SESSION 8:

ROADS TO RESPECT: LEARNING ABOUT DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

Time 3 Hours - ⌛

"Childhood was so positive, there were no problems. School days were happy and safe. The sense of community was so strong, we were all living together in peace"

(Serbian Focus Group, 2004)

Introduction

As mentioned in previous sections of this training kit, much of the material presented is based on the outcomes of focus groups and interviews held with refugee women, service providers and refugee communities.

All the women stressed the need for workers to know something about the background of the refugee communities. This includes information about their country of origin, their homelands, their culture, language and way of life, and the reasons why they are refugees. They emphasised the

role that this knowledge can play in forming a good working relationship between service providers, individuals and communities. They suggested that the kit should contain a section on each of the nine communities which were part of the team who put this material together. This was done in collaboration with the bi-lingual workers concerned.

It is not suggested that the information in the profiles provides an instant or comprehensive guide to each country, or to the refugees from each place. Workers stressed the importance of the process of collecting and testing of this material with individuals and the communities. This in itself can be an important tool in the trust and respect necessary for workers to assist refugees to address the issues of domestic and family violence in their communities.

The process of building these community profiles by finding out and learning about background information in relation to a community; their history, their traditional religious or cultural systems can play an important role in:

- establishing partnerships
- demonstrating cultural respect and equity
- the empowerment of refugee communities

PRESENTER'S NOTES

Presenters must read and be familiar with the course material for this session before conducting the training. Section 1, SESSION CONTENT, is background material for the facilitator. This material can also be given as class handouts if required. Section 2, SESSION MATERIALS, includes a suggested running order, a power point presentation, audio visual materials and activities to use when presenting this training session. Small copies of the power point slides are included in the text to indicate where they will be most useful. Larger copies of the PowerPoint slides are printed at the end of the section and can be photocopied as Session Handouts.

SESSION CONTENT

Roads to Respect – Learning about different communities

How to use the Country/Community Sections

Play the second and third sections of the ” From Horror to Hope” DVD

Introduction

The country/community sections, at the end of this module have been designed to be used by a range of community groups and government and non-government services providers. They have been prepared to identify the issues for the countries & communities of origin of the resettled refugee communities, that:

- contributed to their flight and thus to their becoming refugees
- contributed to the violence that they may have experienced, including domestic & family violence, at home, in flight and in resettlement

These sections are not definitive descriptions of the background countries. However, they aim to provide learners with a short summary of the political and social context of women in the nine communities, which are:

Middle East
- Afghanistan
- Iran
- Iraq

Africa
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Sudan

Former Yugoslavia
- Bosnia
- Croatia
- Serbia

These communities were selected because the refugee from these communities make up 90% of all refugee and special humanitarian entrants to New South Wales over the most recent 6-year period of 1st January 1998 to 31st December 2003.

This information is drawn from secondary research sources. All sources are listed at the end of each individual section. References are given to more detailed literature in the sub-sections listed as “resources” at the end of each country/community section, which may be useful in working with and supporting groups of individual women. These references should be consulted for more details about the countries.

All remaining information contained in this section has been complied from qualitative research methods utilising community-based focus groups with women resident in the greater Sydney region of NSW. The ages of the women were from 20 to 65 yrs, and the majority were married with children. Over 60 women were consulted over a period of six months.

Their comments touched on both the positive and negative aspects of resettlement in Australia. The women spoke of similar experiences. The strong sense of loss, social isolation, cultural considerations and family pressures were often in conjunction with the excitement and novelty of new beginnings in Australia.

Role of Cultural Consultants

These training resources have been developed with community workers and refugee community groups. To ensure the country information is correctly used and that the diversity within any country is reflected, it is highly recommended that cultural consultants be sought to participate with the facilitator in this aspect of training.

The role of the consultants is to provide links with relevant networks, and identify additional relevant material and resources. Individuals or community workers from community or cultural organisations should be contacted and asked to participate. Most migrant services are keen to support the interest in their communities. Even with the cultural skills of a community consultant, it is important to note that no community is homogenous, and the facilitator must allow for individual circumstances and experiences.

Importance of Establishing a Relationship with the Community

When community relationships are established and maintained with key people from a particular community, this relationship can assist the development of respect, confidence and credibility of your service. This relationship can also act as a reliable source of information relating to cultural aspects, values and beliefs of the key groups within a particular community. Remembering at all times that all communities are diverse,

this diversity must be reflected when developing projects and programs to meet the diverse needs of clients.

Finally, there is immense value in the community. The value of elders and extended family members as social support systems for refugee women needs to be recognised and utilised. This can be a useful tool. However, before involving elders and other community members, it is essential that appropriate consent is given by the woman concerned.

All Women are Individuals

It is important to note that the case studies and quotes included as part of this training manual do not pretend to represent the experience of all refugee women. Nor do all refugee women experience all of the problems discussed.

Services and practitioners using these resources need to consider each woman's individual circumstances, and attempt to recognise that these shape her experiences. For example, women from particular ethnic minorities or women with disabilities may face additional discrimination.

Individual Country Sections Objectives

By the completion of one country section, the participants will be able to:

- Identify the geographical location and basic demographic information relating to the country
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the key political contexts of the country
- Demonstrate a broad understanding of women's issues and women's rights relating to a particular country
- Identify the key concerns discussed by women relating to domestic and family violence.
- Identify the key prevention and education tools suggested by women to address domestic and family violence.

Contents

Each Country Section contains the following resources:

- Map & basic geographical information
- Ethnic Communities & Population
- Principal Languages & Principal Religions
- Background political context
- Women's roles: of the nine countries
- Women's Voices: Focus Group Outcomes
- Resettlement in Australia
- Causes of Domestic Violence
- Prevention & Education Strategies

Course Handouts

All information in the country sections is designed to be easily copied for distribution to training participates. It is recommended to ensure that all participants have copies of the information either prior, during or after the facilitation of the sessions. The nine country sections are at the end of the session material.

Where to from here?

This section is to assist in service providers to learn about the many different communities that exist in Australia, not just the nine that were included in these consultations.

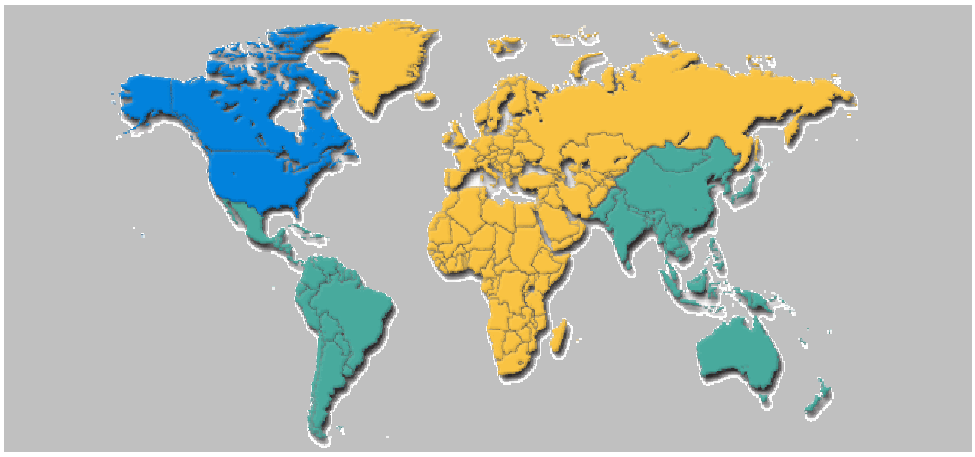
Since this project started refugees have arrived in Australia and in particular New South Wales from other countries, including Liberia, and those in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo). Service providers who have clients from these and other countries can use the techniques described in this section to learn about these communities.

Some of the key sources used were specific web-sites, which provided basic geographical, historical and political information about the countries & communities. The main ones used were:

1. The British Foreign & Commonwealth office website at <www.fco.gov.uk>. Under 'Countries and Regions', the link 'country profiles' provides descriptions of countries in alphabetical order, and is quite comprehensive. A map showing the location of each country is also included.
2. The SBS website at <www.sbs.com.au> is also useful, especially the link to 'The World Guide'. This also provides information on all countries.
3. The website of the UN Refugee Agency, the UNHCR. This website contains current information on situations in various countries, and is particularly relevant once the initial sites above have been accessed. The website is <www.unhcr.ch>, and the link to use is 'Browse by Country'.
4. The website of the department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs provided us with two types of information:
    a. Access to ready prepared reports on different communities in Australia. This does not yet have reports for all communities, but at the time of writing there were report for the communities from the Middle East, and the former Yugoslavia. This website is: < www.immi.gov.au/statistics/infosummary/summary.htm>.
    b. The second website provided statistical data which allowed us to carry out our own analyses. The website was updated on 18th August 2004 and is at <www.immi.gov.au/settle/data/cold.htm>.

5. One other local source of reports that we used was the Adult Migrant Education Program website, at <www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/pdamep>. This had reports for some the countries that we were interested in at the time of writing, and additional ones.

These sites provide invaluable starting points for the journeys along the Roads to Respect – learning about different communities.



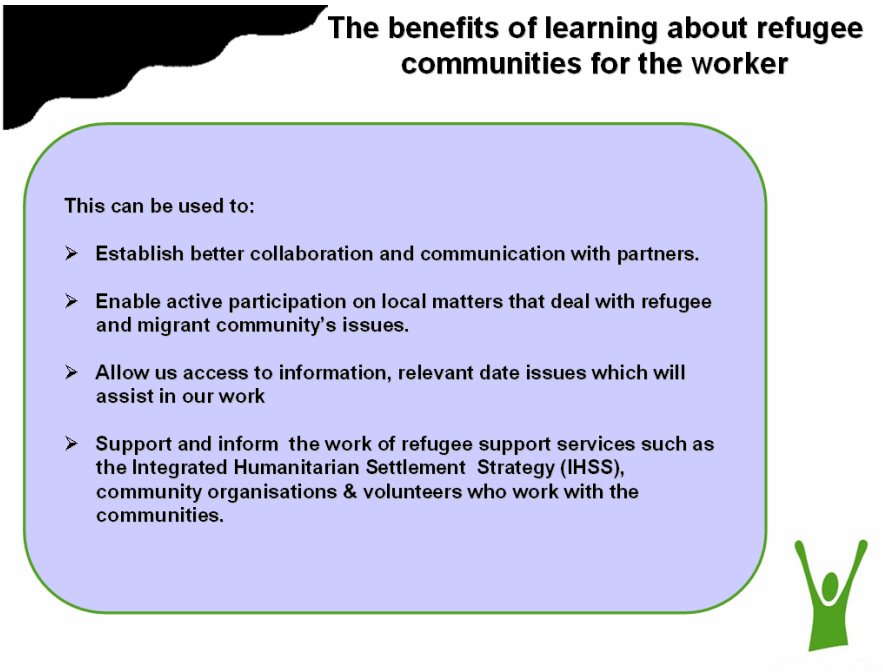
SESSION MATERIALS

Roads to Respect – Learning about Different Communities

Activity – Play the "From Horror to Hope" DVD, Sections 2 and 3 1 hour

Country profiles are a very useful basis for building a good working relationship with communities.

Use PowerPoint Number 72



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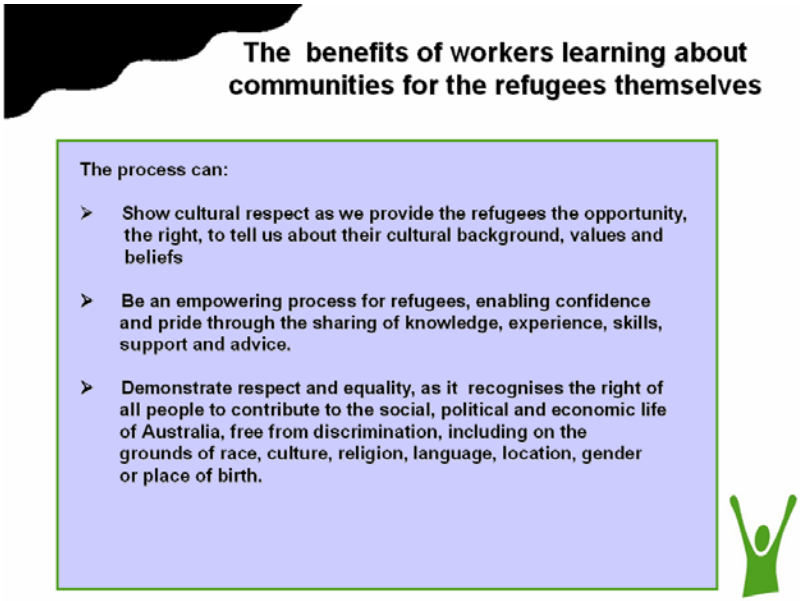


Activity: Small group work - 2 hours

Ask the participants to choose one of the country profiles and read it through.

