders and get involved.”

- Sudanese community leader,
City of Brimbank

“ When you come as a refugee with no language and culture, you feel like you are blind and deaf. You don't understand everything you see and you don't understand everything you hear. You can't read. You can't communicate.”

- Sudanese settlement worker, City of Yarra

Sudanese Scoping Project:

The needs of
Sudanese refugees in
Yarra and Brimbank

Head office
21 Budd Street
Collingwood VIC 3066



Charity gives, justice changes.



Charity gives, justice changes.

**Sudanese Scoping Project:
The needs of Sudanese refugee children, youth
and families in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank**

Author
Endalkatchew B. Gage Benhadya

With assistance from
Will Farrier and Kathy Landvogt

Social Policy Research Unit
21 Budd Street
Collingwood Vic 3066

August 2010

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	5
Executive Summary	6
1 Introduction	10
2 Literature review	11
3 Methodology	17
4 Summary of findings – tables	19
5 Critical settlement issues and challenges	30
6 Service needs	48
7 Conclusion and recommendations	55
References	58
Appendix 1: Interview questions for service providers in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank	60
Appendix 2: Interview questions for members of the Southern Sudan refugee communities	62
Appendix 3: Focus group questions	64
Appendix 4: Participating service providers and agencies	66
Appendix 5: Participating focus groups	68
Appendix 6: Service Provider Survey	69
Appendix 7: Settlement and relevant networks regularly attended	75

“As a Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, I meet regularly with refugee groups – Sudanese, Somali, Hazara, Sierra Leonean and Burmese. However, it is a difficult experience to sit and listen to their accounts of going through the services we provide. The consultation confirmed that the fundamentals of the program – the core services – are still relevant and appropriate. In fact, these are a front on which we are an acknowledged world leader. However, the consultation also revealed gaps and issues around isolation, lack of youth engagement, problems accessing housing, problems accessing employment and training ... We are less successful when it comes to creating sustainable settlement outcomes. The minister and I are looking to set out a new settlement framework – to provide a continuum from offshore to onshore to deliver long-term sustainable settlement outcome ... The way in which we deliver services to humanitarian entrants will need to change.”

**The Hon Laurie Ferguson MP, Parliamentary Secretary
announcement of the Strategic Settlement Framework
– 25 September 2009**

Acknowledgements

A great many thanks go to the staff of the Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service in the Yarra and Brimbank locations for their co-operation and support throughout the project, including the location managers, program managers and administration staff at all levels.

I am also grateful to members of the Sudanese Support Project Reference Group for the continued commitment, contribution and support provided at the different phases. I am also immensely indebted to the members of the Southern Sudan communities in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank, who took keen interest in the project and actively participated in discussions and consultations between May and October 2009.

Many warmly invited me into their communities where they shared their cultural heritage, their refugee experiences and the challenges faced along the way.

The distinct voice and rich contributions of the Southern Sudan communities constitute the bulk of this scoping project.

It is hardly possible to imagine undertaking this project without the enthusiastic and engaging participation of the community members.

I would like to thank, in particular, the Sudanese Women's Group at the Good Shepherd Community House in St Albans, the Sudanese/African Women's Group at the St Albans Primary School, the Sudanese Young Women's group at the River Nile Learning Centre and the members of the Southern Sudan Women's On the Move Network for their time, patience and invaluable contributions made to our work.

It is extremely important that the time, insight and wisdom made available to the project by the various members of the Sudanese community – leaders, elders and professionals, often with more than one role in the community – are acknowledged and appreciated. Your perspectives and originality of thought have made a very visible mark on the report.

I am exceedingly grateful to the wide range of service providers and agencies, and especially the community service professionals who have spared me ample time and participated in the interviews, discussion and consultation in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank, and made available a substantial level of support.

Their honest and objective professional contributions no doubt constitute the other building block of the scoping project.

The perspective of the service providers on one hand and that of the community on the other are the two principal threads that shape the content of the scoping project and the recommendations proposed.

I hope this scoping project will be an addition to the literature that examines the settlement issues of the Southern Sudan refugee communities in general and particularly in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank, and will help inform the work of individuals and agencies in supporting, advocating and providing services to refugee communities.

Endalkatchew B. Gage Benhadya

Executive Summary

Sudanese Scoping Project

An emerging Sudanese community: the context

The Republic of the Sudan, as with many African nations, is divided along fault lines of ethnicity, race and religion, which have shaped the political and social history of this the largest African state. The violent civil conflict waged between the northern and southern regions of Sudan and the associated famines have resulted in a huge loss of life and displacement of the population formerly residing in the southern region. The United Nations estimates that about half a million people from the south have fled Sudan, an exodus that has few parallels in the history of forced migration. Another six million people have been internally displaced within southern Sudan.

The Southern Sudanese community is the largest African refugee community in Australia today. Estimated at 24,000 nationwide, it is the single fastest-growing refugee population in the country. Out of the total Sudanese refugee population in Australia, about 36 per cent is believed to have settled in Victoria – mainly in metropolitan Melbourne. There is no data that captures the secondary migration and massive mobility of the Sudanese community across suburbs in recent years.

Background to the project

This scoping project was developed by Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service in response to growing anecdotal evidence from our frontline work within the cities of Yarra and Brimbank. Our work on the ground attested to a high level of need and demand for specialist support in the growing communities of Sudanese people in both areas, particularly in terms of support for families.

The project was designed to help Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service assess critical issues and the level of community need in each local government area as a stepping stone to developing community-appropriate service responses.

The scoping project was funded by a grant from the Ian Potter Foundation.

Key objectives

The project objectives were to identify age-specific social issues and problems faced by Sudanese refugees in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank; and to make recommendations to address these issues and needs.

Methodology

This study and the key findings are drawn from an analysis of documentary data, a review of previous research on the topic, extensive consultations with stakeholders within the Melbourne municipalities of Yarra and Brimbank and observations of issues within Sudanese communities.

The senior project worker identified two broad categories of informants in both localities: members of Sudanese communities and employees of service providers operating in close proximity to refugee communities. Members of the Sudanese communities were eager to share information about their cultural heritage and challenges relating to their experiences as refugees. The distinct voices and rich contributions of these communities constitute the bulk of the project data.

When contacting service providers, an emphasis was given to those who work

closely with refugee children, youth and families. As much as possible, a diversity of informants was maintained.

Issues identified

Table 1 shows the most critical issues for the Sudanese community as identified by respondents participating in the project.

Table 1: Critical issues identified by respondents, by percentage

	Language (%)	Housing (%)	Transport (%)	Childcare (%)	Employment (%)	Health (%)	Parenting (%)	Racism (%)
Service providers Yarra	80	60	55	45	50	55	60	30
Service providers Brimbank	75	70	60	60	75	60	50	5
Total	77	65	58	53	63	58	55	18
Sudanese community Yarra	80	60	50	30	30	50	40	5
Sudanese community Brimbank	80	75	60	70	70	40	20	10
Total	80	67	55	50	50	45	30	8
GRAND TOTAL	78	66	57	52	57	52	43	13

From the results of our scoping project, the current settlement situation of Sudanese communities, families, young people and children in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank could be described as being a protracted refugee settlement situation.

The settlement issues and needs of the Sudanese in these geographical areas are challenging and complex. They are reflective of the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-linguistic backgrounds and the associated attributes and experiences of these communities, as well as a broad range of environmental factors and expectations of the host community. Although many separate issues were identified, throughout the project it became evident that the inter-relationships and connections between all of the factors were pervasive.

Impacts of critical issues

Table 2 is a summary of the immediate and cumulative impacts of the issues identified through the scoping project for the Sudanese communities in Yarra and Brimbank.

Table 2: Impacts of issues

Critical issues	Immediate impacts	Cumulative impacts
Language & communication	<p>Poor or nil English language proficiency & poor language acquisition pace.</p> <p>Poor literacy skills.</p> <p>Lack of community-based, flexible delivery.</p> <p>Lack of understanding & knowledge of systems in Australia.</p>	<p>Familial instability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Homelessness. ➤ Collapse of traditional families. ➤ Family & domestic violence. ➤ Young people's ability to adjust & transition into a new society & culture. Issues with wellbeing, education, employment, the legal system and homelessness. ➤ Low levels of understanding of parenting & child development in Australia. <p>Social isolation & disconnection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prolonged settlement process. ➤ Limited mobility. ➤ Gap in understanding & knowledge of systems. <p>Financial crisis/poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Low employment. ➤ Reliance upon income support. ➤ Limited access to safe, affordable credit. ➤ Lack of financial literacy. <p>Barriers to accessing formal & informal learning opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Low preschool attendance. ➤ Children & young people in mainstream classes with little or no support. ➤ High level of early school leaving. ➤ Few opportunities for parents to engage in their own & their child's learning.
Chronic housing issues	<p>Lack of affordable housing.</p> <p>Domestic overcrowding.</p> <p>Primary homelessness.</p> <p>Secondary homelessness.</p> <p>Discriminatory practices in housing markets.</p> <p>Lack of transitional & emergency housing.</p>	
Transport	<p>Barrier to accessing service & navigating public transport system.</p> <p>Cost of public transport.</p> <p>Affordability of driving lessons, driver's licence & vehicle.</p>	
Childcare, preschool & school engagement	<p>Affordability & transport to & from restricts access.</p> <p>Very low participation in a range of early childhood play & social activities.</p> <p>Low level of educational early learning support from parents.</p> <p>Low engagement with schooling & poor education outcomes.</p>	
Employment and financial strain	<p>High rate of unemployment (38%) as compared to rest of population (5.4%).</p> <p>Poor language proficiency, lack of relevant skills & work experience.</p> <p>Inability to meet costs of living.</p>	
Health, mental health & trauma	<p>Wide spectrum of mental health issues related to trauma, dislocation.</p> <p>Emergence of reproductive health issues.</p> <p>High levels of teenage pregnancy.</p> <p>Poorer physical, emotional & psychological health of children.</p>	
Parenting/parent support	<p>Collapse of parental authority & challenges to traditional parenting styles, particularly with young people.</p> <p>Different expectations of host community around parenting.</p> <p>May not be recognised by some parents as an issue due to cultural appropriateness.</p> <p>Accessibility of family support and strengthening programs.</p>	
Racism	<p>Real or perceived experiences of racism & discrimination impact upon a range of areas of settlement, including the pace at which it occurs.</p>	

Recommendations

The scoping project findings highlight the interconnectedness of the critical issues identified by participants and moreover the complexity of immediate and ongoing impacts these issues have upon Sudanese individuals and communities in the cities of Brimbank and Yarra. The connection between familial instability and other factors is particularly strong, creating a ripple effect of other issues which impact upon the lives of many Sudanese families. The project recommendations are drawn from areas of need articulated as “cumulative impacts” and fit within the mission, values and existing areas of programmatic expertise of Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service. Together they create a holistic response to a complex set of needs.

Recommendation 1: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service continues to develop a holistic model of support for Sudanese families, young people and children.

Recommendation 2: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops initiatives to stabilise Sudanese families.

Recommendation 3: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service identifies opportunities for Sudanese women to increase their social inclusion and connection with the broader community.

Recommendation 4: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops financial inclusion initiatives specific to the Sudanese community, including affordable credit and financial education.

Recommendation 5: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops initiatives that support the engagement of Sudanese children and young people in education and training.

Recommendation 6: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service focuses on prevention of the cumulative negative impacts of critical issues by developing initiatives to address the immediate impacts of these issues.

Recommendation 7: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service works in partnership with other organisations – especially schools, local Sudanese communities and other community organisations – to develop appropriate and achievable responses.

Recommendation 8: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service provides opportunities for formal and informal life-long learning opportunities for Sudanese community members.

Recommendation 9: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service advocates with governments and community organisations for increased support for the Sudanese community.

Recommendation 10: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service ensures staff members have access to appropriate levels of cross-cultural training.

1 Introduction

Background to the Sudanese Scoping Project

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service has had substantial interaction with a wide range of clients of South Sudanese background in the past five years or so. This population has increasingly accessed a number of programs and services available at the organisation's Yarra and Brimbank locations. Young people and families of the South Sudan community have been assisted and supported in myriad ways, including housing, respite care, financial counselling, family support and involvement in community development. One of the areas of substantial interaction with the community has been in microfinance, with the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS®) and StepUp Loans, which are associated with Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service nationwide.

At the same time, there has been a clear indication from multiple sources that the numbers of South Sudan refugee children and young people entering statutory care has been disproportionately on the rise. The same holds true of the level of involvement of child protective services with refugee families. The steady stream of statutory client referrals of South Sudanese children and young people into out-of-home care programs in recent years is an illustration of the reality of these communities. The anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests this trend will continue to rise in the wake of the heightened level of disadvantage, risk and familial instability within the communities. Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service also recognises the current levels of cultural competency and resources required to effectively respond to those of Southern Sudan refugee background in statutory care is limited.

The Sudanese Scoping Project was a proposal that envisaged bridging the services gap in culturally responsive service provision. Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service was keen to develop and structure an Extended Care Program that would reach out to children and young people, and families of newly arrived communities. One of the themes strongly entertained was around the development of a Sudanese Kinship Care program with the primary aim of building individual, familial and community capacity to develop and enhance kinship networks to ensure cultural identities of children and young people are not lost and social and family cohesion is promoted when children are taken into care.

From the initial concept of service provision, this project was soon redefined to address the need for a better understanding of local settlement issues facing the communities and the types of services they need. Accordingly, the project was developed to engage two broad categories of stakeholder as key informants: the Southern Sudan refugee communities and services providers who work closely with the communities. The extensive information drawn from these consultations forms the basis of the scoping project.

2 Literature review

The historical context of the Sudan

The Republic of the Sudan, as with many African nations, is divided along fault lines of ethnicity, race and religion, which have shaped the political and social history of this the largest African state. Northern Sudan is deeply rooted in the Islamic and Arabist heritage, which has come to define this region as the political and economic centre of the country. During subsequent periods of colonial rule at the hands of Ottoman, Egyptian and British powers, the north has continued to enjoy the political, economic and social development while the south has remained in malignant neglect and is underdeveloped and isolated.

