

Refugee Symposium – AUT 3 December, 2015

Purpose of the Presentation:

- To let attendees know what the project sought (& seeks) to identify and achieve.
- To provide a progress report to participants in the research & others who are interested in the outcomes or recommendations.

Timeline:

- 2013 – Project developed by 2 lecturers at AUT in the Conflict Resolution Project
- 2012-13: AUTECH ethics committee approval sought – conditions imposed and resolved.
- 2014: 30 interviews conducted (AK) after methodological challenges had been identified & addressed.
- Presentation of MC's to LEADR kongres in Melbourne (09/14).
- 2015: responses collated.

The Project's Aims - RRP

- To examine contemporary levels of conflict within and between the communities in Auckland, and with the NZ 'host' population.
- Any conflict/dispute resolution mechanisms commonly used by refugee and migrant communities in Auckland, N.Z.
- To investigate whether those communities found their conflict resolution engagement effective.
- To explore any alternative options and preferences identified by the participants.
- Assess any policy implications for professionals & prof bodies

METHOD: 3 PARTICIPANT GROUPS

REFUGEE COMMUNITY LEADERS,
CR PROFESSIONALS, &
POLICY ADVISORS



Refugee Leaders



CR Professionals



Policy Advisors





Participants 1. Refugee leaders - NZ UNHCR Quota Refugees

- Top 10 (by no.) Quota Refugee Communities (NZ-wide):

1. Burma (2333)
2. Afghanistan* (1260/650)
3. Iraq (*943/684)
4. Bhutan (652)
5. Columbia (286)
6. Sudan (283)
7. Iran (266)
8. Ethiopia (207)
9. DR Congo (192)
10. Congo (109)

Key: (2015 - * = 2012)

Group 1: more information on the RL's interviewed

1. Sudanese (M)
2. Afghani (M)
3. Iraqi (F, Syrian)
4. Iraqi (M)
5. Burmese (M, Mon)
6. Iranian (F, Syrian)
7. Ethiopian (M, Eritrean)
8. Somali (M)
9. African (country not specified, M)
10. Congolese (M)
11. Democratic Republic of Congo (M)
12. Sri Lankan (F)
13. African (F, not willing to specify country)
14. Kurdish Iranian (M)
15. Burmese (Karen) RL (F)
16. Bhutanese (M)

Gender: Men – 11/16 (69 %)

Women - 5/16 (31%)

Group 2: Conflict Resolution Professionals

Number: 7 interviewed. **Gender:** 4 female, 3 male

Ethnicity/identity:

- 3 were Asian: (1 Fijian Indian), Chinese (1 Hong Kong (F), 1 Singaporean Chinese),
- 2 African (all work with Asian, African & other overseas students, either lecturing or in support services),
- 2 Kiwis (F), & 1 Chechnyan refugee (F) now a legal CRP.

Methodology - Initial challenges (getting started 2012-14)

- Ethics Committee 'road blocks'; attitudes towards 'vulnerable groups'.
- Challenges engaging with any umbrella organizations.
- Many of the Refugee & Ethnic Council contacts simply did not respond to e-mail or telephone.
- Difficulties with mistrust to begin with, leading to...
- The need to establish both credibility for the project and the interviewer before successfully achieving 'buy in' of community leaders.
- When this was done, and rapport built, engagement started.
- Method: decision to use a 'snowball' sampling method.
- Decision - one interviewer (AK).



Project - further methodological challenges

- Even when specifically sought, we found there was a lack of women participants among the refugee communities.
- It took many months to get started on the interviews - a long time to get Ethics Committee approval, and then to get a satisfactory sample in the 3 groups. (Time: now 3 years since the start of the Project).
- Only *leaders* were chosen as interviewees; the study was not intended to be exactly representative (of refugee populations in Auckland), or to have a gender balance, etc. This overcame the perceived need for counselling following the interviews.
- We attempted to find representatives of the most populous Auckland Refugee communities.
- In order to have some control over the quality of interviews, awareness by the interviewer of the refugees' (etc) backgrounds, & political climates in countries of origin. (Pernice, NZ Study 1990 – found that the qualities of interviewer are the key to successful research with refugee participants).