Next request them to list:

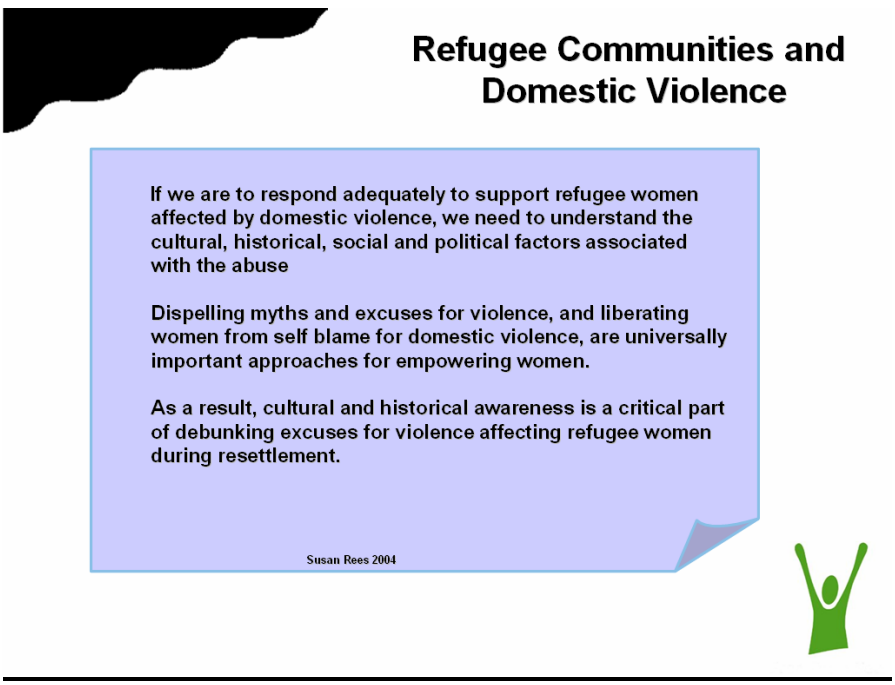
- the things that they have learned from the profile which could be useful in working with refugee families who are experiencing domestic and family violence.
- other information which could be useful to the worker
- how they might check the accuracy of the information with the communities

Share the lists and discuss how this could be used as a good community development tool.

Introduction

Memories of homeland are often the most precious possessions which refugees bring with them. Sharing these memories can be an important part of healing. Compiling and working with community profiles can be an important part of this process.

Use PowerPoint Number 74



We need to explore the countries and backgrounds of the various communities to reach this level of cultural and historical awareness

Activity : Story Circle

Model with the participants how country profiles can be used to work with refugee women to provide them with an opportunity to talk about their homeland and culture.

Get the participants to sit in one or two circles and get each member in turn to share a short story about their culture and heritage. Maybe focus on how they experience the position of women within their culture (which includes the Australian culture). It does not matter if the participants do not come from refugee communities, or if most are Australian born. We all have a cultural heritage and we all experience it differently.

As the facilitator, you need to guide the discussion, be supportive to the participants and encourage all group members to support each other.

Once the story circle is complete, ask the participants to discuss how they might use this technique with refugee women. Suggest that if they are working with women from a particular culture, they could share the material from the country profile with the women, and ask them to comment on it – do they agree with the information presented about their

country? Get the women to discuss the various sections of the profile from their own perspectives.

Once they have relaxed and started sharing information and ideas, the worker could lead into a discussion about the experience of domestic violence in various communities. Is it different here in Australia? How was it dealt with in the homeland and can they suggest new ways of dealing with it here? Story circles are a powerful way of exploring experiences and feelings. They should only be undertaken with very experienced trainers and facilitators, or with a specialist trainer or counsellor co-leading the session.

Refugees come to Australia with skills, knowledge and wisdom from their previous lives. The refugee experience and problems in resettlement can sometimes make problems seem insurmountable. However, with a little support and information about their new country and the services available here, many refugee communities can identify and implement their own solutions, including ways of addressing domestic and family violence. Sometimes they will need help in accepting new ways of doing things, and coming to terms with new sets of values which are enforced through our legal system. It is our role to assist them in this process.

Nine Country Sections

MIDDLE EAST

Afghanistan
Iran
Iraq

AFRICA

Sierra Leone
Somalia
Sudan

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Bosnia
Croatia
Serbia

AFGHANISTAN

Geography and Demographics

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile and SBS World Guide.

Afghanistan is located in South Western Asia, has no sea coast, and is a country of mountains and fertile valleys, rolling plains, as well as desert. Afghanistan is bordered by Iran on the west, Pakistan on the South and east, and Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north.

Ethnic Communities

Afghanistan has a population of approximately 18 million people.

The Pashtun make up between 40-45% of the population of Afghanistan. They live predominantly in the south east, adjacent to the border with Pakistan. The Tajiks, in central and north eastern Afghanistan, are the second largest community with approximately 25% of the population. The Shi'a Muslim Hazara, mainly in central Afghanistan, make up almost 20% of the population. Other smaller ethnic communities include the Aimaks, Panjshiris, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Baloch, Turkmen and Ismaili peoples.

Principal Languages

The principal official language is Pashto, with Dari, spoken mainly by Tajiks, the second official language. There are a number of minority languages including Assyrian and Arabic.

Principal Religions

About 90 % of all Afghanistan population are Muslim, including Sunni and Shi'a.

History and Political Background

Soviet Invasion

Afghanistan has experienced continuous conflict for many years. In 1978 after an internal conflict a communist government seized power. In 1979 Soviet forces invaded and occupied Afghanistan. By the early 1980s exiled Afghans launched an armed struggle against Soviet rule. The United States and its allies, as well as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other Islamic countries provided massive financial support to the Mujahedin, as the opposition forces were known.

Civil War

This conflict between the Soviet backed Afghan government and the Mujahedin continued until 1988 when Moscow withdrew its troops. However the conflict continued with the communist regime that the Soviets left in power in Kabul. During the 1980s and into the early 1990s over 6 million Afghans were refugees in other countries, mostly in Pakistan and Iran. In 1992 the Mujahedin succeeded in ousting the communist regime.

The Taliban

By the mid 1990s the mujahedin had split into many factions. At the same time many Afghan refugees from bordering countries were being repatriated. The strongest of these factions was the Taliban, comprising mainly of Pashtuns. The Taliban had control of 95% of the country by the late 1990s. In the north the mujahedin still had political control. Fighting between the ethnic minority mujahedin and the Taliban continued with widespread destruction and human rights abuses. The internal displacement resulted in a further increase of refugee numbers.

Religious and Ethnic Minorities

Many of Afghanistan's smaller ethnic communities suffered severe discrimination under the Taliban. The Hazara and the Panjshiris have been regularly targeted by Taliban forces. Many thousands experienced extreme racial discrimination and many were also killed.

Since 2000

The Taliban powers permitted and profited from the cultivation of poppy (used to make heroin) particularly in the late 1990s, however in July 2000 the Taliban banned the cultivation of poppy. This ban contributed to the displacement of large numbers of the Afghan farming populations.

The US Committee for Refugees stated that despite the escalating humanitarian emergency throughout Afghanistan that placed millions of Afghans at risk, the international community provided relatively little assistance. (USCR: Country Report, 2002)

In October 2001 the United States launched air strikes in response to the Taliban refusal to hand members and followers of Al Qaeda over to the Americans. Once again the US Committee for Refugees stated:

Afghanistan became the focus of world attention in late 2001, after the US determined that members of the Afghanistan- based Al Qaeda organisation were responsible for the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11th, 2001. On October 6 the US launched a military operation in Afghanistan aimed at rooting out Al Qaeda followers and overthrowing the radical Islamic Taliban regime, which controlled most of Afghanistan and permitted Al Qaeda to operate freely (2002, p 4).

Once again hundreds of thousands Afghans fled the conflict. This time large numbers of refugees came from larger cities such as Kabul. The neighbouring countries tried to seal off their borders, so the majority of the population became internally displaced.

Recent Events

From 2003, the Afghan transitional administration, led by President Hamid Karzai, relies on support from foreign troops to remain in power. President Karzai is the nominal head of a regime in which former Northern Alliance Commanders hold the real power; many of these commanders were responsible for many deaths and atrocities against women in the 1990s.

According to RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan “neither warlordism, terrorism, or opium cultivation have been uprooted in Afghanistan” (RAWA, 2004).

Women of Afghanistan

Violence Against Women

For well over a decade women in Afghanistan have experienced systematic restrictions on women’s rights. There have been strong women’s advocacy groups from within Afghanistan, such as the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, however their work is difficult (RAWA, 2004). Within a context of war, conflict and international agendas, women of Afghanistan have continued the struggle to address their rights. All sides in the ongoing conflict have participated in human right abuses against women and girls, and often the most vulnerable female populations are targeted, particularly women and girls from the smaller ethnic or religious communities.

In the rural and remote areas, and even in the cities, the risk of sexual violence by members of armed factions and combatants is still high. Years of international sanctions and restrictions have also impacted on the health status of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Two years after the ending of the Taliban regime, the community and the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), led by President Hamid Karzai, have proved unable to protect women. Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the extent of the violence faced by women and girls in Afghanistan. The risk of rape and sexual violence by members of armed factions and former combatants is still high. Forced marriage, particularly of girl children, and violence against women in the family are widespread in many areas of the country. These crimes of violence continue with the active support or passive complicity of state agents, armed groups, families and communities. This continuing violence against women in Afghanistan causes untold suffering and denies women their fundamental human rights (Amnesty International, 2003).

Violence against women in the home by husbands, male family members and, on rarer occasions, female family members, was widely reported. Few cases of abuse, however, are reported either to the authorities or NGOs. The extent of the problem emerges more clearly in hospitals than in any other state institution, when severely injured women seek treatment. According to one women doctor interviewed by Amnesty International, “domestic and physical violence are normal practice – we have a lot of cases of broken arms, broken legs and other injuries. It is common practice in Afghanistan – it is not something we should say is not in our region because most Afghan men are using violence” (Amnesty International, 2003).

Refugee Experience

Afghanistan has been the source of the world’s highest number of refugees over the last two decades. The refugees settled in neighbouring countries (Iran, Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan & Turkmenistan) and also sought asylum in Australia, USA and Europe, so much so that in 2001 Afghanistan was the source of the largest number of asylum applicants in Europe. At the end of 2001, it was estimated that 4.5 million Afghans were living as refugees in other countries and 1 million were internally displaced (USCR, 2002).

Within months after the US operations in late 2001 Afghanistan became host to the world’s largest repatriation and reintegration programs. A number of countries including Australia begun participating in voluntary repartition programs for the thousands of Afghans living as refugees in other lands (RCOA, 2003). Other countries such as Iran and Pakistan initiated forced repatriation programs for the refugee populations in border regions. Yet the ongoing instability in Afghanistan made it difficult to assure the safety of Afghans returning, and this was exacerbated by the US actions in Afghanistan as part of the War on Terror.

During the Taliban years, women endured particular infringements of their human rights, with schooling forbidden to girls over the age of 8. However, one of the ironies of the Afghanistan crisis was that large numbers of refugee girls were able to receive an education abroad, primarily in Pakistan and Iran, thus increasing the contributions some

could make to their countries of resettlement (UNHCR, undated). However, the numbers that benefited were not great when compared to the overall population of refugee girls.

Afghan Community in Australia

Freedom of life, freedom of speech – No war here

For the last 20 years there has been no education for women in Afghanistan; before that women were everywhere, very well educated and in good roles in their work, the wars changed everything

(Afghan focus group participant, 2004)

The first Afghans to arrive in Australia were camel drivers hired in 1859, and while more Afghans arrived over the next few years, the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 led to the gradual decline of this population (DIMIA, 2003). The second significant wave of Afghan migration occurred in the early 1980s, with many seeking refugee status as a result of the civil war in Afghanistan. They settled in all states of Australia, with the largest populations being in New South Wales (42%) and Victoria (29%). The rate of entry into Australia has tailed off over recent years.

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003, 2,364 entrants arrived in NSW: 2,072 under the Refugee & Humanitarian program, and 292 under the Family and Skills streams (DIMIA, 2003). The following statistics relate to these 2,364 people.

- Of this population, 48.1% were males, and 51.9% females.
  26% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 14% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 9% were males 40 years and over.
  24% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 17% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 11% were females 40 years and over.

- 81% were of Muslim faith, 1% of Bahai faith, and 1% of Christian faith; the religion of 17% is recorded as “unknown”.

- It is indicated that 64% spoke Dari / Persian / Farsi, and 6% spoke Pashto, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 2,364 in NSW, 27% had less than 10 years of education, 4% completed 10 yrs, 12% had 11-12 years, and 24% had over 12 years of education. For 33% the years of education is not known.