The people of Southern Sudan have more in common with traditional communities of sub-Saharan Africa than with their northern counterparts. The south is made up of a range of diverse ethnic groups marked by physical similarity and some common cultural features, including subsistence-based pastoral and nomadic socio-economic activities and an adherence to indigenous spirituality or Christianity. Nilotic is the common name for many of the people of the south. The term refers to people who speak one form of the Nilotic language family.

The largest ethnic group in Southern Sudan is the Dinka, who make up approximately 40 per cent of the regional population. The Nuer constitute the second-largest grouping, followed by Chollo (or Shilluk) ethnicity. The Bari, Kuku, Kakwa, Mandari, Murle, Didinga, Baka and Bongo are among almost 500 other different ethnicities inhabiting Southern Sudan. A common feature of these various ethnicities is the emphasis placed on the clan as the foundation of social hierarchy. Customary laws embedded within clan organisation regulate the social interaction and relationships, and dictate the operations of daily life in Southern Sudan. On account of the clan institutions, the political and social structures of the Southern Sudan are, by their very nature, highly decentralised.

The political fate of the peoples of Southern Sudan should be understood in the context of Britain's backflip on colonial policy in the 1940s. Prior to the call for independence, the British had established separate administrations in Northern and Southern Sudan to oversee what were recognised as distinct cultural regions. Passports were required to cross the borders from 1922, demarcating the administrations, and permits were required for trade between north and south. In the years leading up to independence, Southern Sudan was prepared for eventual integration with British East Africa (present day Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania), with whom the region has a greater cultural, linguistic and social proximity. However, this special status of the south was reversed in 1946 in favour of integrating the region into the Islamist and Arabist north, a decision made in the absence of consultation with southern representatives and which ushered in a period of strong political agitation for the independence of the south.

As independence was announced in 1956, Sudan was already in the throes of civil war, which had resulted in the deaths of about 500,000 people by the late 1960s. Several hundred thousand more southerners hid in the forests or escaped to refugee camps in neighbouring countries. In 1972, after 17 years of armed conflict, the

opposing sides signed the Addis Ababa Agreement, which guaranteed a degree of autonomy for a southern region under a regional president and brought a decade of peace to Sudan. Unfortunately, the agreement was reneged upon in 1983 when the Northern-based government removed regional autonomy and instituted Shari'a law throughout the whole of Sudan, plunging the country into a second armed conflict.

The discovery of oil in Sudan in the late 1970s began to add another dimension to the conflict between the north and south – the control of economic resources. The state of Sudan forcibly evicted the Southern population that inhabited the areas where oil had been found. The war raged on until the 2005 Naivasha Agreement finally put Southern Sudan on the road to real and enduring autonomy.

After more than six decades at war the human cost of the conflict in Southern Sudan defies one's imagination. Moreover, war has decimated the economic livelihood, social structure and cultural and traditional facets of Southern Sudanese life. The UN refugee agency estimates about half a million people from the south have fled Sudan in an exodus that has few parallels in the history of forced migration. Another six million people have been internally displaced within Southern Sudan. Most displaced Sudanese took refuge in the neighbouring countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and, more recently, Egypt, where they have been trapped in a protracted refugee situation ranging from five to 20 years. Many have been admitted to the developed western nations under various refugee programs, including the Australian Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

Southern Sudan refugee settlement in Australia

The Southern Sudanese community is the largest African refugee community in Australia today. It is the single fastest-growing refugee population in the country, estimated at 24,000 nationwide (DIAC Settlement Database 2009). Unlike many refugee communities from the Great Horn region, the arrival of Southern Sudanese seeking asylum is quite recent. The first substantial arrivals began in 1996. In 2002-2003 Sudan became the Australian humanitarian program's top source country with about 33 per cent of all arrivals. Out of the total Sudanese refugee population in Australia, about 36 per cent are believed to have settled in Victoria, mainly in metropolitan Melbourne. The City of Brimbank, to the northwest of Melbourne's CBD, contains the second-highest population of Sudanese-born people after the City of Greater Dandenong with a local population of more than 1200 in the 2006 census. The City of Yarra, encompassing Melbourne's inner-northern suburbs, ranks sixth and is home to more than 200 Sudanese refugees.

Southern Sudan refugee settlement as an identified issue

The literature relating to the experiences of settlement for refugees in Australia abounds in interview-style studies. Issues brought up in the individual interviews and focus groups consisting of refugees or service providers are mapped and service gaps discussed (Gifford, 2009; Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sudanese Sub-Committee, 2008). Much literature relates directly to refugees from Sudan, something that can be explained by the high intake from this country over the past decade, and also by media publicity surrounding comments in 2007 made by then Federal Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews that Sudanese refugees were having problems integrating into Australian society (Dhanji, 2009).

Literature relating to the resettlement needs of African and Sudanese refugees in Australia frequently relates to youth and the experiences that are specific to this section of the refugee population (Gifford, 2009; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, 2007; Poppitt, G. & Frey, R., 2007). This focus on adolescents is unsurprising considering 62 per cent of Sudanese entrants between 2001 and 2006 were 24 years old or younger (DIAC, 2007). In addition, and as attested by the findings of research in this area, the resettlement needs of Sudanese youth are made all the more immediate by the role of continuing education which plays a major part in the lives of refugee adolescents as soon as they arrive in the country.

Finally, as young people placed in a situation that presents innumerable opportunities in comparison to their parents at the same age, there exists a hope from the parents, as well as the wider community, that Sudanese youth can experience a high degree of success in settling into Australian society.

Scoping studies into issues facing Sudanese refugees in areas of Melbourne

Similar scoping studies that seek to create a profile of the issues facing Sudanese refugees in other Melbourne local government authorities include the *Report of the Wyndham Sudanese Community Forum (2008)* and *Sudanese in south east Melbourne: Perspectives of a new and emerging community (2007)*, focusing on refugee experiences in the City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey and Shire of Cardinia. The Wyndham report details findings of a community forum in the local government authority (LGA) lying to the immediate southwest of Brimbank. The findings relating to the major issues confronting Sudanese refugees mirror many of those found within the current study. Similarly, the report detailing refugee experiences in southeast Melbourne shows issues for Sudanese refugees in these LGAs are very much the same for those residing in Yarra and Brimbank.

In relation to the above research, this scoping project is a valuable addition to the knowledge currently existing in this specific area. Firstly, it covers new geographical areas to increase the spread of knowledge about Sudanese refugees in different areas of metropolitan Melbourne. Secondly, it serves as an update to the general knowledge of Sudanese refugees in Melbourne as the most recent of these reports was compiled two years ago. Thirdly, it seeks to go beyond the profiling of issues to suggest ways in which community service organisations might address them.

Family instability

The current literature supports this scoping project's conclusion that the issue of family instability is at the core of hindrances to successful resettlement. *The Good Starts Research Report (Gifford, 2009)* investigated the experience of resettlement for refugee youth of different nationalities in Melbourne and makes note that:

*“The support of their family is key for Good Starts youth. Yet, few of the young people arrived in Australia as part of an intact family. This, coupled with changes in household composition, **means that family instability was a core feature of family life in the early settlement period for many.*** Additionally, youth are living in families who have many burdens and as such, the supportive context of the family weakens over time.”*

(*Author's emphasis)

Separation from family members is often more distressing than other forms of pre-migration trauma, and has been significantly associated with mental health issues (Milner et. al, 2010). Apart from the trauma of missing family members who remain in Sudan or have been lost in the war, family dynamics shift as new cultural norms are negotiated within Australian society. There are many reports of domestic violence occurring in Sudanese households, and research into this suggests a main cause are the changes in status and expected behaviour of marriage partners as families adapt to the expectations and associated freedoms of a western society (Fisher, 2009; Migrant Information Centre, 2008).

Education

The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria (2007) report, released by Melbourne's Foundation House, makes a connection between two widely recognised truths: firstly, students are more likely to get more out of their education with the active engagement of their parents; and, secondly, such engagement in refugee communities is generally low due to low levels of the parents' own education and literacy, a lack of understanding surrounding the education system and curriculum, and cultural differences.

The *Good Starts* report states that in the common absence of parental support for refugee students an adult role model within the school environment can become a source of general support and encouragement, and that this can be important in both keeping male and female refugee students enrolled.

Dooley (2009) recognises that even for refugees with schooling experience in their former places of residence, the differences between this and the Australian education system, which is "more informal and less didactic", can be vast enough to cause setbacks at school. For example, research-based homework commonly necessitates some form of homework support, such as homework clubs or tutors.

Mental health and trauma

It is important to note the pervasiveness of trauma in understanding the refugee experience. An Australian study into the psychological adjustment of Sudanese refugees found all interviewees had experienced at least one form of trauma within the pre-migration period and more than half had experienced at least five categories (Schweitzer et al., 2007). The same study found this trauma was a significant factor in the onset of mental health issues.

Less confronting stressors also exist, adding to the emotional load of the Sudanese community. For example, the majority of Sudanese refugees in Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham (2009) cited "homesickness and separation from family" as a hindrance in adapting to life in Australia.

Communication

Entrants on humanitarian visas are entitled to 510 hours of free English language classes through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Some people are eligible for a further 400 hours if they meet certain requirements. Much of the literature notes that, for many refugees, AMEP classes (and the related services provided to school-age children) are a positive experience, and interviews with teachers generally paint refugee students as willing and optimistic participants.

However, a common agreement running through the same and additional papers is the number of hours of English tuition provided as part of the settlement package is insufficient in allowing most refugees to obtain a quality of spoken and written language suitable for the workplace or further education (Dhanji, 2009; Gifford, 2009). Dhanji calls the level of English language skills that many refugees finish with “cosmetic” or “social” English.

Communication difficulties have been linked to other less obvious problems in successful resettlement, such as adverse health effects. For example, Milner et. al (2010) describes a situation in which illiterate refugees are unable to read labels on food items at the supermarket to discern the dietary information and are, therefore, eating poorly.

Health

A Victorian study of barriers to healthcare for refugees from the Horn of Africa region found almost a quarter of respondents had a health concern for which they had not sought medical advice even though they believed it would be beneficial (Neale et. al, 2007).

Definitions of key terms

Refugee

According to the United Nations Convention, a refugee is defined as a person who:
"owing to a 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 to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..."
(Article 1, *The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugee*)

The majority of applicants who are considered under this category are identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and referred to the Australian Government by the UNHCR.

Humanitarian Entrants

"The Special Humanitarian Program (SHP) visa is for people who, while not being refugees, are subject to substantial discrimination and human rights abuses in their home country. People who wish to be considered for a SHP visa must be proposed for entry by an Australian citizen or permanent resident over the age of 18, an eligible New Zealand citizen or an organisation operating in Australia."

*(Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs,
The People of Victoria: Statistics from the 2006 Census)*

Protracted Refugee Situations

The UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, defines Protracted Refugee Situations 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. In identifying the major protracted refugee situations in the world, UNHCR uses the

crude measures of refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in the camps. Sudanese communities recognised by the UNHCR to be in protracted refugee situations exist in Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya. The UNHCR recognises the members of such communities will have different experiences of a protracted refugee situation depending on which host country they are accepted into.

Resettlement

“Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against refoulement and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalised citizen of the resettlement country.”

(UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, p.1/1, November 2004)

Settlement

The definition of settlement in the context of refugees or even migrants is often lacking in its meaning and application. There is interchangeable use of the term, which does not sufficiently address the reality that settlement is a complex and varying set of processes undertaken by refugee individuals and communities to establish themselves in their new-found home. The settlement process can be an arduous journey resulting in significant impact on the wellbeing of refugees in terms of their place in the host society. In practice, settlement is:

“a long-term, dynamic, two-way process through which immigrants would, ideally, achieve full equality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities.”

(Immigration Settlement Counselling: A Training Guide OCASI, 1991:8)

Protracted Settlement Situation

When the pace of successful settlement is too low, a stalemate occurs whereby refugee individuals and families remain in a transitional state experiencing a high degree of ongoing difficulties with key aspects of the host society. The low settlement pace of refugees is compounded by the host community's lack of capacity to absorb and resettle refugees into its economic, social and cultural life.

Forced Migration

The definition of Forced Migration as promoted by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) is:

“a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (those displaced by conflicts) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine or development projects”.

(Forced Migration Online)

The reference of forced migration in this paper is exclusively confined to the conflict-induced displacement and dimension of forced migration.

3 Methodology

The key findings of this scoping project were primarily drawn from extensive discussion and consultation undertaken in the municipalities of Yarra and Brimbank. The two key groups of informants were members of the Southern Sudanese refugee communities and professionals involved in a broad range of community-based service provision. Qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and general observations were undertaken with the key participants. The purpose of the research was explained clearly. Community participants provided consent to be interviewed. Generally low literacy levels in the community meant this was verbally obtained. In the case of service providers, filling out survey information is effectively giving consent.

A literature review was undertaken to enhance and contextualise the key themes of the scoping project. It was also powerfully informed by the researcher's theoretical and practical knowledge gained over a number of years living and working with refugee communities, plus "insider" knowledge arising from being a refugee from Africa himself.

Qualitative interviews

i. Interviews with Sudanese refugee community members

The scoping project identified members representing a cross-section of the Southern Sudan refugee communities in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank. The community members were identified through opportunistic and "snowball" sampling. In-depth interviews and focus group interviews were held in community-based locations normally attended by community members (*Appendix 2 – Interview questions for members of the Southern Sudan refugee communities; Appendix 3 – Focus group questions and Appendix 5 – Participating focus groups*). The participants included key community leaders, women and young people, all of whom have significant refugee experiences of forced migration. The interview posed questions regarding their individual and familial experiences of protracted refugee situations, re-settlement in Australia and asked the respondents' views on a wide range of issues relating to settlement. As the in-depth interviews produced narrative answers, they were analysed thematically rather than quantitatively.

ii. Interviews with service providers

The scoping project engaged key organisations within the cities of Yarra and Brimbank, including organisations within the refugee/settlement sector and general organisations providing community services to Sudanese communities, as well as local, state and federal government departments with close interaction with the communities under discussion (*Appendix 4 – Participating service providers and agencies*). In total, 54 professionals were individually interviewed (*Appendix 1 – Interview questions for service providers in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank*). Service providers who were unable to be interviewed in person were sent the survey electronically (*Appendix 6 – Service Provider Survey*). The participants were selected as they represented organisations with significant experience working with Sudanese clients and could be expected to have understanding about the key settlement needs of Sudanese communities, including deficiencies and gaps in the

services they deliver. The questionnaires were designed to capture the organisational background and current services available to Sudanese communities at varying levels, and to record levels of access and participation by the target groups. A quantitative analysis of frequencies and a qualitative thematic analysis were undertaken.