THEMES – Group 1: REFUGEE LEADERS (participants – RL's)

- RLs would like respect, consultation by government on issues such as the quota, support, direction of NZ refugee policy.
- RLs also request acknowledgement for the work being done within their own communities, mostly without pay or little recompense.
- That all NZ-ers attempt to make clear distinctions between *migrants* and *refugees*, and **former refugees**. To be aware of when this status changes.
- Most internal community conflicts are being resolved within the RNM communities, by elders or leaders from these groups. Rarely engage outsiders to assist with this. Probably because of lack of trust & respect.

More Outcomes from The Refugee Leaders' Group...

- For the Conflict Resolution professionals and advisors to government:- become more aware of the internal conflict/dispute resolution already being practiced – within each community.
- That host communities become more aware of the language and culture barriers RNMs face here.
- RL's would like host communities to develop an historical perspective in Auckland/NZ of the CR techniques and larger meetings which have already taken place to resolve inter-community disputes, e.g. Sudan, Ethiopia.
- For case studies about RNMs to be highlighted at various conferences, not just refugee symposia.
- For there to be training and encouragement by bodies such as LEADR & IAMA (now the Resolution Institute) & Universities that incorporate refugee CDR into courses, raising awareness of particular issues refugees and new migrants face here.

Community Dispute Resolution: – Refugee Community Leaders - input

Features: (advantages and disadvantages)

- Leaders strongly wanted their communities to handle their own disputes internally at first.
- They wanted recognition that there is a cost to this, as CLs are usually unpaid and have other commitments, lack of resource.
- ARCC leaders have crucial, but mostly unpaid, positions of leadership; under-resourcing is one problem, spaces to meet are need - could be provided by local government or ?
- High expectations are held for these leaders by community members.
- This can result in a cost to the leaders' family lives, so stressful.
- At least 2 Leaders expressed that there is no real chance for the less powerful in the communities (often women, children) to to tell their story and feel listened to by a neutral and respectful third party.
- There was a concern that this could possibly disadvantage these 'weaker' parties.

COMMUNITY DISPUTE RESOLUTION – REFUGEE & NEW MIGRANT



Main methods of resolution being used:

1. Initial approach and talking to both sides by a community leader, or respected elder from the RC (refugee community) affected;
2. Informal meetings by this person held with each party to talk through the issues and attempt to sort out.
3. If needed, a more formal process of meetings over time.
4. Tribal *shura* or community meetings used if and as appropriate.

2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROFESSIONALS - THEMES



6 interviewed: Asian (Indian), Chinese (1 Hong Kong (F), 1 Singaporean Chinese), 1 African (works with Asian, African & other overseas students), 2 Kiwis (F), & 1 Chechnyan refugee now a legal CRP.

1. That many of the mainstream CRPs lack awareness of the inter-dependence among those in the RNMC (refugee & new migrant communities) – how they are affected by moving here with little support from family and often the wider community (unlike where they came from) for many years.
2. Often there is a lack of interpreting or appropriate services and a lot of assumptions are made even in the courts, by lawyers and mediators who do not have training in the appropriate use of interpreters.
3. The difference in the idea of the family being the appropriate place for family and other disputes to be resolved to 'save face'. (& such organisations as the Chinese New Settlers Society)

Policy Advisors (group 3 – not covered by the presentation – summary of themes)

- **Themes:** an expressed need for greater awareness of the trauma that has often been experienced by refugees and new migrants, and to take this into account where relevant.
- A perceived need for more funding, taking much larger quota numbers of refugees, and valuing the skills and experience that RNMs bring to NZ, rather than seeing the people as a drain on resources, or people who refuse to fit in here.
- Greater opportunities for exchanges between different groups to promote awareness and understanding;
- One expressed the need for refugee liason officers in all centres (not just Auckland & Wellington as at present, e.g. in the NZ Police force, and more access to interpreters in government and private settings to assist this exchange.

Project Recommendations

- That the suggestions above, such as local government assistance with community dispute resolution and community meetings, be supported at the policy level in the Auckland City Plans.
- Promotion of such practical steps such as provision of free or low cost rooms for such large meetings – that these be adopted as part of the local government and ward plans for Auckland.
- That training organisations in the conflict resolution field be encouraged to award scholarships to RL's.
- That appropriate models for Refugee and new migrant communities be made available at low or no cost.

Questions?





To the Refugee Leaders who assisted
with the research & you

- Thank you!