Women’s Voices

A number of women from the Afghani community took part in this project, by being part of the focus group, or taking part in other consultations. The

women appreciated the opportunity to be involved, and made use of the occasion to put forward their views on a number of topics relating to their resettlement in Australia, including domestic violence.

Issues Relating to Domestic Violence

Their main comment on the issue of domestic violence within the Afghani community was “Nobody wants to talk about such things, it is kept very quiet”.

They felt that domestic violence in Afghanistan is different from here in Australia; here most women know that they have access to the law. However, in Afghanistan this was not always the case, as the war meant that there has been years of lack of education for children, and particularly young women and girls. This lack of education can be negative at times, causing people to behave in ways that were not previously acceptable.

They also felt that the effects of the long periods of war and deprivation in Afghanistan had had ongoing traumatic effects on the whole family, with people still suffering mentally and not having had proper treatment.

DV Prevention & Education

On the issue of preventing and educating the community about domestic violence, the women suggest the following:

- Educate men on exactly what DV is, what it encompasses, in their own language
- Ethno-specific Community Workers are needed in the Afghan community to provide information sessions in their own language, on topics such as health, etc, and including DV
- Link the punishment of DV perpetrators to their welfare benefits / payments; if he is a known perpetrator (eg. there is an AVO out against him) this could make him think again.

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USCR, (2002) "U.S Committee for Refugee: Country Report on Afghanistan". www.refugees.org/world/countyrrpt/scasia/afghanisatian.htm

SBS 2003 "The World Guide" viewed 4/8/04 <www9.sbs.com.au/theworldnews>

IRAN

Geography and Demographics

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile and SBS World Guide.

Iran is located in the Middle East region of south western Asia, and at its southern end borders the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan and Pakistan are east of Iran, with Iraq and Turkey on its western borders.

Iran has a population of approximately 53 million people.

Ethnic Communities

The major ethnic communities in Iran are the Persian and Kurdish communities. There are a number of other ethnic communities and smaller tribal groupings. Persians make up 60% of the population. There are 4 million Kurds in Iran, making up about 23% of Kurds in the region (Bulloch & Morris, 1992, p xii).

Principals Languages

The official language of Iran is Persian, often called Farsi. Farsi uses an Arabic script. Other languages spoken include Kurdish, Assyrian, Arabic and various Turkic dialects.

Principals Religions

About 98% of the Iranian people are Muslims, with more than 90% being Shiite Muslims. Shiitism is the state religion. Other smaller religious groups include Sunni Muslims, Baha'i, Zoroastrians (an ancient Persian religion), Christians and Jews.

History and Political Background

Islamic Revolution

In 1979 leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, a Shi'a Muslim religious leader, overthrew the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi Iran, and declared an Islamic Republic.

The constitution was ratified at this time by popular referendum and a Republic was established based on Islamic principles. Changes in the law were founded on conservative Muslim fundamentalist principles. By the early 1980s Khomeini had gained control over all aspects of government including media, military operations, the police and intelligence services, religious appointments, the judicial system and the treasury. Political vengeance against the previous Shah's regime had resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people by execution. Religious minorities in Iran including Baha'is and Christians were repressed and suffered human rights abuses.

Kurdish Conflict

The severe conflict with the Kurdish people began in 1980 in the northern border regions of Iran. Following the 1979 revolution, Kurdish hopes of independence were raised, and the Kurds mounted a rebellion. However Khomeini sent troops to occupy Iranian Kurdistan, and embarked on a widespread offensive against the Kurdish population, bombing and shelling villages. The leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party-Iran, Mustafa Hejri, estimates that over 5,000 guerrillas were killed in the fighting. The situation is still volatile, despite the reform movement which has gained momentum in Iran in recent years (Pepper, 2002).

Iran – Iraq War

This war also started in 1980. Iran and Iraq agreed to a ceasefire in August 1988. However by this time it is estimated that over 300,000 Iranian military personnel were killed. Hundreds of thousands of people were homeless and there was massive destruction of buildings, temples, houses, schools and other important infrastructure.

During the many years of turbulent conflict in the 1980s the women and girls of Iran were required to observe strict codes of behaviour as prescribed by Islamic principles. Government sanctioned these laws and practices and women's roles in society were extremely restricted and limited. The systematic oppression of women throughout these years deprived many of their fundamental human rights. By 1984 there were over one million Iranians refugees in the province of Khuzestan.

The 1990s

Ayatollah Ali Khomeini died in 1989. During the 1990s fundamentalist government forces in the wider Iranian society have been placed in a

position to view and debate reforms. Reformers and moderates now make up the majority of the parliament but reform legalisation is often blocked by the Islamic Revolutionary Council who has a right to veto on legislation passed by parliament.

Human Rights

According to the following report human rights abuses were ongoing in Iran at least until 2003:

The Government restricts the work of human rights groups and continues to deny entry to the UN Special representative for Human Rights in Iran. Violence against women occurs, and women face legal and societal discrimination. The Government discriminates against religious and ethnic minorities and restricts important worker's rights, including freedom of association and right to organise and bargain collectively. Child labour persists. Vigilante groups, with strong ties to certain members of the government, enforce their interpretation of appropriate social behaviour through intimidation and violenc. (US Bureau of Democracy, Country Reports, 2003).

Women of Iran

Although there have been some gains in the pursuit of women's rights in Iran there are still major flaws in the Iranian government's interpretations of women's human rights. The head of Iran's Women's Contributions Affair Centre, Zahra Shojaie made the following statement when asked to comment on women's role within Iranian society:

The social activities of women does not mean having a job outside the house. It means the presence of their thoughts, ideas, decision making and views (1999, p.2)

Women have minor roles in government and are in minority compared with male leaders. As such any suggested steps or changes to improve women's situation in Iran are often not meet.

Marriage, Divorce and Child Custody

Under the Islamic regime, marriage and childbirth are seen as women's main roles. In general single or divorced women do not share the same status as married women. The brides' and grooms' respective families often arrange marriages. A man gains ownership of his wife when she accepts a mahr (bride price), similar to a dowry. A mahr can be a real or a symbolic exchange of money or valuables. A mahr is payable to the wife when a marriage ends, so long as the woman has been loyal and obedient to her husband. Arranged marriages do not always occur. Marriages where individuals choose their own partners can also be approved by respective families.

A woman will enter into the household of the husband after marriage, and her position or status in the in-laws home will increase alter after the birth of a son, because giving birth to sons is traditionally more valued.

Shahla Haeri, prominent researcher on Iranian women, describes Shiite marriage as a contract of exchange which gives the purchaser the right of ownership and intercourse. She divides marriage into three types:

- Permanent
- Temporary
- Slave marriage

The main purpose of a permanent marriage is procreation, whereas a temporary marriage is for pleasure (Ferguson & Pittaway, 1999, p78).

According to Islamic tradition a man can marry up to four times. Divorce is also allowed under Islamic family law. Under Iranian law a divorced women will lose custody of her children to the ex husband. A woman may use her mahr as a tool to negotiate custody of her children but this can only occur if the husband initiates the divorce. Divorced women lose social status and suffer discrimination.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is seen a private matter, and is rarely discussed openly. There is no specific recognition of Domestic violence in Iranian legislation or criminal law. In 1999 Iran adopted a three year National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women. This plan examines the links between women's rights and women's duties in the family and society. This report however does not address any statistics relating to domestic violence.

The patriarchal structure in Iran is linked to strong cultural and religious traditions relating to women. In Iranian society women are seen as men's property and domestic violence thus becomes an accepted expression of male dominance. Statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence are not available: however all sources consulted agree on its occurrenc (Asylum Aid, 2002, p171).

The police provide little protection to women in domestic violence situations. Women can lodge a complaint against theirs husbands at police stations but they must also provide a medical certificate stating that she has received serious physical injuries from her husband. Often the police will only act after two or more of these complaints.

A report by the National Council of Women for a Democratic Iran gives some background information:

This situation of difficulty in obtaining justice in cases of domestic violence has created an atmosphere of exhaustion, restlessness, and hopelessness among women in the families where there is violence (Asylum Aid, 2002, p173).

The report concludes that:

There is considerable tension between the progressive examples listed above and the complexity of Islamic concepts and principles that state that it is a women's duty to be submissive to their husbands. The Secretary of Iran's Islamic Human Rights Committee stated that it should be recognized that in a religious society, human rights are applied according to Islamic principles and not western values (Asylum Aid, 2002, p171).

Iranian Community in Australia

[On Iran]
It was such a beautiful place, but then the killing started and lots of killing, so much killing, we just had to leave

[On Australia]
Freedom to go anywhere, to do what you wanted not what someone told you to do

(Iranian focus group participants, 2004)

Before the 1979 revolution, service workers had migrated to Australia primarily to work in the oil industry. Refugees & humanitarian entrants from Iran started coming to Australia in 1981, and these were initially Baha'is seeking to escape religious persecution. The latest Census of 2001 shows that Iranians have settled in all states and territories of Australia, with the largest population (55%) being in New South Wales (DIMIA, 2003).

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003, 2,369 entrants have come to NSW, 1,233 under the refugee & humanitarian program, and 1,136 under the family and skill streams. The following statistics relate to these 2,369 people.

- Of this population, 49.5% were males, and 50.5% females.
  16% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 22% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 12% were males 40 years and over.
  16% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 25% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 10% were females 40 years and over.

- 37% of Muslim faith, 26% of Bahai faith and 6% of Christian faith; for 27% the religion is recorded as "unknown".

- It is indicated that 63% spoke Persian / Farsi, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 2,369 in NSW, 20% had less than 10 years of education, 3% completed 10 yrs, 26 % had 11-12 years, and 28% had over 12 years of education. For 24% the years of education is not known.

Women's Voices

Men are kings in our culture.

(Iranian focus group participant, 2004)

This section discusses the resettlement experiences of Iranian women who were consulted during this project. The following comments touch on both the positive and negative aspects of resettlement in Australia. The community-based action research element of this project staged a series of local focus groups with women, enabling women to speak about their resettlement experiences. Throughout the focus groups women spoke of similar experiences, the strong sense of loss, social isolation, cultural considerations and family pressures was often in conjunction to the excitement and novelty of new beginnings in Australia.

Causes of DV in the community

The women suggested the following as causes of domestic violence in the community:

- Men have no patience and women have no extended family support: this is not good.
- No one talks about sex or intimate relationships; no one is ever taught about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.
- The causes of DV are many, but financial and gambling problems seem to impact greatly on the stresses of families.
- Alcohol and drugs have very negative impacts on our community.
- When a family goes on their refugee journey, they do this without confidence or trust. Some people lose trust in their partners, others loss their confidence.
- Families are isolated and lonely; with no family support this can have very negative impacts on the whole family.
- Family history, and childhood problems, if these are not addressed then they do lead to problems.
- There are huge problems that a refugee family faces everyday, such as prejudice and racism - these bad things can rupture a family and cause real problems.

Key themes on DV prevention & education

- Have communication in the general media (TV, Radio) in relevant Iranian language (eg Assyrian)

- Promote education against DV through the internet
- Include education programs against DV in social events
- Hold community DV prevention & education information sessions in the community languages for men, women and youth

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IRAQ

Geography and Demographics

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile and SBS World Guide.

Iraq is located in the Middle East region of south western Asia and at its southern end borders Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Iran is east of Iraq, with Syria and Jordan on its western borders and Turkey to the north.

It has a population of approximately 23 million people.

Ethnic Communities

The major ethnic communities in Iraq are the Arabs and Kurdish communities. There are a number of smaller communities including Assyrian (about 3% of the total population), Armenian and Turkmen. Arabic People make up 75% of the total population. There are also 4 million Kurds in Iraq: about 20% of the total population of Kurds in the region (Bulloch & Morris, 1992, p xii).

Principal Language/s

The official language of Iraq is Arabic. Other languages spoken include Kurdish, Assyrian, Armenian and various Turkic dialects.

Principal Religions

About 97% of the Iraqi people are Muslims; the majority are Shia Muslims with more than 35% being Sunni Muslims. Other smaller religious groups include Baha'i, Christians, Jews and Mandeans.

History and Political Background

In 1958 King Faisal was displaced by a military revolution which lead to the establishment of a republic. From 1958 until 1979 many political parties were established, of which one was the Baath Party. In 1979 Saddam Hussein (a member of the Baath Party) became president and the Sunni regime came to power over the majority Shia Muslim population.

Living standards dropped dramatically as Iraq headed into decades of conflicts with Iran, Kuwait, and internal and external Kurdish forces. The West also continued to build up hostility towards Hussein's regime and sanctions were introduced after the 1991 Gulf War.