Focus groups

Four focus group meetings were set up to provide additional narrative-based information on the experiences of forced migration. These groups were as follows, and were based at:

- Sudanese Women's Group, Good Shepherd Community House, St Albans
- Sudanese/African Women's Group, St Albans Primary School
- Southern Sudan Women's On Move Network
- River Nile Learning Centre, Footscray (young women)

This information was analysed thematically as for the individual interviews with community members.

Observations

Observations were also conducted at selected sites to deepen and broaden understanding of the subject and enhance the scope of the methodology. The information gained has been used as background and as a source of case studies and quotes, providing added depth to the data. These sites include:

- River Nile Learning Centre
- Sudanese Support ministries
- neighbourhood of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond flats
- Adult Multicultural Educational Services
- Homework groups
- public spaces, such as train stations and bus stations

Limitations

There were a number of practical constraints on gathering the data. Community participants obviously spoke different birth languages (Dinka, Nuer, Arabic), which had to be accommodated. Literacy barriers also presented challenges for gaining the usual consent related to research. There is also a gender bias in the data gathered as men are less likely to attend the service locations and are therefore under-represented in focus groups. In general, women are more willing to talk about their experiences. There was also a degree of unwillingness to criticise services or the settlement experience, which meant it was difficult to get the full views of community members.

4 Summary of findings – tables

a) Characteristics of sample

Table 1: Number of participants in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank

Location	Service provider participants	Sudanese community participants	Total
City of Yarra	40	14	54
City of Brimbank	14	24	38
TOTAL	54	38	92

Table 2: Organisational background of the service provider participants

Type of organisation	Number of participants	Number of organisations
Refugee & settlement sector	9	4
Mainstream services	25	15
TOTAL	34	19

Table 3: Age and gender profile of Sudanese community participants

Gender		Age (in years)				Location	
M	F	18 to 20	21 to 30	31 to 40	41 & above	Yarra	Brimbank
14	24	5	7	14	12	14	24

a. Summary of services provided

The following tables give quantitative summary data about the location and nature of services provided by agencies participating in the service providers' survey.

Table 4: Location of the service provider participants

Local government authority (LGA)	Number
City of Yarra	6
City of Brimbank	7
City of Banyule	1
City of Dandenong	1
City of Darebin	1
City of Whittlesea	1
City of Melton	1
City of Maribyrnong	2
Victoria-wide	2

Table 5: Support services provided for Sudanese clients

Types of support	Number
English as second language	9
Accommodation	1
After-school activities, tutoring & mentoring	9
Vocational training, career & employment support	5
Recreational, camps, sport & leadership programs	6
Youth & family support	14
Bilingual programs	4
Childcare support	4
Legal issues	2
Substances use & counselling	2
Others	3

Table 6: Level of client engagement as perceived by service providers

Perceived engagement	Number
Very low	0
Low	2
Average	8
Above average	1
High	7

Table 7: Service providers' preferred referral pathways for Sudanese client

Referral options	Frequency
Settlement & refugee services	16
Health sector	5
Community services organisations	11
School & education	10
Local government authority (LGA)	4
Kindergartens & childcare	3
Legal aid	2
Employment & training	10
Centrelink	3

Table 8: Perceived ability of service to meet the needs of Sudanese clients

Scale	Number
Poor	0
Fair	3
Good	5
Very good	8
Excellent	3
Other	0

Table 9: Level of the use of interpreters and translators reported by service providers

Scale	With Sudanese communities	With other services
Very rarely	0	0
Rarely	1	1
Occasionally	3	10
Frequently	1	12

Six service providers reported never using interpreters and translators.

Table 10: Level of the use of bilingual worker reported by service providers

Yes	No
9	8

Table 11: Organisation's strengths in working with Sudanese clients, as reported by service providers

Strengths	Number
Multilingual workers, outreach, cultural awareness & responsiveness	4
Links with other agencies	5
Clients' resilience	3
Consultation with community, networks & links	3
Trusting relationships & commitment to respect	6

Table 12: Organisation's barriers and challenges in working with Sudanese clients

Barriers and challenges	Number
Lack of refugee-friendly venues	1
Transport limitations	2
Difficulty contacting clients, maintaining client contact & appointments	1
Resource & funding limitations	2
Language & access to interpreters	3
Access to health, GPs & other health sectors	2
Lack of trust	3
Diminished capacity to respond promptly to client needs	3
Lack of cultural competency	1
Lack of knowledge about refugee experiences	5

Table 13: Identified gaps, as perceived by service providers

Gap	Number
Resources & time	5
Language	5
Cultural intelligence	3
Accessibility	3
Flexibility	3

c) Settlement Issues

The following three tables provide a thematic analysis of the settlement issues of families, young people and children, respectively, based on the responses of community participants and service provider participants.

Table 15: Settlement issues of families

Housing crises & stress	Language barriers	Unemployment	Lack of transport	Culture transition & isolation	Health & trauma	Racism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of adequate affordable housing ▪ Discrimination in housing markets ▪ Domestic overcrowding & cohabitation of large groups ▪ Secondary & primary homelessness ▪ Lack of transitional & emergency housing ▪ Lack of culturally responsive housing support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor literacy skills often originating in home country ▪ Poor or nil English language proficiency & slow pace of language acquisition ▪ Lack of community-based flexible delivery of language education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of English language ▪ Low levels of education, training & skills ▪ Lack of work experience ▪ Overseas qualifications' assessment ▪ Lack of affordable childcare ▪ Discrimination & racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of awareness & familiarity with public transport ▪ Cost of public transport ▪ Lack of support in familiarisation with driving laws ▪ Poor access to drivers' education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clash of culture ▪ Clash of expectations of marriage partners and gender rights ▪ Clash in parenting styles, child-rearing & child-minding practices ▪ Breakdown in communal & kin-based informal social networks ▪ Lack of cultural competency of host society ▪ Language and transport barriers to participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor physical, emotional & mental health resulting from refugee experience ▪ Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder resulting from forced migration, protracted refugee situation and/or settlement situation ▪ Family violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Real or perceived threat of racism ▪ Discrimination in employment, housing & services

Table 16: Settlement issues of young people

Familial instability	Housing crises & stress	Language & education barriers	Lack of transport	Cultural transition	Health/trauma/mental health	Racism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collapse of parent-adolescent relationships ▪ Settlement-induced fragmentation of family units ▪ Collapse of traditional social & communal structures ▪ Family violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary & secondary homelessness ▪ Overcrowding & cohabitation of large groups ▪ Lack of affordable housing ▪ Lack of emergency & transitional housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low education levels & literacy/numeracy skills due to interrupted or sub-standard schooling in refugee situation ▪ Lack of English language acquisition ▪ Age-based not ability-based school placement ▪ Lack of special educational support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public transport costs ▪ Lack of understanding of laws relating to driving ▪ Lack of programs to meet needs of young people around driving skills and licence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negotiating between two cultures ▪ Negotiating two identities ▪ Inter-generational gap ▪ Difficulty with identity formation ▪ Anti-social & criminal behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early pregnancy ▪ Substance abuse & other high-risk behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Experiences of racism across schools, community & employment settings ▪ Discrimination ▪ Low levels of familiarity with rights & responsibilities ▪ Media imagery & presentations ▪ Media & public scrutiny ▪ Lack of legal & social support

Table 17: Settlement issues of children

Family instability	Early learning & social play barriers	Childcare & kindergarten barriers	Education barriers	Health & welfare barriers	Racism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collapse of traditional familial units through refugee experience ▪ Settlement induced fragmentation & breakdown of families ▪ Domestic overcrowding & cohabitation of large groups ▪ Family violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little interaction with early learning settings ▪ Lack of culturally appropriate playgroups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of access to childcare and kindergarten ▪ Costs of childcare ▪ Inadequate access to transport ▪ Lack of Sudanese staff & bicultural workers at childcare centres ▪ Lack of culturally friendly childcare settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low education levels due to refugee experience & trauma ▪ Lack of adequate school-centred educational support ▪ Lack of special refugee support ▪ Lack of multicultural refugee professionals in education settings ▪ Lack of adequate tutoring & homework groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor physical, emotional & psychological health ▪ Lack of co-ordinated child-focused health & welfare support ▪ Absence of adequate child trauma & support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bullying & harassment ▪ Real or perceived threats & racism ▪ Lack of adequate school-based anti-racism support ▪ Lack of proactive access to services ▪ Lack of adequate access to advocacy

d) Service needs

The following three tables provide a thematic analysis of data about service needs (or gaps) from community participant and service provider responses.

Table 18: Service needs of families

Housing provision	Language/literacy education	Transport access	Cultural & social participation	Employment support	Health services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accommodation support ▪ Culturally responsive crisis accommodation & transitional housing ▪ Rental rebate ▪ Education, advice & advocacy about tenancy rights, responsibilities & legal protections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective English language & literacy programs ▪ Community-based, flexible English language education ▪ Bilingual English staff in main services used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driver education in traffic laws, insurance, registration etc ▪ Support with transport to & from appointments ▪ Familiarisation with public transport ▪ Support with transport costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased support with learning how to navigate “the system” ▪ Increased education & support for parenting in new system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support with employment-oriented training ▪ English literacy education for employment ▪ Specialised refugee employment support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased access to refugee health and mental health services ▪ Increased advocacy & support to access services ▪ Refugee-specific health outreach

Table 19: Specific service needs of young people

Housing provision	Family support	Literacy & education opportunities	Transport access	Socio-cultural participation	Employment support	Health services	Anti-racism support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accommodation support ▪ Culturally responsive crisis accommodation & transitional housing ▪ Rental rebate ▪ Education, advice & advocacy about tenancy rights, responsibilities & legal protections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holistic family support & mediation ▪ Youth counselling & mentoring ▪ Education about parenting in “new system” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intensive English language support ▪ Intensive literacy & numeracy education & educational support in schools ▪ Additional settlement support based in schools & bilingual staff in schools ▪ Flexibility in education delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Additional driver education, including registration & laws ▪ Mentoring & driving experience support ▪ Familiarisation with public transport ▪ Support with public transport costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support with learning the “system” ▪ Refugee youth advocacy ▪ School-focused welfare support ▪ Recreational sport, music & art programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refugee youth employment programs ▪ Employment focused mentoring ▪ Traineeships, apprenticeships, vocational training ▪ Workplace support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education on sexual & reproductive health ▪ Programs around refugee wellbeing & health ▪ School-focused health support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legal advocacy & education ▪ Social support

Table 20: Specific service needs of children

Family support	Childcare & kindergarten access	Early learning & play opportunities	Education opportunities	Health & welfare services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holistic family support & support with parent-child engagement ▪ Early intervention services ▪ Education in parenting across cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support & education to access childcare and kindergarten ▪ Support with cost of childcare ▪ Transport to & from childcare centres ▪ Multilingual childcare & kindergarten staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Sudanese playgroups ▪ Parent-child interaction groups ▪ Partnership between Sudanese community & early learning centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School-centred educational academic support ▪ Special needs education support programs ▪ Tutoring & homework groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refugee-specific health outreach, including maternal & child health ▪ School-centred settlement, welfare & health support

Table 21: Most critical issues identified in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank, by percentage

Participants	Language (%)	Housing (%)	Employment (%)	Transport (%)	Parenting (%)	Racism (%)	Childcare (%)	Health (%)
Service providers Yarra	80	60	50	55	60	30	45	55
Service providers Brimbank	75	70	75	60	50	5	60	60
Total	77	65	63	58	55	18	53	58
Sudanese community Yarra	80	60	30	50	40	5	30	50
Sudanese community Brimbank	80	75	70	60	20	10	70	40
Total	80	67	50	55	30	8	50	45
GRAND TOTAL	78	66	57	57	43	13	52	52

5 Critical settlement issues and challenges

“You cannot just settle like this. There is no support, no settlement. Everywhere you need education, housing and work and language to be settled.”

(Sudanese youth)

The settlement issues and challenges relating to Sudanese refugee communities in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank are acute, profound, and in some, aspects extremely difficult to address. The magnitude and complexity of these problems are a source of grave concern as far as the successful transition towards the social inclusion and prosperity of Sudanese refugee communities is concerned. One of the salient features of the set of settlement issues identified in this scoping project is that they are closely interrelated and interconnected. They stem from the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-linguistic backgrounds and associated attributes of the community on one hand and the broad range of environmental factors relating to the host society, including settlement policies and processes, on the other.

A compounding issue common to many refugee groups is that most families and parents have diminished knowledge and understanding of the Australian social, political, economic and cultural facets of life and the belief system that underpins these. It takes time to fully grasp the meanings of the Australian way of life and cultural norms and to learn to navigate through the maze of accessing services, education, employment and so on. Sudanese communities require the significant involvement and support of others to do so.

The current settlement situation of the Sudanese community in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank can be best described as a **protracted settlement situation**, whereby the pace of settlement into the adoptive community is almost stalled and progress in critical settlement areas is below average or negligible. This leaves the community in a state of entrapment. The tasks of settlement and transition are daunting, arduous and fraught with difficulties and challenges.

The protracted settlement situation of these communities has had and will continue to have wide implications for refugee communities and their pace of transition into the cultural, economic and social fabrics of the host society. Without a commensurate level of policy response and concerted community services support, this protracted settlement situation will lead to an ongoing entrenchment of racialised poverty, marginalisation and disadvantage of which glimpses can already be seen.

A clarity and understanding of the nature and genesis of the issues at stake is critical in forming the appropriate policy response in regard to the Southern Sudan refugee communities in both the locations studied and beyond. The following critical settlement issues and challenges have been identified in this scoping project. These issues affect children and young people as well as families, and where there are direct effects on youth and children, these are explicitly outlined under each issue. Furthermore, it must be borne in mind that these settlement issues and challenges are not necessarily unique to the two localities, but have wide application throughout the Southern Sudan-born refugee communities and the other recently arrived refugee communities of sub-Saharan origin.

To set the context for this discussion of the critical issues, some facts about the settlement populations of families, youth and children are provided below.

Families and parents

The average Sudanese household in Australia is made up of five persons. About 27 per cent of Sudanese families are headed by single parents (Sudanese Community Profile). It is possible the actual figure is much higher than reported. About 65.6 per cent of the total population has two family members and above (DIAC Settlement Database 2009).

The experiences of conflict-induced forced migration, the protracted refugee situation and the socio-economic, linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics of the community at large have diminished or limited the capacity and resources that would have assisted with the steady pace of settlement and transition into the host society.

“After all the experiences of war and refugee camps, I think God wanted me to come here. To Australia. I began another life with my husband and children. Everything is different. I tell you everything. And learning everything is not easy. Language is one thing. Culture is the other. The different system. Transport is another. How would you communicate to your doctor? How would you travel around? How would you seek support? Everything is big for us. Looking for house, childcare, shopping, school enrolment, hospitals. It’s difficult to go around these without support, there are two reasons. One is the language, the other one is I do not know about all these before. You feel lost again. Settlement is not easy. It makes you lost. If you don’t get a support, you will be lost. It requires support.”

(Sudanese wife and mother)

As mentioned earlier, the settlement experiences of the Southern Sudanese refugee families and parents can be safely termed as a protracted settlement situation. The vulnerability and risk that dominates the lives of families and parents can be best explained in light of this situation.

Youth

“Almost 70 per cent of the current intake [of refugee and special humanitarian entrants] being under 30 years of age (and this trend likely to continue), we need to ensure the needs of young people are not forgotten.”

(Laurie Ferguson, MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, announcement of the Strategic Settlement Framework – 25 September 2009)

Southern Sudan refugee youth constitutes a substantial segment of the Sudan-born refugee diaspora. With the Sudanese refugee children, they make up about half of the Sudanese Refugee Population. The 2006 Census put the figures of refugee youth at 34.8 per cent (ABS 2009), while the Department of Migration figure stands at 30 per cent (DIAC 2007). The age profile of Southern Sudan settlers between 2001-2006 indicates 62 per cent of entrants are below 24 years of age,

which makes it the largest group of the total population of the Sudanese community in Australia (Sudanese community profile DIAC 2007).

Many Southern Sudan refugee youth have had first-hand experience of protracted armed conflict, political violence, wanton destruction of property and life, forcible uprooting and dislocation. A great many were either born or grew up in protracted refugee situations and so spent most of their childhood and the formative years so crucial for their holistic development under the harsh and deprived circumstances of refugee camps. Separation from parents and primary care-givers were too often common, as were instances of conscription into the warring rebel or state militias. The Sudanese young person's journey has not been an easy one, and is not a success story in many instances. Despite the rapid pace of language acquisition and apparent acculturation of Southern Sudan young people, this group remains highly disadvantaged, vulnerable and at risk, frequently marginalised and alienated even from its own culture and families. Some of these young people have also been the subject of harsh media scrutiny and public debate, unfortunately at times being misunderstood and even vilified.

Children

Southern Sudan refugee children account for about 40 per cent of the total population of the Southern Sudan refugees, who are estimated at half a million worldwide (2007 IDMC). Another report indicates children under the age of 18 constitute half of the Southern Sudan-born refugee population in the Ethiopian, Egyptian, Kenyan and Ugandan refugee camps (UNHCR Report African Refugee 2005). Of the total population of the refugee and humanitarian intake to Australia, refugee children roughly make up about 32 per cent (DIAC 2007). Sudanese refugee children aged between 0-12 years of age constitute 23.1 per cent of the total Sudanese population that arrived under the Australian Refugee and Humanitarian intake since the mid 1990s (ABS 2006). According to a recent figure, Sudanese refugee children below the age of 19 years are estimated at 49 per cent of the total Sudanese population in Australia (DIAC Settlement Database 2009). By virtue of the experiences of forced migration and protracted refugee situations, Southern Sudan refugee children have to contend with numerous major settlement issues on arrival in Australia.

a) Familial instability

Familial instability in the context of this scoping project refers to the disruption and fracture of traditional familial ties and communal structures, including conjugal ties, which are the social foundations of life in Sudan. The settlement-induced household instability is marked, among other things, by domestic overcrowding, unemployment of parents, language and cultural barriers and the diminished capacity to negotiate the social landscape of the host society at large. Many refugee families arrive already fractured by the death, trauma and separation wrought by the experience of fleeing their home and country. Once in their host country, the drivers of familial instability include housing stress, unemployment and the resulting lack of economic security, poor pace of host language acquisition and low levels of cultural transition into the dominant host culture.

These are exacerbated all too frequently by a collapse of traditional parental authority, intergenerational conflict, the “parentification” of children and the disappearances of the customs and traditions that once regulated traditional family relationship and ties.

“Sudanese kids and teens have taken control of families.”

(Settlement worker)

“Centrelink is at the centre of (our) problem when it comes to young people. It advised my 16-year-old son that he would earn more money if he leaves home.”

(Sudanese father)

With the collapse of the traditional social organisation, which was a source of parental authority and the basis of a traditional parenting-style, parents of Sudanese refugee families have difficulty adjusting to the western parenting-style offered by Australian society and expected by their children once they have been exposed to it. This tension can undermine family life and lead to an intergenerational rift. Further tension results from children acquiring better English proficiency, which predisposes them to greater resistance to the traditions and worldview of their parents. This scoping project found an increasing level of outright rebellion against parental authority. Further outcomes include homelessness for children and social isolation for parents who rely on their children to communicate with the outside world.

This heightened level of familial instability in combination with other factors places refugee families and parents at significant risk of ongoing poor health and settlement outcomes. The inclination of family members to keep their troubles private and protect the family from the exposure of these issues to outsiders compounds their difficulties.

Youth

One of the major settlement issues for Southern Sudan refugee youth is lack or absence of familial stability within the household environment. Combined with other factors, such as housing stress, unemployment, transmigration trauma and language and cultural barriers, the weakening of the parent-adolescent relationship and resulting family breakdown are devastating for refugee youth. Southern Sudan refugee youth are almost hostage to their traditional communal roots on the one hand and cosmopolitan western culture on the other.

“There is no communication between children, particularly young people and parents. There is a sort of cold war between them. Parents are not emotionally involved with children.”

(Sudanese worker)

The severity of familial instability impacts on their schooling, employment, general wellbeing and capacity to participate in and adjust to the host society. For these young people, successful transition depends on their resilience and capacity to negotiate between and selectively blend the two cultures.

CASE STUDY

Tahir's settlement journey began to unravel soon after he joined the local primary school, where he earned notoriety as a difficult and unruly child. On the basis of his age he was placed in Year 4, where he stood out among his peers in terms of his poor level of social, academic and life skills. He practically lacked any basic literacy and numeracy. The poor language fluency, cultural issues and transmigration trauma all contributed to his situation. He felt as if he was constantly under the spotlight in class and outside. The insensitivity with which he was often treated infuriated him.

By the beginning of the following year, Tahir was a bewildered, disoriented kid with anger issues. He was often in verbal and physical scuffles and fights. He absconded from classes. His relationship with his parents deteriorated markedly. The family maintained he was violent, uncontrollable and rude with no respect for anything. Tahir confided in the school welfare co-ordinator that he was being abused at home. The school notified Child Protection Services, who promptly removed Tahir from his parents' care. The parents were significantly traumatised by the removal and devastated by the allegations and court order.

Tahir lived with various foster families. Some he liked for the material things, the space and variety offered. He hated others, mainly for the rules they placed on him. Foster carers had concerns for the low level of attachment and anarchic behaviour. The relationship with the family broke down completely. He is currently in foster care, has enrolled at college where his behaviour seems to have improved and has made some friends with other kids of refugee background.

Children

Family instability owing to the perilous journey of forced migration, the depletive effects of being in a protracted refugee situation and the dynamics of settlement has become a defining hallmark of refugee children's experience. This has continued to have an impact on the capacity of Southern Sudan-born refugee children to make a successful transition into their new life. In combination with other factors, these circumstances place refugee children at a significant risk of poor health, education and settlement outcomes.

b) Acute housing stress and housing crisis

*"A one-parent head of a Sudanese family of five had at one stage stayed in a garage for an extended period of time. They cooked outside in the open. It's a difficult life."
(Sudanese support worker)*

*"In the last month alone, three (Sudanese) single parents with kids came to our service. They are homeless."
(Housing worker)*

Community members and service providers identified housing stress as a crucial issue in these communities. There is strong body of evidence to suggest

the issue is widespread across the Sudanese refugee community as with other newly arrived refugee communities in Melbourne. A majority of the members of the Southern Sudan community experience housing stress, which is frequently at an acute level and usually has wider repercussions on families and the community.

Aspects of housing stress include lack of affordable and secure long-term housing and domestic overcrowding. Large families, single-parent headed households and those with diminished social networks or major language and transport barriers are the most at risk of descending past acute housing stress into homelessness.

There are reports of Sudanese families with children currently living in garages, refuges and rooming houses. Housing difficulties emerge as the most significant contributor to familial instability. It has a profound impact on the settlement outcome and quality of life of Southern Sudan refugees and on the longer-term health and wellbeing of the refugee household.

CASE STUDY

Fazilah spent about 17 years in refugee camps in Ethiopia and then in Kenya. She recalls nothing about Sudan. The refugee camps were the home and community that defines her. She knew nothing of her parents or relatives. They are all the unaccounted victims of war. She witnessed violence and death, destruction, famine and starvation. She lived amid the chaos, never having a childhood. Like many unaccompanied minors, Fazilah was exploited by carers and others, spending every day of her camp life collecting firewood and water, and enduring other heavy labour.

The years wore on and she became of age. The tradition of her people demands an arranged marriage. She had no say. Her carer had collected a token dowry in exchange. In no time she became a mother of several children, eventually arriving in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program. Nothing had prepared her for the challenges she is about to face in Australia.

They had to live with the proposer to be able to repay the travel loans that enabled them to come here. The family was crammed into two bedrooms of a house, but neighbours alerted the landlord about the new occupants and an eviction notice was issued. In spite of concerted efforts, both families were not able to secure housing and were forced to leave, squatting outside for hours. The police, with the assistance of nearby services, managed to put them in a motel for weeks on end, and in transition houses and refuges. Fazilah found the whole process daunting and too much to cope with despite eventually being helped by a service to find housing. Life was no longer the simple task she had once known.

The acute housing stress being experienced by the community has brought about a massive population movement or secondary migration to areas where there are few support services available. Such mass movements often have the potential to stir racial issues and threaten social cohesion in communities.

Difficulties in finding suitable housing are confounded by the lack of a basic understanding of the rental market as well as tenancy rights and responsibilities. In addition, participants in the scoping project cited instances of discriminatory practices based on the size of families, ethnicity and income.

Youth

“A Sudanese kid was made fun of at school when he told others that they all sleep in one room. When he came back home, he asked why his family packed together in one room when everybody else in their families has a separate room?”

(Migrant refugee worker, St Albans)

A substantial level of housing stress and housing crisis exists among Southern Sudanese refugee youth. There is a disproportionately high rate of early home leaving and homelessness caused by a combination of domestic overcrowding, parental absence, family breakdown, peer pressure, substance use, early teen pregnancy and breakdown in traditional relationships. In a majority of cases, familial instability appears to be the prime driver of homelessness within refugee youth. Secondary homelessness and the risk of primary homelessness are widespread and have created large groups who share and cohabit property, often illegally. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest primary homelessness is on the rise among refugee youth. Other than being a source of significant stress and trauma, homelessness in its various forms is also one of the causes of risk-taking behaviour and other issues that are negatively affecting young peoples' life chances.

c) Language and communication barriers

“When you come as a refugee with no language and culture, you are like a blind and deaf person. You don't understand everything you see and everything you hear. You can't read, you can't communicate.”

(Sudanese settlement worker)

“Language is difficult. Even asking for items in shopping centres, going to the butcher and ordering what you want is difficult if you don't speak English.”

(Sudanese mother)

The overwhelming majority of participants in the scoping project – members of the Sudanese community and service providers alike – identified language barriers as the most significant settlement issue facing Sudanese refugees in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank. In spite of the provision of English language lessons as a part of the settlement package, few refugees seem to achieve a functional level of English proficiency in the given time frame provided or even within the extended time frame thereafter. Almost 80 per cent of Sudanese humanitarian entrants arriving in greater Melbourne between 2000 and 2010 had nil or poor English language proficiency. The overwhelming majority of the Sudanese parents and families had little or no formal education and literacy in their own language.

CASE STUDY

Subin vividly recalls the date the Sudanese state security forces took her husband in the middle of the night, allegedly for his links to the opposition. She never saw or heard of him again. Sadly, no one left her alone to grieve. Her home was invaded, searched and plundered. She was harassed, even abused.

In the wake of these circumstances, she fled the Sudan with her young daughter. She lived and worked in Cairo's working-class suburbs for more than half a decade. While working as a cleaner she fell, sustaining multiple injuries. The fact she did not have proper medical attention has left her with permanent disability.

In 2005, Subin was granted a humanitarian visa to settle in Australia. The change was immense. She lived with her daughter in temporary accommodation in an inner suburb. The cultural and linguistic barrier was huge. She sincerely believed she was beyond the age of learning. Despite more than five years of various English language programs, she still relies on her daughter for almost all communication needs. Navigating the health system's different specialists, various clinics, tests and papers has proved the most daunting. She gets confused and disoriented.