Iran – Iraq War

This war started in 1980 over disputed territory. From 1982 most of this war was fought on Iraqi borders, with an estimated one million people killed from both sides. Iran and Iraq agreed to a ceasefire in August 1988. During these years many thousands of Ethnic Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and anyone who opposed the Government were killed or displaced in Iraq as a direct result of the repression imposed by Hussein's rule.

Kurdish Community

Particularly in the north eastern Iraq, Saddam Hussein adopted an Arabisation policy whereby the Iraqi government attempted to change the ethnic character of the oil rich region of Kirkuk. In the late 1980s it is estimated that Iraqi forces killed between 50,000 to 100,000 civilians of the region, the majority of whom were Kurds. In the 1990s, tens of thousands of Kurdish families were expelled from cities such as Kirkuk and moved to the far north of the country.

Gulf War

In 1990 Saddam's regime attempted to gain control of the oilfields in Kuwait. In early 1991 the US led UN coalition expelled Iraq forces from Kuwait and the Gulf War continued until 1994. UN Sanctions were imposed on Iraq from 1990 to 2003. The humanitarian impact of these sanctions has considerably added to the struggles of the Iraqi civilian population. In 1996 the "oil for food" program was implemented with the aim of lessening the sanctions' impact of the civilian population (Global IDP Project, 2002 p173).

The 1990s

From the mid 1990s (post Gulf war) the population of Iraq continued to experience harsh living conditions. International responses to the internal humanitarian needs of the Iraqi population were minimal due to the severe restrictions that the Iraqi government placed on the UN and international agencies. Iraq has the highest number of internally displaced

people in the Middle East. Between 700,000 and 1 million people were estimated to be internally displaced in the late 1990s. Ethnic Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmen have suffered from several waves of displacement over the past two decades, mainly due to repression by the Iraqi government and, to a lesser extent, to inter-ethnic Kurdish fighting (Global IDP Project, 2002 p173).

Recent Times

In early 2003 Iraq was involved in yet in more conflict when the US led Western forces invaded Iraq and toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein. The ongoing conflicts have severely damaged Iraq's infrastructure, including the power and water supplies. The impact of this has been the rapid spread of diseases such as cholera, which continues to impact on the population today as does access to food, housing, health and education services.

Human Rights

Information on Human right's issues was difficult to obtain for Iraq prior to 2002, however in February 2002, the then Iraqi government allowed the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights to visit Iraq. Many international agencies denounced the Iraqi's government's policy of forced displacements from Kirkuk and the southern marshes (Global IDP Project, 2002 p175).

In 2003, it was reported that there were shortages of food, shelter, clean water and medical supplies. War related damage to electrical networks, ports, bridges, and roads severely impact on humanitarian aid agencies capacity to deliver essential services. Around 60% of the Iraqi population is dependent on monthly food rations (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Since 2003 it has become known that the political and security vacuum following the US led invasion of Iraq has led to widespread looting and gun crime. Daily newspaper reports of kidnappings and rape led many women to give up work or study and they are effectively confined in their homes. An Iraqi women's rights organisation, the League of Iraqi Women, reported that more than 400 women had been "kidnapped, raped and occasionally sold" between April and August 2003 (Amnesty International, 2004).

Women of Iraq

In our country the man gets custody of the children when separation happens. This is why women will not create any trouble because women worry about losing their children.

(Iraqi focus group member, 2004)

Iraqi women have experienced severe hardship for decades: loss of male relatives in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war; mass expulsions to Iran of entire

families declared by the authorities to be of “Iranian descent”; government repression, including the chemical weapons attack on Kurds in Halabja in 1988; in 1991 the Gulf war and the subsequent suppression of the Shi’a uprising; 13 years of UN sanctions from 1990 to 2003; and the US-led military action in 2003. Under the government of Saddam Hussein, women were arbitrary arrested, tortured, “disappeared” and executed by the authorities on political grounds. In 2000, scores of women accused of prostitution were said to have been beheaded in public by a paramilitary group (Amnesty International, 2004).

Women have generally been somewhat freer in Iraq than in many of the neighbouring gulf countries, but they are still less well-educated than men and are restricted in their travel movements (AMEP, 2002).

Women and girls do not feel safe in Iraq. A recent report by Human Rights Watch (2003) states that there has been a dramatic increase in sexual violence and abduction of women and girls since the US-led coalition’s invasion of Iraq. Public safety and security has further declined and the Coalition Provisional Authority did not provide adequate security to meet the specific needs of women and girls. The long-standing structural and cultural issues such as poor legal recourse and religious factors further compound this for women and girls. Legally there were many obstacles to women who are victims of sexual or domestic violence.

Iraqi Community in Australia

Australia’s Iraq-born population includes Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Turks, Turkmens and Jews. Migrants from Iraq started coming to Australia in significant numbers from the mid-1900s.

1976 was the first year when the Census recorded the Iraq-born population separately, when the number was 2,273, and numbers had doubled by 1986. The pace of arrival further increased over the period starting in 1991, when extra places were allocated to Middle East refugees in the refugee & special humanitarian program (DIMIA, 2003). This continued to 2003 (HREOC, 2004; DIMIA, 2003). The largest community is in New South Wales (15,730 people) followed by Victoria (6,110), according to the 2001 Census (DIMIA, 2003).

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003, 6,844 entrants have come to NSW, with 5,432 (79%) under the refugee and humanitarian program (DIMIA, 2003). The following statistics relate to these 6,844 people.

- Of this population, 48.6% were males, and 51.3% females.
  19% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 20% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 10% were males 40 years and over.
  19% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 23% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 9% were females 40 years and over.

- 55% are Christian, 23% of Muslim faith; however the religion of remaining 22% is recorded as “unknown”.

- It is indicated that 53% spoke Arabic, 27% Assyrian, and 5% Kurdish, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 6,844 in NSW, 37% had less than 10 years of education, 3% completed 10 yrs, 12% had 11-12 years, and 20% had over 12 years of education. For 28% the years of education is not known.

Women’s Voices

Many women from various parts of the Iraqi community took part in this project, by taking part in the focus groups, or otherwise taking part in consultations. The following sections cover their views on domestic violence – its causes and ways to communicate the issue within their community.

Causes of DV

The women felt that there were significant differences between the social structure in Iraq and Australia. ”In Iraq there is a lot of external family support and care. Here we do not have that, and there is only concern for money and materialist things” was one comment which identified the issue. On the other hand “The Australian laws make it better for women compared to Iraq and the child custody laws”.

Domestic violence in the community was a very difficult issue to address, because it is kept very much as a private thing.

“If a family has domestic violence then there is no dignity, no face in the community, shame is very hard for the women to overcome” and “friends and family may know it is happening but no one will interfere; there is no way to intervene.”

Gambling and alcohol were named as factors that caused domestic violence. Alcohol and gambling are related to a high unemployment rate, and many people have lots of time on their hands.

Key DV prevention & education themes

As far as communicating the issue in the community it was suggested that new arrivals be told about Australian Family Law, and other relevant law as “they just don’t realize how different it is”. Other suggestions included:

- Include DV prevention and education messages and discussions in social events.

- Provide counselling services in a non-threatening environment.
- Teach youth about their rights, but also their responsibilities.
- Educate the police about other cultures and their beliefs.

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Sierra Leone

Full Country Name: The Republic of Sierra Leone

Geography and Demographics

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile and SBS World Guide.

Sierra Leone is one of the smallest of the 54 countries of Africa, having the 33rd highest population, and being 39th largest in area, at about 1 hundredth the size of Australia. It is situated on the west coast of Africa and shares borders with Guinea (to the north and east) and Liberia (to the south east). It covers a total area of 71,740 square km divided into three provinces and one area. Its 400 km coastline overlooks the North Atlantic Ocean.

The country can broadly be divided into three areas: mangrove swamps and beaches along the coast; a belt of low-lying wooded land in the immediate interior; and a mountain plateau rising to 2,000 metres further inland. The climate is tropical, with a hot, humid, rainy season from May to December and a winter dry season from December to April.

The capital is Freetown.

People

About eighteen ethnic groups make up the indigenous population. The Temne in the north (30%) and the Mende (29%) in the South are the largest groups. Fifteen other ethnic groups account for 31-39% and about 2-10% are Creoles, descendants of freed slaves returned from the UK / USA / West Indies in the late-18th century.

The total population is about 5 million.

Religions

The main religion is Sunni Muslim (60%), with animist / indigenous beliefs (30%) and Christianity (10%) accounting for the rest.

Languages

The main languages spoken are English (the official language, with regular use limited to literate minority), Mende (the principal vernacular in the south), Temne (the principal vernacular in the north) and Krio. Krio is an English-based language which is spoken as a first language by the Creoles but is a lingua franca and is spoken and understood by 95% of the population.

History and Political Background

Recent History

In January 2003 Sierra Leone celebrated its first year of peace in over a decade. The preceding civil war devastated its infrastructures and displaced the population. Sierra Leone is ranked bottom of the UN's 2003 Human Development Index Report.

Background (PHR, 2000; US State Dept, 1994)

Sierra Leone was at one stage a British colony and became an independent state on 27th April 1961, with the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) becoming the party of government. It further became a republic on 19th April 1971, while remaining a member of the British Commonwealth.

In 1968, the All People's Congress (APC) gained government, and introduced a new constitution in 1991. At this time, there was a war in neighbouring Liberia, and this had an effect in Sierra Leone, spilling over into the diamond mining areas of Sierra Leone. A group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led a rebellion against the government in 1991, and this was the start of 11 years of bitter war.

The APC remained in power until 1992, when a coup occurred and a military government [National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC)] headed by 26 year-old Captain Valentine Strasser took over power. This coup was in part motivated by dissatisfaction among the troops (including Strasser) and the NPRC set as its primary objective bringing the war to an end (US State Dept, 1994). This did not happen as they wanted.

Human Rights

Terrible human rights abuses were committed by all sides during the war. The RUF deliberately targeted civilians and resorted to brutal terror tactics. At least 50,000 people died. A third of the population was

internally displaced or fled to refugee camps outside Sierra Leone. Some 30,000 civilians were deliberately maimed through amputation of limbs and other physical atrocities. Thousands of children were forcibly recruited to fight during the war. The conflict saw widespread rape, looting and destruction of property.

Conflict Diamonds (PHR 2000 [diamonds], UN 2000)

The conflict was fuelled by diamonds.

Conflict diamonds are diamonds that originate from areas controlled by forces or factions opposed to legitimate and internationally recognized governments, and are used to fund military action in opposition to those governments.

On 1 December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted, unanimously, a resolution on the role of diamonds in fuelling conflict, breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict, as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts (A/RES/55/56). In taking up this agenda item, the General Assembly recognized that conflict diamonds are a crucial factor in prolonging brutal wars in parts of Africa, and underscored that legitimate diamonds contribute to prosperity and development elsewhere on the continent.

In Angola and Sierra Leone, conflict diamonds fund the rebel groups, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), both of which are acting in contravention of the international community's objectives of restoring peace in the two countries.

It was further found that “the illicit trade in diamonds from Sierra Leone could not be conducted without the permission and involvement of the Liberian government officials, and that the Government of Liberia was actively supporting the RUF at the highest levels”.

In 2004, the then president of Liberia (Charles Taylor) was forced to stand down and flee to exile in Nigeria, and has been accused of war crimes for his activities in Sierra Leone.

Women of Sierra Leone

A US State department report of Jan 1994 stated that:

Although women have equal rights under the Constitution, in practice they face both legal and societal discrimination. The rights and status of women under traditional law vary significantly, depending upon the ethnic group. The Temne and Limba tribes, for example, accord more rights to a woman to inherit her husband's property than do the Mende, who give preference to male heirs and unmarried daughters (in that order).

Ten years later, much the same remarks were made in the 2004 State department report (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, & Labour, 2004) with the added comment that “In the Temne tribe, women could not become paramount chiefs; however, in the Mende tribe, there were several female paramount chiefs.” indicating that there had been a slight improvement in the role of women in the Mende tribe over that period of time.

The 1994 report further states:

In the broader society, women do not have equal access to education, economic opportunities, health facilities, or social freedoms. In rural areas they perform much of the subsistence farming and all of the child-rearing and have little opportunity for education. The average schooling level for women is markedly below that of males. A 1991 U.N. study showed that females receive one-fourth the schooling of males;
only 6 percent of women are literate. At the university level, men predominate. There is at least one recently formed rights group which has as its purpose improving economic opportunities and access to health services for women.

By the time of the 2004 report, there was again no change in these basic observations. However, there was an increase in women’s awareness of gender equality and women’s issues, in that “. . . Women were active in civic and philanthropic organizations. Domestic NGOs such as 50/50 and Women's Forum raised awareness of gender equality and women's issues and encouraged women to enter politics as candidates for Parliament.”