The lack of English proficiency in parents diminishes their capacity to communicate with their children and disrupts family roles when they need to use children as interpreters in visits to doctors, schools, and other services. For children, lack of English or slow pace in acquiring it becomes a major impediment to settlement.

Language barriers diminish the capacity of Sudanese people to participate fully in the social, cultural and economic life of the host community. Poor or nil English language proficiency and poor literacy skills cut people off from participating in a range of social fields, and restrict understanding of and access to employment, medical care and education. Communication barriers are, in effect, the bottleneck which have the potential to impede progress in other key settlement criteria. To integrate successfully, a newly settled person has to be able to take in as much as possible in order to navigate the systems and beliefs that direct life in their adoptive country. Unsurprisingly then, this issue is regarded as the most pressing for refugee communities and service providers alike.

CASE STUDY

Funyido is a small enclave in the western plains of Ethiopia. It had been home to tens of thousands of refugees from Southern Sudan. It is Nijam's place of birth. Ethiopia's opposition forces annihilated the camp in 1990, forcing a great many to flee. Nijam was three years old at the time.

Persons remotely related to his mother rescued him and took him, after months of difficult trekking, to Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp. No one has ever heard of his parents and siblings. He was cared for by the same people, until he learnt to fend for himself as a child labourer.

One of Nijam's surviving relatives, who happened to live in Victoria, managed to trace the boy in the refugee camp through the Red Cross Agency. In 2004, Nijam was proposed to come to Australia under the Special Humanitarian Program to join his relative in Melbourne. It marked the advent of a new chapter in his life. He sincerely believed he had been given a new lease on the life.

Nijam spent one year in English classes at the local school with fellow refugees, but he made little progress in using basic English speech. After the completion of his allocated hours and extra times, the school connected him with the nearby TAFE to continue with his numeracy and literacy skills. It was here Nijam became acutely aware of his low level of education and the poor learning pace. This became a source of discouragement and frustration. He felt alone in his struggle. He sought to secure any form of employment, but none of his endeavours were successful.

d) Unemployment

"I separated from my husband. I took my children and left. I become homeless. Lived for a while with people I knew. Very crowded. It was difficult with kids to be homeless. I lived in emergency and transitional housing until I moved to the public estate two years ago. I am almost isolated. I can't support my children in school. I cannot drive and I can't take them anywhere. It's hard to raise children here in this situation. I sit at home always, no work, no education. I am lost even now. I also fear."

(Sudanese mother)

There is a wide consensus among the scoping project's participants that unemployment is an issue of significant magnitude within the Southern Sudan-born community in the two locations. The unemployment rate of this population stands at 38.2 per cent compared to an average of 5.4 per cent unemployment rate claimed for the Victorian population as a whole (ASB 2006). A broad combination of factors explains the diminished employment prospects of the Sudanese refugee community. These factors include non-proficiency in English, lack of skills and recognised training, and lack of Australian workplace experiences as well as real and perceived threats of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Lack of employment drives housing and other financial crises. Lasting entry into the labour force and the attainment of the economic security that follows is a crucial benchmark on which the successful settlement of refugee populations hinges.

Youth

Widespread unemployment is one of the settlement issues of paramount significance for Southern Sudan refugee youth. The factors explaining the high rate of unemployment are similar to those for adults, and include poor educational outcomes, lack of skill and training, lack of qualifications or trades, and real and perceived threats of racism and discrimination. Not only is employment and entry into the labour force a key measure of successful settlement, employment is a significant source of self-esteem, self-reliance and responsibility for refugee youth.

e) Education and childcare

*“Imagine when a kid can’t hold a pencil at the age of 12 and in high school.”
(Sudanese mother)*

“At the age of 10 or 11 kids come to Australia. With no education. Somebody places them in Grade 5 or 6. It is difficult for that child to cope in class. It’s a huge issue. The same problem with children aged 13 or 14. They go to secondary colleges and they don’t cope, they drop out of school. These are the problem kids you now have on the streets.”

(Sudanese community leader)

The scoping project respondents reported, overall, refugee children’s school experience was poor. One of the major settlement issues identified is the poor level of educational integration of children from Southern Sudan. This does not stand as a reflection on any of the schools involved in the scoping project or the two locations. Rather, it illustrates the lack of adequate specific educational policy responses combined with failure of aspects of the settlement policy in relation to refugee children. The unique settlement needs of refugee children in the school context have not drawn the attention and response they deserve. These children arrive in Australia with little or no formal education to help with their transition to mainstream school. On the other hand, schools have been ill prepared for the avalanche of refugee children’s social and academic issues and needs. Schools often lack the resources, specialist staffing, policy frameworks and cultural competency required to help children overcome the educational deficits they arrive with and the further challenges of settlement.

Youth

“A boy was taken to TAFE. He came in 2007 to Australia and directly moved to high school. He only did fair, and they moved him to TAFE. He came from Kakuma [refugee camp, Kenya] where he lived with his grandparents as his parents had perished in the war. How would you fare in the Australian education system? No way. He hangs around with the already disengaged youth. That’s bad.”

(Sudanese mother)

One of the most daunting challenges for Southern Sudan refugee youth is schooling. Educational settings are the first areas with which the majority of refugee youth would have an interaction in one way or the other. The schooling experience of Southern Sudan refugee youth is often troubled and sometimes bleak.

The majority of Southern Sudan refugee youth arrived in Australia with little or no formal schooling, impeding their absorption into the Australian educational system. Evidence indicates the majority lacked the basic building blocks of early years of learning and of literacy and numeracy skills to prepare them for the Victorian curriculum. Subject-based conceptual knowledge was also not present. Refugee youth lack the academic, cultural and social experiences their peers in the host society can usually take for granted. They do, however, bring the compensations of resilience, eagerness to learn and open-mindedness to new knowledge.

Notwithstanding the positive attributes and potential every refugee student brings, Victorian state schools have little preparation to respond effectively to the high needs of refugee students. With little support to manage either their settlement issues or educational deficits, Southern Sudan refugee youth find themselves lost in a world they do not understand. This is a source of significant trauma and stress.

Southern Sudan youth, in particular, and refugee youth of Sub-Saharan origin reportedly have the highest early school-leaving rate in the state. Few young people seem to grasp the fact their long-term success is most probably tied to their educational outcomes and that poor outcomes will often mark them out early for disadvantage, which may last the rest of their lives.

CASE STUDY

It is almost 10 years since Charuni first set foot in Australia with her aunty, uncle and cousins. At age three she fled with her aunty and only surviving relatives, but can recall nothing of Southern Sudan or of her parents and siblings – whom the conflict claimed. She grew up in the Ugandan refugee camps, labouring alongside adults for survival, fetching water, collecting firewood, raising kids, helping with house chores and running errands.

This was to change in 2002, when the UNHCR officials in the camp referred the aunty's family for resettlement in Australia and in no time they were in Melbourne. With the assistance of settlement and refugee workers and the community they made their home in the western suburbs. Charuni remembers this as the happiest period of her life.

As the euphoria began to wear off, the realities of settlement began to dawn. It was not an easy task to acquire a new language and make sense of the culture shock experienced. The knowledge of myriads of things and understanding how basic, mundane things worked was often beyond her grasp.

The most daunting challenge for Charuni in her new home came soon after enrolling in secondary school, for which her refugee experiences had least prepared her. Placed in Year 7, she was unable to write nor could she read. She had never heard of the concepts of maths, science and other subjects. People around her considered dumb and she felt a deep sense of loss and failure. Nobody seemed to know or care that this was her first time in school.

Charuni went to school for almost four years. Although her spoken English markedly improved, academically she struggled. A combination of factors led to estrangement with her aunty, who did not approve of her new lifestyle.

Charuni began to drink socially, go out with friends, came home late at night, and spoke to her aunty in a way that was considered disrespectful. She left home to live with friends and later with her boyfriend.”

Children

A lack of access to childcare centres and kindergarten and of support to refugee children within those early years has been identified as a significant settlement issue of Southern Sudan refugee children in the two localities. The unique needs of these children are not being met within these early years by services that are intended to ensure a positive start for all young children in Victoria.

In 2010, kindergartens in the City of Brimbank have had an enrolment of 1300 children across the region. Out of these, only nine were reported to be of Southern Sudan background (City of Brimbank 2009). It gives us a glimpse into the participation of children in an area that hosts the second-largest community in Victoria. It was difficult to obtain comparable figures on the level of participation of children in childcare. But there is anecdotal evidence that indicates a low level of participation. The high cost of childcare in part explains the low participation of refugee children. The other factor is the barrier of transportation and low mobility of refugee families.

This low level of participation by Southern Sudan refugee children in the early years will continue to impact on their language, social and life-skills development, their subsequent schooling and their cultural transition. Arriving at primary school without kindergarten experience sets the children at a further disadvantage. The scoping project has found a significant number of children who are enrolled in Prep have very little English proficiency or none at all, and diminished social and learning skills at primary schools.

f) Transport

Issues surrounding transport and lack of mobility are one of the main barriers to accessing services and increasing social networks. Navigating the overly complex public transport system with its timetables, route numbers, zones and so on can be daunting for refugees, especially when this is compounded with illiteracy. Affordability is another issue, as dependency on public transport to regularly cross multiple zones can dramatically increase an individual's weekly outgoings.

In terms of private transport, the barriers to mobility include the expense of driving lessons and acquiring a licence, and the further cost of owning and maintaining a car. In addition, there may be confusion surrounding the rigid and complicated road and licensing rules, which are highly structured compared to those in Sudan.

Limited mobility of individuals in the Sudanese refugee community can lead to profound impacts, which range from the obvious difficulties in accessing crucial services such as healthcare to serious cases of social isolation. Transport issues seem to impact on women more severely than men owing to their increased share of household duties and parental responsibility in Sudanese culture. Young people experience the same transport difficulties as their elders in getting around their community and to school.

CASE STUDY

At the age of 48, Subin considers herself too old to be able to learn to drive. But she has a mild disability, which means travel has remained a significant issue that has confined her at home most of the time. Subin seems to have fewer contacts, let alone relatives.

She also has a limited connection with services and support services. She was also acutely aware that she could not provide adequate support in terms of school and recreation for her daughter, who would like to participate in a wide range of activities both at school and outside school.

g) Social isolation/disconnection

A pervasive level of social isolation and disconnection affects the community. The changes to traditional, communal and cultural lifestyles and ways of life, which result from forced migration and resettlement, radically alter the modalities of interaction and socialisation of the communities. The high degree of connection and affinity the families would have in their pre-migration period is gone. This social isolation felt by the members of the community is further exacerbated by the absence of informal social groups, which can serve as a vehicle for socialisation and bring people together for traditional activities, events and rituals. Such a magnet for vibrant interaction would provide some substitute for what has been lost through forced migration. Transport, language and cultural competency of the host culture all play a role in this isolation. Although the social disconnection among the refugee populace is purely a settlement-induced phenomenon, its impact on the health, wellbeing and general functioning of the families and parents is immense.

Youth

The severity of disengagement and alienation of Southern Sudan refugee youth is demonstrated by their increasing interaction with the justice system. In spite of the fact that the target population are recent arrivals, they are disproportionately represented at the custodial centre. For these most-at-risk refugee youth there appears to be little or no specialised support available.

CASE STUDY

A deep sense of desperation and failure began to engulf Wiraj and he began to go out with friends, consume alcohol and use drugs he had never known before. He frequented the public spaces and train stations, and was involved in youth brawls in a number of settings.

The situation at home, too, began to reflect his changed lifestyle. He was argumentative, defiant and rebellious against the uncle's authority. Things began unmanageable. When Wiraj was asked to move out of home, he couch-surfed for a while. At one point he became homeless and lived for half a year in rooming houses and temporary shelters.

Today Wiraj is a disengaged, at-risk young person involved in no meaningful activities and

without any community or family connections. He suffers trauma and other mental health issues, but he has secured accommodation with the help of youth workers and hopes to be employed someday.

Children

The other significant settlement issue relating to Southern Sudan refugee children is the marked absence of their participation in and access to a wide range of early childhood play and social activities. More significantly, there is little or no opportunity for children to engage in social activities within their own cultural communities. The level of early childhood play and social activity is almost non-existent for Sudan-born refugee children, who spend their formative years isolated and confined to homes with their parents.

CASE STUDY

Fatimah was born in the refugee camps in Guinea after her parents met there, having fled the horror of bloodshed and mayhem in Liberia. She was followed by a further three younger siblings. In 2007, the family arrived in Australia and began living in a Housing Commission flat.

The whole family struggled with a range of settlement issues, including refugee trauma. The lack of social connection, diminished knowledge of support services around them and the language and cultural barriers have been immense.

h) Financial strain

A severe form of financial strain, bordering at times on financial crisis, has been identified as a recurring barrier, affecting housing, transport, childcare and other issues. There is no doubt culture informs behaviour and decisions about financial issues. For the majority of the Southern Sudan pre-migration experience, the medium of economic and social transaction has never been monetary. As a communal, traditional and pastoralist community, social and economic transaction, including trade, involves bartering. In the case of Southern Sudan, cattle form the basis of the social and economic capital and by default the acceptable form of currency. It is a society that operated without the monetary token and required no financial institutions. Exposure to financial or monetary issues was also almost non-existent during their protracted refugee situation when emergency food and shelter was provided. Consequently, many in these communities lack basic knowledge and understanding of financial matters.

Coupled with poor literacy skills, the management of their meagre financial resources has been a huge hurdle for families and parents who continue to struggle to pay rents, utilities and other basic costs of living. The high level of consumerism and resulting debt is one of the outcomes and a further source of financial strain and crisis, reducing the already subsistence existence into a pattern of poverty and its cycles.