Violence against Women

Domestic violence, in particular wife beating, is mentioned several times in various reports & surveys about Sierra Leone, dating from 1993 to the present time. In particular, in addition to the two State department reports mentioned above, more than 50% of Sierra Leonean women surveyed by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR, 2000) in a population based survey reported that “their husbands had the right to beat them” even though 80% of these same women indicated that “. . . that there should be legal protection for the rights of women”.

The US State department report of 2004 discussed attitudes to rape, domestic violence and prostitution in the general population of Sierra Leone:

Domestic violence against women, especially wife beating, was common. The police were unlikely to intervene in domestic disputes except in cases involving severe injury or death. . . .. Women suspected of marital infidelity often were subjected to physical abuse. Frequently women were beaten until they divulged the names of their partners. Because husbands could claim monetary indemnities from their wives' partners, the beatings often continued until the woman named several men even if there were no such relationships. There also were reports that women suspected of infidelity were required to undergo animistic rituals to prove their innocence.

Rape was recognized as a societal problem and was punishable by up to 14 years' imprisonment. There were reports that former rebel forces continued to force women and girls to act as sex slaves. There also were reports of the sexual abuse of refugees in refugee camps. Cases of rape were underreported, and indictments were rare, especially in rural areas. Medical or psychological services for rape victims were very limited. Rape victims were required to obtain a medical report to file charges; however, government doctors charged $20 (50,000 Leones) for such an exam, which was prohibitively expensive for most victims. . . .

Prostitution was widespread and legal; however, prostitutes sometimes were arrested and charged with loitering or vagrancy. Many women and girls, particularly those displaced from their homes and with few resources, resorted to prostitution as a means to support themselves and their children.

In commenting further on the sexual violence against women that developed during the war, PHR (2000) state:

Rape of women and girls was widespread and systematic during Sierra Leone's conflict through most of the 1990s, and continued on a smaller scale in areas still controlled by rebels in the north and east of the country in the early 2000s. This brutal tactic, used as a tool of war to terrorize the civilian population into submission and break-apart families and communities, was primarily perpetrated by members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. Thousands of women and girls were viciously raped and left behind by roving rebel units. There are reports of children raped in front of their parents, and mothers raped in front of their children. Thousands of women and girls were abducted and taken into the bush to travel with the rebels and to act as domestic and sex slaves to the fighters. Combatants were given "rebel wives" as rewards, often more then one. The rebels particularly targeted younger girls - presumed to be virgins - for abduction, threatening to kill parents if they didn't turn over their children. In many cases the abductees were gang raped, beaten, starved, tortured, forced to walk long distances carrying heavy loads, and told they would be killed if they tried to escape. It is suspected that hundreds, if not thousands of abductees remain with the rebels.

In a separate study of AIDS knowledge, attitude & behaviours in Sierra Leone (Coker & Richter 1998), 67% of women living in urban Sierra Leone reported being beaten by an intimate male partner. In addition 50% of those surveyed reported being forced to have sexual intercourse, where a boyfriend or husband is the perpetrator in 90% of the cases.

Refugee Experience

The refugee experience occurred over a period of time of up to 10 years. Many refugees fled to neighbouring Guinea at various times during the period. The refugee experience in Guinea was difficult.

We waited for three years in Guinea and it was extremely hard. My young boys often could not leave the house. If they played outside they might be picked on by the police or locals, who did not like Sierra Leonean refugees. For three years I pretended to be Guinean, because I could speak Madingo, to avoid trouble (DIMIA, 2003 p10).

While there were several refugee camps in Guinea, they were perceived to have significant problems – including diseases in the camps, and lack of security.

We had been in Guinea for four months when the rebels attacked the camp (DIMIA, 2003 pvi).

Some of the refugees preferred to live with the local community, and avoid the problems in the camps.

We were taken to a camp, but I felt very unsafe there, and we left after three days. We went to Conakry, a large city in Guinea. We lived with relatives who had also fled Sierra Leone, with more than seven people in one room. To stay out of the camp, we took on odd jobs. I cooked, cleaned and did laundry and the kids sold ice blocks and other things on the street. (DIMIA 2003 p10)

In September 2000, the situation for refugees in Guinea turned extremely nasty. Guinean authorities reported that insurgents from Sierra Leone and Liberia had breached their sovereignty and attacked towns near the boarders of the three countries. This resulted in increased hostility to the refugees from these countries who were in camps near the borders. Eventually, the President of Guinea, Lansana Conteh, made a speech on 9th Sept 2000, accusing the refugees of harbouring the rebels who were responsible for those attacks. He further went on to say ”I am giving orders that we bring together all foreigners in [Guinean] neighbourhoods . . . and that we search and arrest suspects.” (Afrol 2000)

This statement provoked widespread attacks by Guinean police, soldiers and civilian militias on the refugee populations throughout Guinea, resulting in

- Rape of over 40 women [who subsequently provided testimonies to Human Rights Watch (2000)]
- 3,000 people being rounded up and taken into detention over the weekend

According to the Human Rights Watch interviews, the mobs drove refugees out of their houses, frequently beating, raping, and sexually abusing them. The attackers wielded sticks, rocks, iron bars, electric cords and knives.

For some of those who did not flee to neighbouring countries, but moved within Sierra Leone, traumatic events still followed them.

Many internally displaced persons in Sierra Leone moved to Freetown for safety. However, it was invaded by rebel forces in January 1999. A survey was conducted in Freetown by MSF four months after this invasion (de Jong, Mulham & van der Kam 2000) which found that

The inhabitants experienced horrific events. Few people escaped the mental trauma of the war zone, that Freetown became for those 3 week in January 1999. Of those surveyed:

- *99% suffered some degree of starvation*
- *90% witnessed people being wounded or killed, at least once*
- *>50% lost someone close to them*
- *73% endured the destruction of their homes*
- *65% endured shelling*
- *62% had their property burned*
- *16% had been tortured by a warring faction*
- *7% had been amputated (typically limb, hand foot or ear)*
- *39% had been maltreated in other ways*

The report suggests that there is a link between the high levels of stress in this population, and the population responding to stimuli with violence in the future, by stating:

The high levels of traumatic stress indicate a clear need for psychosocial or mental health interventions to address the needs of the survivors of violence in Freetown. . . .Psychologically healthy people can also solve their disagreements in less violent ways.

Sierra Leonean Community in Australia

Refugees and humanitarian entrants from Sierra Leone started coming to Australia in May 2000, with over 700 arriving in Australia by the end of 2003 (DIMIA settlement database). About half settled directly in NSW, especially the humanitarian ones, as they had contacts with the very small Sierra Leonean community that already existed in Sydney. The rest settled in Perth, Brisbane, & Adelaide, with small numbers of families going to Victoria & Tasmania.

By the end of 2003, a total of 401 people had arrived in NSW over the 4 year period, with 395 coming under the Refugee and Humanitarian program. The following statistics refer to these 401 persons.

- Of this population, 49.5% were males, and 50.5% females.
  22% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 23% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 4% were males 40 years and over.
  25% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 19% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 6% were females 40 years and over.

- 53% were of Christian religion, and 47% of Muslim faith.

- It is indicated that 67% spoke Krio, and 14% English, with 19% speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 400 in NSW, 28% had less than 10 years of education, 8% completed 10 yrs, 15% had 11-12 years, and 11% had over 12 years of education. For 38% the years of education is not known.

Women's Voices

A number of Sierra Leonean women in Sydney participated in this project in 2004. In some cases they were interviewed, and in others cases they took part in focus groups. The following sections record those women's voices, what they had to say about the issue of domestic violence within their community.

Key Themes

Key themes that came out of the consultations were:

1. Rights, and (lack of) responsibilities
2. High cost of living
3. Change of roles

All of these were seen as contributing to domestic violence.

The issues with rights were the following;

1. The women (in the focus group) were for the most part aware of their rights in regard to DV, but were not exactly sure how or where to go help when needed. They also felt that the rest of the women in the community needed help (ie advice) in telling them what their rights were – for example, that they did not have to submit to being beaten by their husbands.
2. They were not sure of the extent men in the community knew DV laws. This could cause problems within the family, because in some cases the women assert their rights but the men do not accept them.
3. There was a strong feeling that the youth (young men and young women) needed to be educated in the area of domestic violence together – so that both get to understand the rights of the individuals in this country.
4. Youth are being told of their financial rights in schools, and by Centrelink. In particular, once aged 16 or so, they receive their own allowance from Centrelink (if the families are on welfare), and they are told that they can move out of home, if they so want (so the parents believe).
   However, while the youth know of their rights, they do no appear to understand the responsibility that goes with this – ie they need to know that this money is not pocket money, but is to cover or at least contribute to living expenses – rent, food etc.
   (The background to this is that traditionally in Sierra Leone children / youth do not contribute to the household expenses – everything is done by the parents. Kids, male and female, stay at home until they get married & move out to their own marital home, and then begin to "pay their own way".)

The high cost of living seemed to be a significant source of DV, especially verbal abuse.

1. The cost of living is high, so women as well as men have to work outside the home, yet women are still responsible for all household duties, leading to tiredness and lack of interest in sex, denying what are seen as men's "traditional" marital rights, and leading to abuse.
2. The cost of living is high yet people send money back to Sierra Leone to support the family members there, which they can ill afford to do. This results in more arguments.

The change of gender roles (male / female) also has significant ramifications:

1. Men are not used to their women working, and this new reality can lead to lack of trust (of men in their women) and jealousy. Also, men themselves may not have jobs, and so feel a loss of status
2. Men also felt threatened by the domestic violence program itself; they felt that this was changing the way the women behaved.

Domestic violence prevention & education

The women in the consultations considered various strategies that would suit their community in preventing domestic violence, and in providing information about domestic violence. Many of the suggestions centered around the existing Sierra Leonean women's group, and ways in which it could take a proactive role in this area.

The suggestions were:

1. Sensitize the women's group and other community groups to the issue, so that women can be prepared to look out for each other, and support each other if they are in such a situation and need help.
2. Select community elders (male and female) to mediate in family problems before they reach the stage of physical violence.
3. Have discussions about DV on community radio, and publicise the existence of the hotline, and its number.
4. Educate the youth (male and female together) on DV; also on sexual rights, youth allowance, and family allowance covering the rights and responsibilities that go with each.
5. The community can organize a project or play on the theme of DV, as an educational / sensitization act.

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SOMALIA

Alternative names: Somali Democratic Republic, Jamhuriyadda Dimugradiga Somaliya

Geography and Demographics

The main source used for this section is the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile.

Somalia is one of the middle sized of the 54 countries of Africa, having the 26th highest population, and being 17th largest in area at about 1 tenth the size of Australia.

Somalia is situated in East Africa with a coastline that borders the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. It shares land borders with: Djibouti 58 km, Ethiopia 1,626 km and Kenya 682 km. The country is divided into 16 regions, and is predominantly arid, with rainfall increasing north to south-east from 61 mm to 490 mm annually. Drought is a constant threat.

The capital is Mogadishu.

People

Somalia is the most ethnically homogeneous nation in African, with about 85% of the population being Somali. Almost all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, and Islam is the official religion. The remaining 15% are Bantu & Arabs.

Languages

The main language spoken is Somali, which is also the official language. Other languages are Arabic, Italian and English.

Religion

Somalia is an Islamic state, with the population being Sunni Muslims.

Population

The estimated population of Somalia is ~9 million people, although this number increases to an estimated total of 13m Somalis, when those living outside Somalia (such as in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia) are taken into account (AMEP 2003).

History and Political Background

History

The main source used for this section is the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile.

The Somali people, who probably originated in the highlands of Ethiopia, spread south and east from the northern steppes of present-day Somalia after their conversion to Islam in the 14th century. Today there are Somali communities in Djibouti, Kenya, and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

In 1875 Egypt laid claim to northern Somalia but was forced to withdraw in 1884, at which point the British stepped in, declaring a protectorate in 1885. Meanwhile, Italy asserted its claim on the Benadir (eastern) coast which became a protectorate in 1889. Whereas Italy strove to develop Somalia as a colony, encouraging Italians to found cotton, sugar and banana plantations, Britain made no attempt to colonise British Somaliland.

Both Somalia and British Somaliland became independent in July 1960, and they immediately merged to form the Somali Republic. Despite an initial period of political stability inter clan tensions threatened the coalition government. Following an unsuccessful war with Ethiopia in 1963-64 and a presidential assassination, the army under General Mohamed Siad Barre seized power in October 1969.

During the 1970s Barre established a regime of 'scientific socialism'. In 1972 the Government decided to adopt the Latin script for the Somali language and in 1974 the Government successfully launched a major literacy campaign with lasting effect.

By the early 1980s, opposition groups began to form in the north-west and north-eastern regions.