Youth

Southern Sudan youth behaviour around financial issues is also informed by the socio-cultural attitude and pre-migration experiences with money. The main financial crisis drivers for refugee youth include excessive fines and infringement penalties, debts, substantial spending on consumer goods and loans. Commitments to support families overseas also play a significant role. These are further exacerbated by poor budgeting skills and low financial literacy.

i) Health/trauma/mental health

“No word can explain our suffering in Sudan. And the suffering of our people. A lot of violence, a lot of war, a lot of dislocation. Everywhere was fire, death and mayhem. It was destruction. The whole of community, villages, farms were razed to ground. People were hunted down and killed like animals. Children, elderly and young starved to death. That was the life in Sudan, our life in Sudan.

We run away, We fled. Everyone ran for his life. At the time you don't know where, really. And somehow, you survive, others not. And you ask why I survived when all others, children, elderly and young, were wasted. Imagine when you lose relatives, neighbours and family members. Even if you survived all that war and death, though you are live, still something is missing, something inside you is never the same again. You are lost inside.

Then you begin another life, in a different place. Another life again, this time in Kenya in the Kakuma Camp. You know that you are lost. In the camp was no war because there were no machineguns, no helicopter, no cannons, no mortar, no stalking army units, no bombs, no running and no big type of killing. Still people get killed by disease, hunger and bandits. Still people raped, still people disappear. You depend on someone else for food, for water. It is a big prison, the camp.

For 15 years I lived in the camp. I married there. I had children there. No social things, no wedding, no songs, no burial ceremony, no birthday ceremony. No cattle, no food of your own. No culture. It's an empty, hard and miserable life. You are very much lost.”

(Sudanese mother)

“Trauma issues, I think, underpin a lot of other issues relating to Sudanese clients we work with.”

(Family services worker)

Transmigration trauma and a wide spectrum of mental health issues were frequently identified as issues in this scoping project. The combination of life events of dislocation and loss and protracted refugee and settlement situations together induce significant levels of trauma and affect the wellbeing and health of families and

parents of the Southern Sudan community. The real or perceived threats of racism and discrimination also contribute to trauma and mental health issues.

CASE STUDY

Mariam was a mother of several young children who had gone through many of the traumas common to Sudanese refugees before coming to Australia. After having many problems finding housing, things started to wear her down. The barrier of language along with lack of knowledge and social networks had diminished her capacities. Her husband was away working in country Victoria and only came home once in a month.

Mariam developed signs of fatigue, stress and depression, which were complicated by previous experiences of trauma. In a dramatic twist of events, she left her children and fled the family home. Mariam called the police and church, telling them she could no longer take care of the children and expressed the desire to go back to the Sudan. Her husband had to come back from work to take full care of the family.

Youth

For refugee youth, transmigration trauma is not uncommon and will remain an ongoing part of their life, requiring a lifetime of juggling and support. A spectrum of mental health and trauma issues appears among refugee youth. This trauma has its roots in the personal life experiences of dislocation, loss and witnessing or being subjected to political violence and horror on a scale unimaginable in Australia. The deprivation of the refugee camp experience has further debilitating impacts on the psychological wellbeing of vulnerable young people. The protracted settlement situation in which most refugee youth find themselves adds another layer to their already fragile state of emotional and psychological wellbeing. The real and perceived threats of racism and discrimination, stressors of settlement and acculturation, homelessness, familial instability, substance use, isolation, lack of support and the struggle with their own identity and development as adolescents frequently bring these young people to crisis point. Without a place to seek support and comfort in the face of this adversity, they are at high risk.

One manifestation of this risk is the widespread use of alcohol and a range of drugs by young people. This is one of the contributors to the deterioration of their relationships with parents, as well as affecting their health severely and fuelling anti-social behaviour, criminal offences and risk-taking behaviours. Consultations found trauma, loss, peer pressure, differing social norms in relation to alcohol and other drug use, adjustment difficulties and socio-economic disadvantage are some of the factors that place African refugee youth at risk of substance misuse, unemployment, homelessness and involvement with the judicial system.

Reproductive health issues are another indicator of these health and risk-taking issues, and are widespread among refugee youth in general. Among Southern Sudan-born teenage girls there is a high level of early pregnancy, often creating significant conflict with parents and breaks with family members. In a majority of instances, these young women are disowned by their families and lack their support.

Southern Sudan refugee youth have limited knowledge, traditional and western, relating to sexual health, making them especially vulnerable to sexual health issues.

CASE STUDY

In 2008, Zeneb became pregnant. Her parents disowned her and her boyfriend ran away from the responsibility. She was left alone and in the process became virtually homeless. Zeneb had no prior knowledge of reproductive and sexual health nor of any support services. She had not visited a GP or clinic for most of her pregnancy. It was only in her last trimester that she showed up at the Women's Hospital, where she was connected to support services. She has since had her baby and resides in supported accommodation.

Having no social network, she is a very isolated person. She has difficulty managing and budgeting on her meagre income. She has a high level of anxiety and stress associated with settlement, her personal experiences and motherhood.

Children

Owing to their experiences of forced migration, these refugee children often have poor physical, emotional and psychological health. It is reported there is a high level of dietary issues and malnutrition, low levels of immunisation, lack of check-ups, past chronic conditions and disabilities, which seem not to have been picked up by families in the early stages. The families' limited knowledge and understanding of the health system plus the socio-cultural context of the community and its belief systems combine with a lack of culturally responsive services to impact negatively on the health of these children. Therefore, poor health continues to affect their settlement prospects.

In addition to these more generic concerns, many Southern Sudan refugee children have directly experienced or witnessed the horrors of protracted armed conflict and the destruction of human life and property on a large scale. The experiences of refugee children include the loss of close family members and significant carers often through violent events. Some were conscripted and used as child soldiers, when they often participated in violence. As children, they lack the emotional maturity and development to process and deal with each facet of their experience. Their subjection to numerous life-threatening events – deprivation, malnutrition, starvation, human suffering and ill health – makes trauma part and parcel of their daily life. This trauma assumes yet another dimension through the different phases of the settlement period, when they have to deal with their parents' trauma increasingly manifesting in their daily lives. For these children, trauma will be a lifelong battle. The real and perceived threats of racism and discrimination compound their trauma on a different level, posing a significant threat to their development, identity and wellbeing.

j) Family violence/domestic violence

Domestic violence is an issue widely applicable to the population under discussion. Throughout the refugee experience, communities and families gradually lose the customary laws, traditions and norms that once regulated relationships and interactions. Gender-based violence is a common occurrence during the forced migration and protracted refugee situations. This continues into the settlement period where the primary driver of violence is trauma, settlement stressors, financial and social disadvantage, mental illness, isolation and perceived changes in the status of women, men and children.

Research in the area of domestic violence within resettled refugee communities continually notes the tension created as customary views of spousal relationships are contrasted with a western perspective. Also, male refugees facing long-term unemployment experience the humiliation of not being able to provide for their families, which threatens their sense of masculinity and heightens the risk of violence against family members. In addition, refugees may not have the capacity to define and talk about domestic violence in the way that we expect without community education in the concept.

k) Racism and discrimination

As noted in previous sections, real or perceived discrimination on the basis of ethnicity affects many aspects of life, such as applications for tenancy and employment. There are empirical studies showing a correlation between the experiences of racism and discrimination, and the mental wellbeing of the refugees. It increases stress in these key areas of settlement and forms a significant barrier to settlement for some. Experiences of racism, discriminatory attitudes and practices, and systemic discrimination prevent some African humanitarian entrants from accessing services and opportunities. Authorities report concern that unless attitudinal and structural barriers are addressed, there is a risk African humanitarian entrants will become marginalised and alienated within the community and consequently not participate fully in society.

Youth

Schooling experiences, community spaces and neighbourhoods, social and cultural events and recreational and sporting activities are all by and large dominated by the real or perceived threats of racism and discrimination.

Children

Younger refugee children also experience racial slurs, harassment and bullying in various settings in addition to coping with the experiences of their parents or families. The correlation of racism and the emotional health of refugees have long been identified by researchers. Yet they appear to have little or no support from their parents, school or the community to deal with this particular issue and so it threatens to have a drastic, long-term impact on their development.

6 Service needs

The critical settlement issues and service needs of the Southern Sudan refugee communities in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank are two sides of the same coin. In keeping with the scale and complexity of the issues, the settlement needs are many and multi-faceted. The preceding section makes clear the day-to-day struggles refugees have finding their way in their new environment, with its confounding maze of social, cultural, legal and economic dimensions. This section will now consider how the current somewhat scattered and ad hoc policy and practice responses to these issues can be improved.

The wellbeing of Sudanese refugees depends on how well local, state and federal agencies and community services meet the needs emerging through various phases of the settlement process. Any given settlement policy, practice or program is only as successful as its capacity to meet these needs.

The participants in this scoping project also make a plea for services to work harder to understand the community across the cultural differences and to avoid making assumptions about Sudanese refugees.

“Don’t assume that you know everything about us, interact with the community, with its leaders. Get involved at the base level and work closely with the community. Culturally, people are different.”

(Sudanese community leader)

In planning services to meet the service needs, government and community agencies need to ensure full and proper consultation with the community.

a) Refugee family support programs

Family support programs are one of the most critical areas of service need. This type of program is required to address family instability, the most damaging issue eroding the wellbeing of Sudanese refugees. Settlement programs need to be expanded to include this type of family-oriented response as a core component.

Family support programs would draw on the expertise and cultural know-how of the communities and professionals to:

- provide family support, advocacy, referral and case management
- provide holistic, culturally compatible and culturally sensitive support informed by the refugee experiences and the understanding of the social cultural context of refugee communities, and using bilingual workers
- have an educational component, which focuses on bridging the gap between the traditional parenting style and authority with that of the host country
- improve engagement and involvement of parents with children and youth in the context of school, communities and age-appropriate activities
- provide support to improve relationships between young people and their families
- develop partnership approaches between community services organisations,

community health organisations, child and maternal-health services, schools and early childhood services to address children's support needs within the context of their families

- recruit and train family mentors from the broader community to accompany and guide families in day-to-day aspects of Australian life during the first period of settlement, for example: school relationships, health visits and other services.

Ensuring the safety of children is the highest priority in delivering family support programs. This task usually includes building the family's capacity to meet the child's needs. Understanding the Sudanese culture in particular as it relates to care of children is essential.

“Service providers need to know and understand our culture. Sometimes children exaggerate their freedoms, abuse their rights. They call the DHS or police alleging that their father or uncle or aunty is abusing them. These people intervene and remove children and place them in terrible places. After that the children want to come back to our culture, and it's hard to accept them back. Police and DHS have to be very careful to intervene and remove Sudanese children.”

(Sudanese community leader)

b) Refugee housing and accommodation programs

For Southern Sudan refugee communities the first step to settlement, one on which the remaining settlement issues depend, is acquiring affordable and stable housing. The acute housing stress and housing crises that are common within the community warrant an immediate and commensurate level of response by all levels of government. Specialist refugee housing and accommodation programs would:

- provide prompt, efficient and culturally responsive services and support to refugee families
- incorporate emergency housing options and crisis accommodation with a cultural component
- serve as an agency broker and bridge the gap between the refugee communities and the public, private and community housing sectors
- include an educational and community development component directed at the refugee community
- include an advocacy component directed at the housing sector and other stakeholders, including local, state and federal departments.

There is also a demonstrated need for housing responses for refugee youth, which:

- are accessible
- are culturally sensitive
- recognise the drivers for refugee homelessness are not always the same as those for mainstream young people
- connect the youth with a wide range of social and support services.

Without drastic changes, including strategic planning and co-ordination between key players, the possibility of meeting this critical need for adequate housing will remain remote.

“I always pray for housing.”

(Sudanese mother)

c) Refugee English language programs

The current adult-migrant English program does not currently enable sufficient numbers of Sudanese participants to acquire the English language competence required to participate in education, employment or training to access services or to participate in the social and cultural life of the host community. The current English language program requires review to ensure that:

- content, mode of delivery and curriculum reflect the experiences of refugee life
- it is more holistic, client-oriented and community-based to suit the particular learning needs of the learner group
- it links language learning with a wide range of social and cultural facets of the host community
- it has flexible time frames
- where possible, it utilises professionals of refugee background who have cultural insights that would enrich the learning experiences of refugee families
- it includes hands-on practical life skills, social skills and vocational training
- the particular needs of refugee youth are met, especially those who arrive in Australia in their early teens or older.

d) Refugee employment and training programs

The structural barriers and challenges faced by refugees coupled with their diminished resources and capacities frequently reduce these families to chronic unemployment and under-employment. There is an immediate and critical need to identify training needs, build employability and remove barriers to employment. The current settlement policy should have this type of training and employment response as one of the core components of settlement programs. Specialist refugee training and employment service are needed to:

- provide individually based case management, advocacy, information and referral
- increase the participation of community members in a wide range of endeavours, which enhance their employability
- provide training and employment matched to individuals
- provide access to traineeships and apprenticeship training
- provide career exploration, job search and practical placement
- respond to the particular training and employment needs of refugee youth.

e) Transport support and driver education

Unlike the lifestyles in the country of origin, Australian life involves a significant level of commuting between homes, shops, schools, children's centres and social networks. The short and long-term participation of refugees in the social, cultural and economic life of the host country is closely related to their capacity to use transport. The consultations revealed most Sudanese community members needed more intense support during the initial period of settlement to achieve this mobility. This is required both for basic public transport knowledge and assistance with becoming a licensed driver. Transport support is therefore needed to provide:

- assistance to understand and familiarise them with the transport network and its application in their daily life routines
- education in the process of acquisition of learner's permit and driver's licence, legal requirements of drivers, traffic laws and regulations, insurance and related issues
- driving lessons and supervised driving experience

Settlement programs, community services and local government working with refugee communities in these two localities need to look into ways to meet this unique need of this particular community. The particular needs of young people and single women should be considered.

f) Social networks and community connections

The consultation emphasised the immediate and urgent need for the development of social, cultural and socio-linguistic networks to foster and strengthen interactions between families and celebrate their cultural heritage. Social inclusion into mainstream activities depends on first overcoming social isolation. These interventions should:

- encourage grassroots local groups involving women, men, young people and children to actively participate in wide range of activities in which they can express their language, culture, arts, music and other traditional and cultural practices
- could provide a catalyst to learn about the host culture and explore the opportunities available for mainstream participation
- take a community-development approach to any service provision
- include age-appropriate recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities for refugee youth
- facilitate participation in a range of mainstream activities through improving access to mainstream facilities.

g) Refugee psycho-social, counselling and therapy programs

The refugee experience of a great majority of the Southern Sudan families and parents includes multiple losses and grief, exposure to extreme violence and conflict, dislocation from families, disruption of lifestyles and communities and severe deprivation.