In 1992, during the worst turmoil, an estimated 800,000 Somalis were refugees in neighbouring countries, and two million were internally displaced (AMEP, 2003).

Politics

Recent Political Developments

From 1993 – 95, efforts were made to re-create the Somali state with the help of the UN. A number of peace and reconciliation conferences were held to try to get sufficient agreement among warlords, politicians and clan leaders for a government to be formed, but they produced no more than temporary alliances. After 1995, when the UN had left Somalia, this was also paralleled by support for the idea of creating local administrations as a first step towards the creation of a government for Somalia, using the idea of Somaliland as a model.

This has not been successful to date. However, a new conference began in October 2002 and by August 2003 was trying to agree on a parliament and a government.

The 'Republic of Somaliland'

In May 1991 the north-west region of Somalia declared its independence as the 'Republic of Somaliland', within the borders of the former British Protectorate of Somaliland.

Somaliland has stood aside from the Nairobi conference and rejected any suggestions it might attend. Somaliland would however be prepared to discuss relations with Somalia on a basis of complete equality, if/when Somalia manages to create a government.

The Puntland State of Somalia

Puntland is the self-administered north-eastern territory of Somalia. However, it has made it clear it has no aspirations to emulate Somaliland and declare its independence from the Somali state. During the late 1990s Puntland, like Somaliland, enjoyed relative peace and stability.

Women of Somalia

With the breakdown of the public health system, the dwindling numbers of health personnel, and the collapse of water and sanitation systems, Somalia's poor national health status has continued to decline steadily over the past decade. The average Somali lifespan dropped from 48 years in 1990 to 44.6 years for men and 47.8 years for women in 1997. Somalia has the worst health indicators in Africa. Infant mortality is 125 per 1000 live births. One in eight babies dies before the age of 12 months. 4,000 Somali women die each year in childbirth.

Women’s rights are heavily restricted, and are violated by the widespread practice of Female Genital Mutilation. They also suffer from parent-induced restrictions to education and from the limited availability of targeted health services, rendering them highly vulnerable during pregnancy and childbirth. Domestic violence against women is common.

The following gives the status of women in Somalia as at 1993, according to the US State Department (1994):

Women are harshly subordinated in Somali society. Somali culture is overwhelmingly restrictive and patriarchal. Women suffered disproportionately in the Somali civil war and in the strife that followed. Traditional rulers have reported systematic rape and abduction of young women to serve as sexual slaves to roving gangs. . . . Women were often used as spoils of war and denigrated to humiliate their clan or family.

A subsequent report provides their status as at 2003 (according to US Bureau of Democracy, 2004):

Domestic violence against women occurred. Women suffered disproportionately in the civil war and in the strife that followed. There was no information available on the prevalence of domestic violence in the country. There were no laws that specifically address domestic violence; however, both Shari'a and customary law address the resolution of family disputes. Police and militia members raped women, and rape was commonly practiced in inter-clan conflicts. Laws prohibiting rape exist; however, they generally were not enforced. There were no laws against spousal rape. There were no reports that rape cases were prosecuted during the year. There were numerous reports of rapes of Somali women and girls in refugee camps in Kenya during the year.

FGM was a widespread practice. There were estimates that approximately 98 percent of women have undergone FGM. The majority of women were subjected to infibulation, the most severe form of FGM. In Somaliland, FGM remained illegal under the Penal Code; however, the law was not enforced. In Puntland legislation prohibited FGM in north-eastern areas of the country; however, in practice the law was not enforced strictly. U.N. agencies and NGOs have made intensive efforts to educate persons about the danger of FGM; however, no reliable statistics were available on the success of their programs. Prostitution is illegal; however, it was a problem, but because it is culturally proscribed, it was not reported.

Women were subordinated systematically in the country's overwhelmingly patriarchal culture. Polygyny was permitted, but polyandry was not. Under laws issued by the former government, female children could inherit property, but only half of the amount to which their brothers were entitled. Similarly according to the Shari'a and local tradition of blood compensation, those found guilty in the death of a woman must pay only half as much to the aggrieved family than if the victim were a man.

Several women's groups in Mogadishu, Hargeisa (Somaliland), Bosasso (Puntland), and Merka (Lower Shabelle) actively promoted equal rights for women and advocated the inclusion of women in responsible government positions. During the year, the local NGO "Save Somali Women and Children" held a number of workshops on women's and children's rights, including a regular monthly "Gender Forum" in which women gathered to discuss women's rights.

One of the Human Rights Centres reported that during the year there were 31 rape cases in Mogadishu, largely committed by militia members. There continued to be reports of rapes of Somali women and girls in refugee camps in Kenya

during the year. The majority of the rapes were perpetrated by Somali bandits who crossed over the border; a small number of the rapes were committed by Kenyan security forces and police. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documented more than 100 reported cases between February and August 2002, but estimated that the actual number was likely 10 times greater. In 2002, the aid agency CARE estimated that approximately 40 women were raped every month in 4 refugee camps; other reports indicated that 10 percent of Somali women in the camps have been raped. The rapes usually followed looting attacks by bandits and occurred when women and girls left the camps to herd goats or collect firewood or at night when bandits enter the refugee camps. The victims ranged in age from 4 to 50 years of age, and many of the rapes reportedly resulted in pregnancies.

Refugees

Significant numbers of Somalis have resettled in Canada, Denmark, Sweden and the USA as well as Australia. The state of Minnesota in USA hosts the largest number resettled in the USA, at approximately one third of the total of 34,000. According to Emily Sandgren (2003), her investigations showed that while domestic violence occurred in the Somali community in Minnesota, there was no clear indication that domestic violence had increased over the amount that occurred in Somalia.

For some women, the refugee experience led to the realisation of their rights. Some of those who were in refugee camps in Kenya stated that there were posters in the camp encouraging the women to call or report to the authorities if they were beaten by a man – “we know our rights, and that we can use these rights” a participant in the focus groups said.

Somali Community in Australia

Impact of Islam in Life of Somali Women in Australia

A 2002 study (McMichael) interviewed 42 Somali refugee women living in Melbourne, covering their experiences of war, displacement, resettlement and emotional health. In nine of the interviews, the language used was English, while for the remaining 33 the interpreter relied on a Somali – English translator / co-worker. While all of the women were refugees, they had come from varied backgrounds in Somalia, with some having lived as nomads, while others had lived in various cities of Somalia. Also, their circumstances in Melbourne were different – some had no relatives in Melbourne, where others had arrived with family members. All of the participants were Muslim.

The report mentions that images emerged of nostalgic memory for homeland, of the civil war, and of fleeing Somalia, and living in refugee camps and other countries of asylum. But throughout the research process, the centrality of Islam in everyday life was apparent. Conversations were peppered with reference to Allah and religious faith, and daily life was suffused and punctuated with Islamic practices. Interviews were frequently halted so that the women could pray.

So Islam was seen to have a central role in the lives of these women. In fact, the study reported that the women felt that Somali people have 'one religion', with Islam and Somali culture being inseparable.

The report also covered general aspects of life for the Somali women in Melbourne. In a statement which mirrored information that we identified in our research in Sydney, the report says:

Recollections of Somalia were shaped by a compelling drive to present and hold onto a beautiful era. Women told stories of the good life they had, the fresh food, the beautiful weather, and the strong social networks; this was a time when everyone was happy. Representations of Somali identity and community life in Australia are strikingly different. Women lament the loss of family support and trusted social networks. They often referred to fissures and conflicts amongst Somali people in Melbourne, such as problems with gossiping and lack of trust. For many, there is an understanding that the idea of a 'Somali community' in Melbourne is a myth, and that there are strong cleavages along lines of clan membership and status. Further, women feel out of place in Melbourne, as they face an immediate reality of new environments and social networks, and the unfamiliar workings of institutions and services.

Islam was seen as a way in which women found continuity in their lives.

Statistics

Refugees & humanitarian entrants from Somalia started coming to Australia in the early 1990s. They settled in all states of Australia, with the largest population (65% - McMichael) being in Victoria (a total of 3,226 Somalis were settled in Melbourne by 2002 - McMichael). The rate of entry into Australia has tailed off over recent years, with a total of 1,687 refugee & humanitarian entrants and 519 family reunion entrants coming in over the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003 (DIMIA 2004).

In this same 6-year period, 340 entrants have come to NSW, all under the humanitarian program. The following statistics relate to these 340 people.

- Of this population, 46.8% were males, and 53.2% females.
  26% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 16% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 5% were males 40 years and over.
  24% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 26% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 3% were females 40 years and over.

- 48% were of Muslim faith; however the religion of remaining 52% is recorded as "unknown".

- It is indicated that 93% spoke Somali, and 5% English, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative

description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 340 in NSW, 26% had less than 10 years of education, 6% completed 10 yrs, 11% had 11-12 years, and 6% had over 12 years of education. For 51% the years of education is not known.

Women's Voices

Women from the Somali community in Sydney participated in this project, and discussed several aspects of domestic violence in their lives. Their concerns covered community and extended family considerations, the context of women and children and the role of men in the Somali community.

Women are not encouraged to discuss domestic violence or other family problems even with their own extended families. As one mother told her daughter when she was getting married

When you have problems, talk only to your pillow; your pillow will listen and give you good advice

(Somali focus group, 2004)

Many marriages are arranged by family members, and in this case there is a strong feeling that whatever happens the wife is to stay with her husband. Indeed, if she does seek support from the extended family to deal with domestic violence, there will be a strong sense of shame and community stigma associated with the act of seeking external support: "wives are expected to take everything, including abuse". If the women run away to their family for help, the family will return them to the husband.

Somali women cannot divorce their husbands – the husbands need to initiate the actions, and it needs to be approved by the elders, and the Iman (religious leader). If the husband refuses to divorce his wife, there is nothing she can do about it, and is therefore unable to have a legitimate relationship with another man. Moreover, if tribal leaders and elders are approached to deal with the problem, the women fear that this may lead to community gossip and stigma.

A Somali proverb states

The head and the lion of the home is the man

There is a strong sense of financial and emotional dependence on the man in the family. It is not unusual for one man to be the financial provider for not only his wife & children, but also for his mother and his sisters. In addition, most Somali families here in Australia support families

back in Africa, and therefore the often limited family finances are divided between Australia and "back home".

As such, the role of the man as provider is significant, and even more so when it is remembered that Somalia has been at war for many years, and many men have been lost to the war. This is reflected in the statistics above which show that of the Somali refugees who entered Australia in the period 1998 – 2003, 16% were men aged 20-40, and 26% were women in the same age group, which is a significant imbalance in that age group.

Domestic violence prevention & education

The women had the following suggestions for domestic violence prevention and education in their community:

1. Tribal leaders (elders) should be consulted when issues of domestic violence or child protection come up.
2. Community based education programs are required in the Somali language, to increase awareness of the risks of family violence. Such programs could include talks from the Department of Community Services (DOCS).
(However note that this refers to spoken Somali. Even though Somali is a written language, this has only happened in the last 30 years. Young refugees who were away from home would not have learned to write it, and those who came to Australia in the early 1990s may not speak it at all. On the other hand, older Somali women may not have become literate in Somali, and also may not speak English. Therefore, it is preferred that English be used as the written (official) language, as at least the youth can read and write it, and translate to their families.)
3. Ethno-specific Somali social / community workers are needed to assist with family issues.

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Other Resources

Sexual Assault Education Video for the Somali Community in Seattle, USA

A PC-based video is available in the Somali language, and provides information from the Seattle Police Department including victims' rights and resources. It is available from the Refugee Women's Alliance at:

<www.rewa.org/programs>

SUDAN

Full Country Name: The Republic of Sudan

Geography and Demographics

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile, SBS World Guide, and the SudanNet website.

Sudan is the largest of the 54 countries of Africa at about 1 third the size of Australia, and has the 7th highest population. It is dominated by the Nile and its tributaries. It is in north-eastern Africa, occupying and area of 2,505,810 square km divided into seven regions.

It has borders with Egypt, Libya, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Sudan has over 800km of coastline along its north eastern border which provides access to the Red Sea. Sudan has a tropical south and arid desert in the north. It is generally flat with mountains in east and west.

People

The people consist of the following groups: Arab (39%), African (52%) and others (9%). The Arab and Nubian peoples predominate in the north, while the Nilotic and Sudanic peoples inhabit the south.

The population is 38 million, of which about a quarter live in urban areas.

Languages

There are several languages, of which Sudanese Arabic is the official one. Others include Nubian, Ta Bedawie, dialects of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic, Sudanic languages and English.

Religions

The majority (70%) are Sunni Muslim who mainly live in the north. Those with indigenous and animist beliefs comprise 25%, and the Christians who live mostly in the south and Khartoum make up 5%.