There is an immediate need to provide more counselling, and emotional and psychological support programs, which:

- are culturally competent and informed by the refugee experiences, the socio-cultural context of the community and knowledge of forced migrations
- include the provision of age-appropriate comprehensive counselling, psycho-social support and therapy programs
- draw on both the existing western “treatment” paradigms and on community knowledge and traditions
- build on the resilience and resourcefulness of refugees
- provide support in both social and clinical settings
- recognise the higher risk of having or developing a wide spectrum of mental health issues among the community.

Refugee youth need specific programs, which:

- respond to the roots of refugee youth trauma
- understand how trauma is compounded by adolescence development issues.

In addition, refugee children have specific needs, including:

- developing resources, professional development and expertise around the themes of trauma in refugee children
- contributing to research on trauma and how it affects children, and the cultural dimensions of this trauma
- ensure that the developmental context of children provides the fundamental premise to understand and respond to the refugee children trauma.

h) Community advocacy and anti-discrimination

There is a clear need for ongoing community advocacy about the significant issues affecting parents and families. The concerns and needs of this community need to be articulated in an organised and consistent fashion, which includes the following considerations:

- settlement programs, community organisations and others who closely work with the refugee communities need to incorporate an element of community advocacy on behalf of their clients
- advocacy needs to counter the real or perceived threat of racism and discrimination
- settlement services, community organisations and government departments who work within the realm of social justice and humanitarian issues need to take leadership by implementing anti-discrimination strategies, policies and procedures
- a comprehensive framework of cultural competency in relation to the working with Sudanese refugees would assist service providers, government agencies and organisations to operate within clear policy and procedural guidelines
- challenging systemic and structural racism in the community and institutional settings through a holistic approach and strategic partnerships, for example, between schools, community and students and parents
- schools and the Department of Education to look into the issues of racism and discrimination more closely, and respond in appropriate manner.

Southern Sudan refugee youth have particular needs in this area, with the media representation and the public scrutiny adding to the need. The fragmentation of the youth in these communities makes them a voiceless group in the wider community. The lack of a platform to express their numerous and complex concerns adds to anti-social behaviour and other symptoms of settlement stress.

i) Educational and social support for children and young people

Young people and children from Sudanese communities need extra support in their literacy and numeracy skills, social and other learning skills. The Department of Education, schools and the settlement sector should develop programs that co-ordinate and facilitate support around refugee students on a needs basis, including programs that are community-based rather than school-based. These programs should be informed by conceptual understanding of forced migration, the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic terrain of the refugee cultural background and the lived experience of these children and young people.

“A minority of Sudanese young people don’t fit with the school system.”
(Sudanese community leader)

Services needed are:

- comprehensive, holistic and specialist refugee youth programs with a high-grade case-management component
- school integration programs that would help with the delivery of social and academic support to refugee youth and children within schools
- individual and group programs designed to meet multiple and complex needs
- other enhancements of the resources and expertise of schools and their staff to meet the educational and social needs of refugee children within the school context.

In response to the low representation of Southern Sudan refugee children at childcare and kindergarten centres and the critical importance of the early years to healthy development, there is an immediate need to enhance the capacity and resources of childcare and kindergarten to cater for the specialist needs of Southern Sudan refugee children. Trained bilingual staff of refugee background is an essential part of that enhanced capacity. Childcare and kindergartens serve a double purpose for refugee children. They:

- facilitate the acquisition of the socio-cultural and socio-linguistics elements and underpin values of the host society
- give refugee children a structured routine that involves them in play and learning, which enhances their social, communication, and life and learning skills.

In addition, Southern Sudan refugee children have little or no access to mainstream playgroups and early childhood activities or culturally specific playgroups. Community services organisations need to work closely with refugee families and children to invest in the development of accessible, responsive cultural playgroups.

These services should have the appropriate level of resources, cultural professional and consistency. Cultural playgroups would serve multiple purposes. They would:

- give children structured organised routines of play and learning with children of a similar cultural group
- give children out-of-home interaction with their parents in a culturally familiar atmosphere
- foster positive educational engagement between parent and child
- contribute to children's understanding of their own cultural heritage and identity critical to their development.

j) Health needs of children and young people

It is critical services and agencies working with refugee children and young people are aware of the huge need in areas of health. Particular responses are needed to:

- address the marked lack of knowledge and understanding of health-related issues among the refugee community, families in general and the youth
- focus on reproductive health
- focus on mental health
- counter the widespread substance abuse, which is the major contributor to mental health issues, through a drug and alcohol program
- ensure they are holistic – including education, group work, case management, treatment and engagement.

For children, there is a need to develop a comprehensive set of refugee health services, which:

- looks into the complex physical, psychological and emotional health needs of refugee children and respond accordingly
- includes paediatric services
- counters the low level of understanding of chronic health issues relating to children, including developmental disorders, disability, malnutrition and trauma/mental issues with public education
- leads to better diagnosis and intervention
- takes account of the experiences of parents and children in the continuum of forced migration in severely complicating the health issues of children and young people.

7 Conclusion and recommendations

This scoping project, like other documented studies regarding the needs of Sudanese refugees in Australia, identified many issues impacting on this community. The issues identified as critical include housing shortages, language barriers, cultural and social isolation, family instability and family violence, difficulty gaining employment, financial insecurity, barriers to education and childcare, poor health and mental health often originating from trauma and refugee experiences, and discrimination. By definition, settlement is a long-term process that takes considerable time and resources. The settlement and integration of the Southern Sudan refugee communities and other newly arrived refugees of sub-Saharan origin is proving more complex than many want to believe. These communities will continue to require a significant level of support not to remain disadvantaged and marginalised by the wide gaps that exist between their circumstances and those of the mainstream community.

These findings also highlight the interconnectedness of the critical issues identified by participants and, moreover, the complexity of immediate and ongoing impacts these issues have upon Sudanese individuals and communities in the cities of Brimbank and Yarra. The connection between familial instability and other factors is particularly strong, creating a ripple effect of other issues which impact upon the lives of many Sudanese families. Some of the difficulties refugees' experiences, such as health and education deficits, begin in the harsh realities of the refugee experience. The lack of adequate support in their new host communities not only compounds the poor health and education status of refugees, but also leads to unemployment, social isolation, financial difficulties, family instability and a range of other issues. For many community members, basic needs such as housing, language lessons and transport are not met sufficiently to enable successful settlement.

These issues create a "protracted settlement situation", which parallels the "protracted refugee situation" most have already experienced in the years spent in refugee camps. Episodes of discrimination and racism, while not universal, are also re-traumatising and create further barriers to successful settlement. The situation of young people and children is particularly concerning. For their development, children and young people need stable family life, adequate shelter, access to health services and education, and age-appropriate community connections. This project found many of the next generation of Sudanese Australians are at risk of missing crucial developmental milestones and arriving at adulthood ill-equipped for Australian life.

This scoping project therefore supports previous research in finding that developing policy and program initiatives to address these issues is a pressing challenge for governments and community services alike. It also finds that if they are to succeed, these new policies and programs need to be developed in close consultation with the Sudanese communities.

A great many new services and approaches are required in order to meet the needs identified in this study, but these findings present Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service with particular opportunities.

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service is an established organisation working with the communities of Brimbank and Yarra to provide family programs, including foster care; youth programs, including housing and educational support; and financial programs, including microfinance and financial counselling. As such the organisation can build on its knowledge and networks to develop and integrate programs for these newest community members as well as to make its existing programs more accessible to them. With a particular concern for the needs of women and children in its mission, Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service also has a clear responsibility to these groups within the Sudanese community.

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service is in a good position to present holistic responses, which address the interwoven nature of issues and their manifestation in people's lives. Providing different types of support to help overcome family instability is clearly a pivotal requirement, but it must be done with reference to the other needs with which it intersects. One of the most important underlying needs is for financial security. Financial stress limits access to the basics of life such as housing, transport and education, and to opportunities for advancement through, for example, accessing childcare or recreation. Ongoing lifelong learning also needs to be a major focus to enable community members to continue to adapt to their circumstances in the host country. While these initiatives may need to begin in a targeted way, opportunities for engagement with the wider community can also be created in such community-based settings.

Importantly, program initiatives need to draw on the expertise of the refugee communities themselves as the people most affected. This means using a community-development approach, something familiar to the organisation in its work over the years in disadvantaged communities. To this end, developing partnerships with local schools or other community centres where community members congregate is essential. School-based activities and services are particularly promising ways to engage with families whether they are preventative (for example, after-school care, playgroups), therapeutic (for example, remedial teaching, family support) or community-strengthening (for example, whole school events, community education). A community-development approach can include early intervention strategies by reaching out to those who are isolated and involving them in new ways.

The Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service mission is to work to remove the structures that prevent people engaging fully in life's possibilities, as well as to provide support to individuals. Ensuring the policy frameworks of various state and federal government departments are informed by the needs of the Sudanese refugee population through policy advocacy is therefore also part of the organisation's role.

Last, but not least, in order to undertake this work, it is important to provide appropriate cross-cultural training within the organisation to sensitise staff to the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic backgrounds of refugee clients, their diverse lived experiences and the settlement issues that challenge them daily.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the Sudanese Scoping Project into the needs of Sudanese children, youth and families in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank:

Recommendation 1: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service continues to develop a holistic model of support for Sudanese families, young people and children.

Recommendation 2: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops initiatives to stabilise Sudanese families.

Recommendation 3: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service identifies opportunities for Sudanese women to increase their social inclusion and connection with the broader community.

Recommendation 4: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops financial inclusion initiatives specific to the Sudanese community, including affordable credit and financial education.

Recommendation 5: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service develops initiatives that support the engagement of Sudanese children and young people in education and training.

Recommendation 6: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service focuses on prevention of the cumulative negative impacts of critical issues by developing initiatives to address these issues at the earliest stage possible, in the community.

Recommendation 7: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service works in partnership with other organisations – especially schools, local Sudanese communities and other community organisations – to develop appropriate and achievable responses.

Recommendation 8: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service provides opportunities for formal and informal lifelong-learning opportunities for Sudanese community members.

Recommendation 9: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service advocates with governments and community organisations for increased support for the Sudanese community.

Recommendation 10: That Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service ensures staff members have access to appropriate levels of cross-cultural training.

References

- Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIAC) (2006). *The People of Victoria: Statistics from the 2006 Census*. Accessed via: <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/population-and-migration/how-victoria-was-settled/diac-publication-project>
- Dhanji, S. (2009). "Welcome or Unwelcome? Integration Issues and the Resettlement of Former Refugees from the Horn of Africa and Sudan in Metropolitan Melbourne", *Australasian Review of African Studies*, vol 30, no 2, 152-78.
- Dooley, D. (2009). "Homework for refugee middle school students with backgrounds marked by low levels of engagement with English school literacy", *Literacy Learning: the Middle Years*, vol 17, no 3, 28-36.
- Fisher, C. (2009). *The Exploration of the Nature and Understanding of Family and Domestic Violence within Sudanese, Somalian, Ethiopian, Liberian and Sierra Leonean Communities and its Impact on Individuals, Family Relations, the Community and Settlement*. Accessed via: <http://pubs.asetts.org.au/Documents/DVreport.pdf>
- Gifford, S. et al. (2009). *Good Starts for recently arrived youth with refugee backgrounds: Promoting wellbeing in the first three years of settlement in Melbourne, Australia*. Melbourne: La Trobe Refugee Research Centre.
- Milner, K. & Khawaja, N. (2010). "Sudanese refugees in Australia the impact of acculturation stress", *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, vol 4, no 1, 19-29.
- Neale, A. et al. (2007). "Health Services Utilisation and Barriers for Settlers from the Horn of Africa", *Aust NZ J Public Health*, vol 31, no 4, 333-5.
- Migrant Information Centre (2008). *Family violence within the Southern Sudanese community: Project evaluation report*. Accessed via: <http://www.miceastmelb.com.au/documents/PROJECTEVALUATION>
- Poppitt, G. & Frey, R. (2007). "Sudanese Adolescent Refugees: Acculturation and Acculturative Stress", *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, Vol 17, No 2, 160-181
- Shakespeare-Finch, J. & Wickham, K. (2010). "Adaptation of Sudanese Refugees in an Australian Context: Investigating Helps and Hindrance", *International Migration*, vol 48, no 1, 23-46.
- South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (2007). *Sudanese in south east Melbourne: Perspectives of a New and Emerging Community*. Accessed via: http://www.scoa.org.au/resources/CACHE_DUVIE=f5a16ddcd984bbd1ba7cbccbe8ebab65/261548_72752_Sudanese%20profile%20-%20Sample.pdf
- Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (2007). *The Education Needs of Young Refugees in Victoria*. Accessed via: <http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=25058>
- Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sudanese Sub-Committee (2008). *Report of the Wyndham Sudanese Community Forum: Issues & Recommendations*. Accessed via: http://www.immi.gov.au/gateways/police/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/208639/wyndham-forum.pdf

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions for service providers in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank

Appendix 2: Interview questions for members of Southern Sudan refugee communities

Appendix 3: Focus group questions

Appendix 4: Participating agencies

Appendix 5: Focus groups

Appendix 6: Service Provider Survey

Appendix 7: Settlement and relevant networks regularly attended

Appendix 1: Interview questions for service providers in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank

Introduction to the project

Part I

1. How do you describe your service or organisation?
2. How long have you been working with the refugee communities in general and Southern Sudanese refugees in particular?
3. What is your involvement with the Southern Sudan refugee community in terms of service provision?
4. Describe the service and programs available to the Southern Sudan refugee communities in your organisation.
5. Is your work informed by best practice, cultural-competency framework or policy frame?
6. Do you employ professionals of Southern Sudan background or refugee background?