History and Political Background

The sources used for this section are the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office country profile, SBS World Guide, and the SudanNet website.

Recent History

Sudan has hosted Africa's longest-running conflict, the latest period of which has lasted 20 years, resulting in some 2 million deaths, hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people, and widespread famine. It is a complex conflict with much of the fighting being factional. Some of the rebels are seeking greater autonomy for the south; others full independence.

While the majority of the conflict has been around the south of Sudan, further conflict in the western province of Darfur has provoked mass populations displacements within and across the borders of Sudan since April 2003 (Australia for UNHCR, 2004).

Background (AMEP, 2003; SudanNet)

Sudan’s background extends as far back as the ancient Egyptians, with conversions to Christianity beginning prior to the 5th Century AD. Islamic influence began in 6th Century AD.

By the 19th century, a complex situation existed with competing power groups based on the African slave trade, Islamic movements, a declining influence of the Ottoman Empire, and increasing Egyptian influences. The British became involved, and in 1899 a joint Anglo-Egyptian administration came to power.

In the 1920s, Egyptian involvement in the government of Sudan was minimized, and independence from Britain was achieved on the 1st January 1956.

The north of Sudan is arid, and has a long history of Arabic tradition, including adherence to Islam, while the south is tropical, agricultural, and

populated by black Africans. Christianity and animism have been the religious traditions of the south.

There have been two significant trends in Sudanese politics since independence. These are:

1. A series of military coups, with five between 1958 & 1989

2. An ongoing insurgency movement in the south of Sudan, starting from 1955.

The set of coups resulted in unstable governments, and the most recent ones moved to create a strongly Islamic state. In September 1983 the penal code was revised in order to link it with Islamic Law (Shari'a). Theft, adultery, murder and related offences were to be judged according to the Koran, and alcohol and gambling were both prohibited; non-Moslems, however, would be exempt from Koranic penalties except when convicted of murder or theft.

The inauguration of the new code was marked by a ceremony in the capital, Khartoum, in which stocks of alcohol were dumped in the river Nile. After Shari'a law was adopted as the legal system in the north, moves were made to increase the influence of Islam in education & other aspects of life throughout the country.

The difficulties in the south became stronger after 1983, when the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) with its military wing, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fought a series of battles. The conflict was essentially a result of southern groups resisting the government in Khartoum. However, the southern groups were not united, and sometimes fought each other. The conflict is now officially recognised as a war, which has been going on for over 20 years.

In general, the sources of the war are:

1. resentment of both control from the north of Sudan (ie Khartoum), and exploitation of the more fertile and resource-rich south (with crude oil deposits in West and South Sudan)

2. increasing imposition of a fundamentalist Islamic social order and legal system on areas that are not predominantly Muslim

The war has been both lengthy and complex, with many people being enslaved. All sides have been known to commit violations, such as conscripting child soldiers, and raiding & attacking civilian populations. People were ambushed as they fled, and as they went to look for food.

According to one source, "Sudan hosts the largest displaced population in the world, and has produced one of every nine of the world's uprooted people. At the end of 1999 more than 4 million Sudanese remained internally displaced, and some 420,000 Sudanese refugees were living in

neighbouring countries. . . . Since 1983, more than 2 million Sudanese have died because of the country's civil war" (USCR *Refugees Report*, 2000, cited in Hillier, p4).

According to other sources, there were up to 2 million Sudanese refugees in Egypt alone at one time.

Conflict in Darfur (sourced from Australia for UNHCR, 2004)

The conflict in Darfur was called "the worst humanitarian crisis in the world" in 2004. A pro-government Arab militia known as the Janjaweed launched brutal attacks on village after village, bombing and torching the houses and slaughtering, raping and terrorising the local population.

By December 2003 over 100,000 people had fled across the border into neighbouring Chad. Scattered along a 600 kilometre stretch of remote, inhospitable country, without sufficient food, shelter or water, their plight triggered a major UNHCR response. Between January and June 2004, the UN Refugee Agency relocated nearly 90,000 refugees to camps in Chad, well away from the increasingly frequent and brutal border incursions by militia groups.

On the other side of the border, within Sudan, nearly a million people were forced from their homes by the fighting in Darfur. As "internally displaced persons" or IDPs, they are not entitled to protection from the UNHCR, and any other aid agencies that want to reach those areas need visas to get into Sudan, and then travel permits from the government to allow them to travel to Darfur. These are both hard to come by.

The costs to UNHCR and other agencies for this emergency mission will be high, as all relief items need to be airlifted to Darfur from the capital Khartoum or further afield due to the poor security and difficult roads (flooded in the rains, and desert tracks at other times).

Women of Sudan

The following description of Sudanese women relates to women in the whole of Sudan, but in particular the North, where the majority of the population lives. Note, however that most of the refugees leaving the Sudan are from the Southern regions (see the Background section above) and thus the general statements made in this section may not apply to those who are refugees.

A US State department report (1994) observed:

In Sudan, education was not segregated, so many women obtained university training. Women also had roles in the professions government, police and the military.

Sudan has an Islamic government, and the laws and traditions favour men over women, in such issues of inheritance of property. In 1991,

government directives required that women working in government offices, and other public institutions conform to Islamic dress code, which was described as non-decorative, modest clothing covering the entire body except for the face, hands and feet. This also applied to students.

The penalty for not observing the dress code was 40 lashes.

Another US State department report of 10 years later (2004) stated:

Some aspects of the law discriminated against women, including certain provisions of Shari'a interpreted and applied by the Government, and many traditional law practices. In accordance with Shari'a, a Muslim woman has the right to hold and dispose of her own property without interference. Women were assured an inheritance from their parents; however, a daughter inherited half the share of a son, and a widow inherited a smaller percent than did her children. It was much easier for men to initiate legal divorce proceedings than for women. These rules only applied to Muslims and not to those of other faiths for whom religious or tribal laws applied.

Although a Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim, a Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim unless he converted to Islam; however, this prohibition was not observed or enforced in areas of the south not controlled by the Government or among Nubians.

Thus Sudan still operated a two-tier legal approach, which differentiated between the Muslims (of the north) and the proponents of other faiths such as those who lived in the South, and who have been most affected by the ongoing war.

Violence against Women

Domestic violence in Sudan, in particular wife beating, is mentioned several times in the US State department reports (1994, 2004). In particular the 1994 report stated that

Wife beating reportedly is common. The Government did not address the issue of domestic violence against women; nor was it discussed publicly. The police do not normally intervene in domestic disputes, and there were no reports of court cases involving violence against women in 1993. For a variety of cultural reasons, many women are reluctant to file formal complaints against such abuse. Women refugees were particularly vulnerable to harassment and sexual abuse.

It also stated that

Among some southern tribes, rape is common. No blame is attached to the practice, although the man involved must pay the woman's family if she becomes pregnant.

The report of 2004 (10 years later) stated that

Violence against women was a problem; however, since reliable statistics did not exist, its prevalence was unknown. Many women were reluctant to file formal complaints against such abuse, although it was a legal ground for divorce. The police normally did not intervene in domestic disputes.

Displaced women from the south were vulnerable to harassment, rape, and sexual abuse. The Government did not address the problem of violence against women, nor was it discussed publicly. The punishment for rape under the Criminal Act varied from 100 lashes to 10 years imprisonment to death.

However, the reality of the situation was that women who were found to be pregnant out of marriage were killed (by stoning, as determined by Shari'a Law) and therefore women did not want to come forward to press charges of rape. As such, the perpetrators of rape were seldom charged, let alone punished.

Domestic Violence in Southern Sudanese Community in USA

A recent publication from USA discusses issues relating to Domestic Violence in a resettled Southern Sudanese refugee community in Minnesota (Holzman, 2000). In particular, in assessing the causes of domestic violence (or gender conflict, as it is called) in the Nuer community in USA, the following statement is made:

Quarrels in Sudan frequently revolve around men's perceptions of women's failure to cook or perform other household duties. . . . The single greatest source of gender conflict [in USA] is, however, money. (p398)

It is suggested that the significance of money is not primarily about budgets for food or other household items, but relates to the role that money plays in the extended family. This includes paying off dowry, and the need to send money home. While "both men and women are eager to remit money to family members remaining in Africa … the recipients, amounts, and purpose of remittances may be bitterly contested" (p399), thus sparking domestic violence.

The article hypothesises that "the concept of 'dialling 911' [ringing the police] has . . . taken on a life of its own, with the propensity of women to seek police assistance becoming an additional source of gender-based tension." In other words, Nuer women have developed a readiness to seek resolution of disputes outside of the Nuer community, through the involvement of police and women's shelters.

There is a suggestion that while domestic violence is recognised within the Nuer community as being a negative aspect of marital relationships, it is not the only such negative aspect, and the community feels that the police are only interested in violence. Thus violence is given primacy in the context of disputes within the home, without there necessarily being a search for a fair resolution to family disputes. In other words, whereas

Americans perceive violence as a signal that a marriage should perhaps, be dissolved, Nuer perceive it more as an indication that a couple requires assistance in resolving their difficulties.

The article concludes

Although efforts to prevent domestic violence are positive, indeed essential, steps, some of the consequences in the Nuer community suggest a need to develop more nuanced, culturally appropriate strategies that take into account the full range of gender relationships and family processes within the target population.

This is what the prevention and education project at CRR is endeavouring to do.

Domestic Duties in Southern Sudan

Traditional Southern Sudanese life had clearly defined roles for males and females, as in most cultures. In particular, cooking was one such area. According to Jon D Holtzman (2000, p398) "A Nuer youth, after he has been initiated into manhood, is strictly forbidden to cook food", indicating that cooking is strictly a role for women. This is supported by statements such as the following:

In Western Australia the Eatsmart nutrition program is assisting the young [Southern Sudanese] men by providing cooking classes; before arriving here most had never learned to light a gas stove. In Kakuma they had handed their rations to women, who cooked their food for them (Hillier, p7).

Thus, if men are unable or unwilling to cook, it means that it is the responsibility of women to cook for them. This also has implications for single men (eg. orphans, widowers, or divorcees) who either need to acquire the support of women to cook for them, or need to develop some skills in this area.

Life in Sudan

The following section provides some descriptions of Sudanese life, from refugee women who are now resident in Australia.

The following excerpts are from Zainab's story (Yagoub, 2000, p30) where she talks about traditional Dinka custom, some of which is no longer observed:

I belong to the Dinka tribe, one of the largest tribes in Sudan. The Dinkas have many sub-tribes, and branches all over the country. The all look similar, but they differ much in culture and tribal traditions. My tribe is called AGAR.

My childhood was carelessly happy. We, the children, moved around with our families, listening to the elders, to their stories and wisdom. The rhythm of life was orchestrated by tribal tradition.

One of the everyday practices in the [Dinka] tribe was a close observation of the girls' status. The girls in the tribe were considered to be of great importance. A first-born girl would mean wealth or she would get married first and with that her dowry would bring wealth to the family. Each girl represented a cow as a dowry gift which ensured that on her marriage the wealth of the family will increase. The selection of a groom depended on who could offer the largest dowry. The dowry could not be just a cow. It had to be a cow in milk, together with a calf and a bull! At some time the dowry consisted of an entire herd of animals; 100 – 150 heads.

Tribal law defined exactly how the dowry would be distributed among the family members so that each one would get their allotted share, a perfect example of sharing wealth on a pre-determined basis. The value and quantity of the dowry was negotiated between the two families prior to the marriage.

When we moved from the country to the city, and then migrated to a new world, many new scenarios evolved. Living in the city has irrevocably changed our lives and our traditions. Here, city laws rule our lives, and we are obliged to follow these laws. But it is still our duty to teach our children the tradition of their tribal origin, the language, the different types of food, the dances, the music, and the ways of conduct.

Martha talks about the dowry negotiations for her marriage (Yagoub, 2000, p43):

When my future husband proposed to me my family decided on an offer of 150 cows. His family negotiated the deal down to 90 cows. Bargaining continued with a settlement of 70 cows decided on.

In Grandmother Jannet's story (Yagoub, 2000, p38) she describes an aspect of her grandfather's life:

My grandfather was a tribal chief who had 30 wives. My father was the child of his first wife, whilst my grandmother took charge of all the other wives and they followed her guidance. It was the tradition that the first wife would co-ordinate her husband's visits to all the other wives. The fist wife (my grandmother) would carry a stick with a long knife and she would place this symbol in front of the house to which her husband would come this night. This wife would then prepare the house and a dinner for the expected visit.

The stories outline the richness of Dinka traditional life, and show how much it contradicts everyday life in Australia. Even though these women may not have themselves observed all the customs of their tribes, they would still have brought some of the traditional concepts and modes of thinking with them on their refugee journey.

In some cases as above, they are willing to share these insights with a wider community.