Part II

1. From the point of view of your own work and the perspectives of your organisation, what are the key settlement issues for the cross section of the Southern Sudan communities in your locality (cities of Yarra/Brimbank)?
Prompt questions:
 - Would you be able to elaborate in some length on visible patterns of the settlement issues for families and parents of Southern Sudan background?
 - Discuss in some detail what you may think are significant settlement issues for Southern Sudan refugee youth.
 - Is there anything particular about refugee youth settlement issues that require policy and program responses?
 - What is your view or the view of the organisation in relation to the issues relative to Southern Sudan refugee children?
 - Do you think they have settlement issues that warrant the attention of services or organisations or policy makers?
 - What is your take on the possible responses to address the key settlement issues of the Southern Sudan refugee communities in your locations?
2. From the point of view of your own work or the programs you're involved with and the perspective of your organisation, what are key and critical areas of settlement need relating to refugee children, youth and families of Southern Sudan background in your locations (cities of Yarra/Brimbank)?
Prompt questions:
 - Discuss what you may think are the dominant characteristic features of the settlement needs of Southern Sudan refugee families and parents in your area of work/location (cities of Yarra/Brimbank)?
 - In relation to refugee youth of Southern Sudan background, are there any

professional or organisational observations that would attest to the fact that the settlement needs for these cohorts are different to that of their adult counterparts at some levels? Do you think they might have unique and particular needs?

- Would you be able to detail the key and critical settlement needs that have been captured at the level of your work or at organisational level relating to the refugee children of Southern Sudan?
3. Would you be able to comment on the capacity of the current services and programs available in general to address the settlement issues and settlement needs of the Southern Sudan refugee communities in your location (cities of Yarra/Brimbank)?
 4. From the point of view of the scope of your professional work or within organisational boundaries is the resource, staffing, funding and knowledge and understanding available around refugee communities commensurate with the level of issues and needs of the communities?
 5. What are the key elements that inform your work with clients from refugee background?
 6. What are the key strategies to overcome the cultural and communication barriers in working with refugee communities?
 7. Do you have a cultural-competency framework in your agency?
 8. What is the participation rate of refugee communities in your services or organisations?
Prompt questions:
 - In your professional view, what do you think needs to be done to improve the work, engagement and service provision with the refugee communities?
 - What is your final comment on the settlement issues relating to refugees in general and the Southern Sudan refugee communities in particular?

Appendix 2: Interview questions for members of the Southern Sudan refugee communities

Welcome and introductions

Part I: Forced migration experiences

- A. Would you be able to tell us how and when you left Southern Sudan?
Prompt questions:
- With your family
 - Alone
 - What happened
- B. Where did you seek refuge outside your country of origin?
Prompt questions:
- Urban refugee centres
 - Refugee camps
- C. How long did you stay in refugee camps?
- D. Would you be able to discuss some of your experiences in the refugee camps?
Prompt questions:
- Security
 - Education
 - Food
 - Dwelling
 - Social connection
 - Health
 - Work

Part II: Settlement experiences

- E. When did you come to Australia?
Prompt questions:
- With whom did you come?
 - Have you left anyone behind?
- F. How would you describe some of your experiences in key areas of life in Australia?
Prompt questions:
- English language
 - Educational and schooling
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Social connection
 - Participation in social and cultural aspects of Australian life

- Racism and discrimination
- G. Would you be able to give us some indication of the services and organisations that provided support when you first arrived?
Prompt question:
- Do you still access their services?
- H. As a member of the Southern Sudan community, where would you go to seek support?
- I. From your personal point of view or the perspective of the Southern Sudan communities, would you be able to elaborate on the key settlement issues that you are faced with?
Prompt question:
- The immediate challenges soon after arrival
 - The short-term challenges and difficulties faced
 - The challenges faced currently
- J. What do you think are the key settlement issues for families and parents of Southern Sudan background?
- K. Would you be able to discuss in some length what you believe to be the key settlement issues of Southern Sudan refugee youth?
- L. By the same token, what do you think are the key settlement issues for Southern Sudan refugee children in your communities?
- M. What are the best strategies to address the settlement issues from the perspective of the refugee communities?
- N. Elaborate on key areas of settlement need of the Southern Sudan refugee communities – from your individual perspective and family perspectives.
Prompt questions:
- What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese children?
 - What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese youth?
 - What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese parent/families?
 - What key services do you access?
 - Who are your immediate support networks?
 - The difference between the Sudan and Australian ways of life?

Appendix 3: Focus group questions

Introduction, welcome and objective explained

Part I: Forced migration experiences

- A. All participants were asked about the circumstances, which precipitated their flight from the country of origin.
Prompt questions:
- With your family
 - Alone
- B. All participants were asked where they sought refuge during their flight.
Prompt questions:
- Urban refugee centres
 - Refugee camps
- C. All participants were encouraged to dwell at some length on their or the communities' experiences in the refugee camps.
Prompt question:
- Security
 - Education
 - Food
 - Dwelling
 - Social connection
 - Health
 - Work

Part II: Settlement experiences

- D. Participants were asked when they arrived in Australia.
Prompt questions:
- With whom did you come?
 - Have you left anyone behind?
- E. Participants were specifically asked to describe some their initial experiences and expectation of life in key areas of life in Australia.
Prompt questions:
- English language
 - Educational and schooling
 - Employment
 - Housing
 - Social connection
 - Participation in social and cultural aspect of Australian life
 - Racism and discrimination

- F. Participants were encouraged to give some indication of the services and organisations that provided support when they first arrived.
Prompt question:
- Do you still access their services?
- G. Participants were asked where they would be likely to seek support.
- H. Participants were asked from their personal point of view or the perspective of the Southern Sudan communities to elaborate on the key settlement issues that they are faced with.
Prompt question:
- The immediate challenges soon after arrival
 - The short-term challenges and difficulties faced
 - The challenges faced currently
- I. Participants were asked what they thought were the key settlement issues for families and parents of Southern Sudan background.
- J. Participants were encouraged to talk at some length about what they believed to be the key settlement issues of Southern Sudan refugee youth.
- K. The participants were asked what they thought were the key settlement issues for Southern Sudan refugee children in their communities.
- L. Participants were asked what they thought were the best strategies to address the settlement issues from the perspective of the refugee communities?
- M. Participants were asked to elaborate on key areas of settlement need of the Southern Sudan refugee communities.
Prompt question:
- What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese children?
 - What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese youth?
 - What are the main settlement needs for Sudanese parents/families?
 - What key services do you access?
 - Who are your immediate support networks?
 - The difference between the Southern Sudan and Australian ways of life?

Appendix 4: Participating service providers and agencies

1. Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, Collingwood
2. Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, St Albans
3. Edmund Rice Centre, St Albans
4. Scared Heart Primary School
5. Fitzroy Primary School
6. Fitzroy Learning Centre
7. African Holistic Services, co-located Fitzroy Learning Centre
8. Collingwood English Language School
9. Victorian Police, Yarra Youth Resource Officers
10. Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Service Innovation Program – Family Strengthening Strategy
11. Ecumenical Migration Centre, Fitzroy
12. Migrant Resource Centre North West Region
13. Victorian Cooperatives on Children Services for Ethnic Groups
14. Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, Office of Justice and Peace
15. ISIS Primary Care, Sunshine
16. Department of Human Services, Fitzroy
17. North Yarra Community Health Centre
18. Napier Street Child and Family Resource Centre, Fitzroy
19. City of Yarra Family Services
20. City of Yarra Youth Services
21. Home Ground Services, Collingwood

22. New Hope Foundation, Prahran
23. Senior MIPS Officer, North Melbourne Institute of Technology
24. Salvation Army, Crossroads Networks
25. Senior Policy Adviser, Child Safety Commissioner
26. Brimbank Secondary College
27. Berry Street Family Services, Richmond
28. North Richmond Community Health
29. Holy Eucharist Parish, St Albans
30. St Albans Primary School
31. River Nile Learning Centre, Footscray
32. Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES), St Albans
33. Centre for Multicultural Youth, Sunshine
34. The Anglican Sudanese Settlement and Welfare
Ministry Office, Footscray
35. Refugee School Health Coordinator, Department of Education
and Early Child Development, Footscray

Appendix 5: Participating focus groups

A. Southern Sudan Women's Group

Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
Good Shepherd Community House
168 St Albans Rd East

Participants: Five to six Southern Sudanese women

B. St Albans Primary School Sudanese/African Women's Group

West Esplanade, St Albans
VIC 3021
Phone: (03) 9366 2832

Participants: 10-12 Southern Sudanese women and few other African women whose children attend the primary school

C. Sudanese Women on the Move Network

New Hope Foundation
Victoria St, Footscray

Participants: About 10 Southern Sudan refugee women, who meet once a week to discuss issues which concern them

D. River Nile Learning Centre

30a Pickett Street, Footscray
Phone: (03) 9687 6244

Participants: A group of adolescent female African students, some of whom had babies and were residing in foster care and residential care.

Appendix 6: Service Provider Survey



Charity gives, justice changes.

Sudanese Support Project Service Provider SURVEY

Dear Participants,

The Sudanese Support Project is an undertaking of the Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, with four core tasks (or aims):

1. Identify the refugee and settlement issues impacting on the wellbeing of the Sudanese refugee children, youth and parents;
2. Determine significant areas of need relating to Sudanese children, youth and families of Sudanese background;
3. Identify current gaps in service provision to the Sudanese refugee children, youth and parents;
4. Chart the level of support and services available or accessed by the Sudanese refugee children, youth and families in the cities of Yarra and Brimbank.

The Project has to this point consulted with a range of key informants within the cities of Yarra and Brimbank. The following survey is designed to capture relevant information from a broad range of service providers within the scope of the project.

We value your input and appreciate any time you can give to completing this survey. The information you provide will be used for the sole purpose of the project's objectives. Please send the completed survey electronically to e.gage@goodshepvic.org.au Should you have any other queries in relation to the Survey, please feel free to call Ed Gage on (03) 9279 9379 or 0407 307 171.

Please mark with X to indicate types of service your agency/service provides

1. Type of Agency/Service: { _____ }

_____ Settlement and refugee services

_____ Education and school

_____ English language programs

- _____ Employment and training
- _____ Health
- _____ Court, Police and Juvenile Justice
- _____ Family Services
- _____ Youth Programs
- _____ Child protective services, foster care and respite care
- _____ Council or local government agency
- _____ Others

2. Which geographic area does your agency serve?

- _____ City of Yarra
 - _____ City of Brimbank
 - _____ City of Melton
 - _____ City of Banyule
 - _____ City of Darebin
 - _____ City of Whittlesea
 - _____ Other – please name
-

3. Rate the level of direct engagement your agency has with Sudanese refugee children, youth and parents, respectively.

- _____ Very low
- _____ Low
- _____ Average
- _____ Above average
- _____ High

4. What types of support services are available to or provided to refugee children, youth and families coming to your agency/service?

- _____ English as a second language
- _____ Accommodation support
- _____ After-school activities
- _____ Tutoring
- _____ Mentoring
- _____ Vocational Training

- _____ Career and employment support, placements
- _____ Recreational programs, camps and sports
- _____ Leadership
- _____ Family support
- _____ Youth support
- _____ Bilingual programs
- _____ Substance abuse counselling
- _____ Childcare support
- _____ Other

5. What do you think are the underlying factors for the levels of participation or access to your respective services (either low or high)?

6. Please indicate the services/agency to which you would refer Sudanese children, young people and families coming to your organisation.

7. What would you identify as the key challenges of the Sudanese refugee children aged 0-12 years of age in the context of your service provision?

8. What would you identify as the key challenges of Sudanese refugee youth 13-26 years of age in the context of your service provision?

9. What would you identify as the key challenges of Sudanese parents or families in the context of your service provision?

10. Please do rate the ability of your specific agency to meet the needs of the Sudanese children, youth and families.

- _____ Poor
- _____ Fair
- _____ Good
- _____ Very good
- _____ Excellent
- _____ Other

11. What are the particular strengths of Sudanese refugee children, youth or parents?

12. What are some of the main present and future challenges in providing services for Sudanese refugee children, youth or families?

13. What would you list as a recommendation to enhance and strengthen service capacity for Sudanese children, youth and families in your agency context?

14. What would you recommend to enhance and strengthen services capacity for Sudanese children, youth and families on a community level?

15. Has your agency been in collaboration or partnership with other agencies in the area of service provision for Sudanese children, youth and families?

- _____ Very rarely
- _____ Rarely
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Frequently
- _____ Very frequently

16. Does your organisation have a level of engagement, collaboration and partnership with the Sudanese communities around service provision?

- _____ Very rarely
- _____ Rarely
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Frequently
- _____ Very frequently

17. How frequent is the case in which your agency provides interpreters to Sudanese clients when accessing services in your organisations?

- _____ Very rarely
- _____ Rarely
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Frequently
- _____ Very frequently

18. Have you had a Sudanese/African cultural aide or other similar arrangement, which assists Sudanese children, youth and families in their interaction with your organisation?

19. As an agency/service, what are your strengths when working with Sudanese children, youth and families?

20. Please list the greatest challenges you are faced with as an agency/service when working with Sudanese children, youth and families?

21. What are the main barriers for your agency/service in working with Sudanese children, youth and families?

22. What types of support services are available to or provided to Sudanese refugee children, youth and families coming to your agency/service?

23. Indicate what you believe to be a gap in service provision relating to Sudanese children, youth and families in your locality or more broadly.

24. Do you have additional comments you would like to add in the area of services provision to refugee Sudanese children, youth and families?

With a great many thanks!

Appendix 7: Settlement and relevant networks regularly attended

1. The Yarra Settlement Forum
2. The Brimbank- Melton Settlement Advisory Committee Network
3. The Migrant and Refugee Youthlink Network
4. The City of Yarra Youth Network

Notes