Refugee Experience

Sudan hosts Africa's longest-running conflict, and as such the refugee experience has come to various people at various times. “At the end of 1999, more than 4 million Sudanese remained internally displaced, and some 420,000 Sudanese refugees were living in neighbouring countries (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Congo-Kinshasa, Central African Republic, Chad and Egypt)” (USCR *Refugees Report*, 2000 cited in Hillier p4).

The flow of refugees and humanitarian entrants to Australia has also happened over a period of more than 20 years. This sections looks at the general refugee experience, with examples from some women from the Sudanese community who now live in Australia.

Refugee Journey to Egypt

<u>Theresa’ story (Yagoub, 2000, p24)</u>

Theresa’s husband was one of the few in his town “blessed with University education”. Shortly after 1981, the family was affected by a major feud between the Juba and Equatorial provinces on one side, and the Dinka on the other, and as a result of this, the family experienced destruction of their house. They eventually moved to Egypt in 1988/89.

She says “at the beginning of 1994, the UN had not really seriously considered the situation in Sudan but as more and more people applied for asylum their attitude changed. I also put in an application for refugee status. . . . To my great fortune, my application came to the Australian Embassy.” She eventually arrived in Australia after 1997.

<u>Grandmother Jannet’s story (Yagoub, 2000, p38)</u>

Grandmother Jannet’s refugee experience started earlier. She states “During 1964/5, one night, we all woke up to gunshot sounds and bullet fire. I carried my 2 children on my back, and ran out to the street seeking protection, as there was an army barracks nearby. On the way we saw bodies lying on the street everywhere. . . . The shooting was apparently an attempt by the army to squash the rebels’ movement.”

Eventually, after her children had grown up, and her daughter got married, she fled to Cairo, Egypt, where “in 1992, the UN opened the doors for Sudanese asylum seekers.” In talking about the life as a refugee she said “Although life in Cairo was hard, it was not totally strange to me”.

Martha's story (Yagoub, 2000, p43)

Martha's problems started shortly after her husband was appointed Governor of the Lakes Province, when the family had to have armed guards at their house 24hours a day. But this was not enough to stop the house being shelled, with the resultant death of her 12 yr old niece. They left, and fled to another part of Sudan for 2 years, and eventually fled over the border to Egypt. They did not have much money, but what they did kept them going for 6 months, after which "I sold all the gold I had kept for times like this".

Then Martha took work as a domestic servant in Egyptian homes, starting work at 6am, returning at 8pm, and by this effort was able to make ends meet for her and her 4 children. She comments: "To live in Egypt as a refugee is a very hazardous experience".

Eventually, "in 1994, when the UN opened their doors for refugee emigrants, I handed in my application". However, there were still obstacles. Eventually, "I hear that Southern Sudanese groups in Sydney were engaged in looking into our problems and that the Australian government was willing to help us in our plight. Consequently I submitted my case to them and was overjoyed when their acceptance arrived together with their sponsorship. On this basis it was clear sailing to obtain our visa and thus I came to Australia."

Refugee Journey to Ethiopia & Kenya

Ana's story (Yagoub, 2000, p47)

Ana was at high school in 1983, when she first heard gunshots early in the morning which lasted until about 10 am that morning. Her family sought refuge near the Ethiopian border, where she stayed for 2 years, and got married. Eventually, she & her husband moved to the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, where they had 3 children. However, when the Ethiopian war broke out, Ana's family decided to return to Sudan (for safety) in 1991 – a fateful decision.

Ana and her family had a traumatic time, where they ended up being on the move, moving from place to place seeking safety all the time, for a period of 5 or more years. During this period, she and her husband were separated.

Ana then spent further time in Lokichokio reception area in Kenya, and then Kakuma refugee camp, where she was reunited with her husband. Eventually she worked for the Red Cross, and applied to the UN for refugee status, and was resettled in Australia.

Sudanese Community in Australia

I do not think it is exceptional to face many difficulties at the beginning of a new life in a foreign country [Australia]. I felt acutely the lack of

understanding of the Sudanese family structure. A standard Sudanese family would compose between 10-12 people, but the Housing Commission was unaware of this situation. . . During 2 years of residence in Sydney, I had to move 3 times. This is quite difficult with children and household equipment (Theresa in Yagoub, 2000, p26).

Sudanese refugees started coming to Australia in the early 1990, with 300 visas being issues each year for Coptic Christian Sudanese under the 212 Special Humanitarian Program, during the period 1992 – 1998.

2,473 entrants from Sudan arrived in NSW in the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003 (DIMIA, 2004). Of these, 2,360 (95%) came under the refugees & humanitarian program.

- Of this population, 55.9% were males, and 44.1% females.
  24% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 23% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 9% were males 40 years and over.
  19% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 18% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 7% were females 40 years and over.

- 67% were of Christian religion, and 14% of Muslim faith and 19% had no religion noted for them (this could mean that they were animists).

- It is indicated that 74% spoke Arabic (Sudanese Arabic) with 26% speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 2,473 in NSW, 28% had less than 10 years of education, 4% completed 10 yrs, 15% had 11-12 years, and 19% had over 12 years of education. For 34% the years of education is not known.

Women's Voices

A number of Sudanese women in Sydney participated in this project in 2004. In some cases they were interviewed, and in others cases they took part in focus groups. The following sections record those women's voices, what they had to say about the issue of domestic violence within their community.

DV Causes

The women that we consulted during the course of this project acknowledged that domestic violence had occurred in their homeland of Sudan, as well as here in Australia, but there were changes in traditions

and roles since their resettlement in Australia. “Traditions such as the dowry make men the owners of women” with consequential obligations on men to protect and provide for the whole family. However, if men are unemployed they cannot provide for the family here and overseas, and this puts pressure onto the wife and can lead to stress in the men.

Government benefits and access to funds via ATM cards also cause problems “because the government gives the child benefits to the mother and this causes DV because the man feels he can’t control his wife” and the family. It was felt that this lack of control over other family members “drives some men to violence both verbal and physical”.

There are also structural differences between the ways in which DV is addressed. In Sudan, women would traditionally turn to their families, community elders and then the heads of their religions if there was trouble in their marriage. These people could then talk to both the husband and wife to assist in the dispute, and the woman would generally return, or be returned to her husband.

However, the husband would be aware that others knew of his actions, and this moral pressure could assist in modifying his behaviour. By the same token, this same moral pressure would work on the wife to encourage her to obey the husband and not dissent, allowing no options for a wife to leave her husband.

In Australia, it was clearly recognised that there are options for women, and there is protection provided by the state, which was acknowledged as being a good thing. “Here, women’s rights are very obvious and available”, we were told. However, there was concern from some women that “the protection that the government provides is often used as a weapon against the men. “

An additional source of stress in the family is the intergenerational one, where it is felt that “teenagers no longer respect their parents” and are too willing to listen to outsiders, such as friends, and teachers – and are able to leave home at an early age.

It was felt that some of the new freedoms that were available here also contributed to domestic violence, and gambling and drinking were mentioned – “here men can drink freely, in Sudan they could not, or they would get 40 or sometimes 80 lashes”.

The following list provides some suggestions that the women came up with for either preventing domestic violence, or for providing education about it, as an early intervention strategy:

1. Have early intervention programs, when verbal abuse starts, before it gets to physical violence
2. There is a need to hold community-based education and information sessions (on DV) for men, women and youth, where the sessions are held

- On their own
- Linked to other social events

3. Religious leaders in Churches & Mosques need to speak out against DV
4. Radio and Community TV should be used to spread the message
5. Youth should be taught their responsibilities as well as their rights
6. Good counselling services should be available for the community (in their own language: Sudanese Arabic)

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BOSNIA

Geography and Demographics

Bosnia-Herzegovina is located in eastern Europe and covers an area of 51,130 square km. It shares borders with Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and has 20 km of coastline on the Adriatic Sea. Bosnia forms the northern part of the republic, Herzegovina the southern.

Bosnia-Herzegovina's population as of July 2002 is estimated at 3,964,388.

Ethnicities

Before the outbreak of civil war and the mass exodus of refugees, the breakdown of ethnic groups in Bosnia was; Serb 31%, Bosniak 44%, Croat 17%, Yugoslav 5.5% and other 2.5%.

Bosniaks, or Bosnian Muslims, are regarded as a distinct ethnic group, their forebears being Serbs and Croats who converted to Islam during the 16th century.

Other ethnic minorities living in Bosnia include Roma, Albanians, Ukrainians, Poles and Italians.

Languages

The majority of people in Bosnia speak Bosnian. Serbian and Croatian are other minority languages.

Religions

The breakdown of religions in Bosnia is as follows: Sunni Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, Protestant 4% and other 10%.

Source: SBS World Guide, 2004.

History and Political Background

The Former Yugoslavia

The Communist Republic of Yugoslavia was named in 1929. At the end of WWII, the Communist Partisan leader Marshall Tito gained power and ruled for roughly the next 40 years, managing to quell any ethnic disturbances. Yugoslavia was made up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is an ethnically divided state. Roughly 42% of Bosnians are Muslim (Bosniaks), 33% Serbian and 18% Croatian. Roma and other minorities make up the rest of the population.

When Marshall Tito died in 1980, signs of the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started to appear. This can be attributed to uneven economic development between the states, and long standing nationalist rivalry. When the Soviet Union fell apart around 1989, nationalist fever within the Yugoslav states took over and fierce fighting for independence began.

The Fight for Independence

Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence in 1992 and civil war broke out in April, when the USA and some European countries recognised Bosnia as a separate state. Immediately Bosnian Muslims came under siege from militias based in Serbia and Croatia. Croat and Muslim factions united in opposition to the nationalist Serbs. Soon however, territorial disputes and rising tensions led to a Bosnian Croat separatist movement and fuelled a ‘war within a war’ which led to fighting all over the country. Each group had the goal of ethnic homogeneity in Bosnia.

Reports emerged of massacres, mass sexual assault of women and girls and concentration camps reminiscent of WWII. The Serbs began a process of ‘ethnic cleansing’ by brutally expelling Bosnian Muslims from northern and eastern Bosnia. To prevent inhabitants from returning, villages were often looted and razed to the ground. Anyone who refused to leave was killed. By the end of the war, all sides had used the tactic of ‘ethnic cleansing’ to serve their own purposes.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that over half of the 4 million people living in Bosnia were displaced and around 200,000 killed or ‘disappeared’. It can be seen from these figures that the war in Bosnia touched nearly every person, family and sector of society.

NATO embarked on a bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs in August 1995 after a massacre on civilians in Sarajevo. This campaign, along with heavy diplomatic pressure and a successful Croatian offensive, finally brought all parties to the negotiating table, which resulted in the signing of the historic Dayton Accords. Under this agreement, Bosnia Herzegovina was defined as a state with two separate entities – a Muslim-Croat entity given 51% of the territory (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and a Serb entity given the remaining 49% (Republika Srpska).

Women of Bosnia

Women during and post war

The conflict in Bosnia had horrific consequences for women. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHFHR, 2000) says that during the war, women were left to head the family, to take care of the children and to survive. Some women actually fought on the front line with men and were killed in battle, though data on how many women were killed is virtually impossible to obtain.

Women endured all the same atrocities as men – being arrested and tortured, murdered, expelled from their homes, having their homes looted and burnt down. The most widespread tool of war employed against women was rape. IHFHR (2000) gives the unofficial estimate of the number of women raped as being around 20,000, though this could be even higher (some sources cite up to 50,000), as it does not take into account the women who, through fear of further humiliation and shame, did not report their attack.

Post-war, women continue to experience many difficulties. Many women lost their husbands during the war and were left as single heads of households. Women who were raped have to deal with the severe physical and psychological damage inflicted upon them. Thousands of women fled as refugees, both abroad and within the country and those who have managed to return are faced with discriminatory policies, particularly in the areas of property allocation and access to employment (Asylum Aid, 2001).

Violence Against Women

IHFHR (2000) states that domestic violence is a pervasive yet underreported human rights violation in Bosnia. The lack of reporting can be attributed to the fact that Bosnian society is traditional and patriarchal, and domestic violence is viewed as part of life by many. The US Department of State Report for 2001 says that:

Violence against women is a problem. Credible NGO observers reported that violence against women, including spousal abuse and rape, remain widespread and underreported. A report by the IHFHR estimates that about 30% of women in the country are victims of domestic violence; however, there is little data

available regarding the extent of the problem….domestic violence usually was not reported to the authorities; a sense of shame reportedly prevents some victims of rape coming forward to complain.

Both Medica Zenica and IHFHR agree that the prevalence of domestic violence increased in the aftermath of the war (Asylum Aid, 2001). This is often attributed to problems associated with family reintegration (see below) and with 'war trauma' where men who fought in combat use violence as a response to their emotions.

The law in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina does contain some provisions regarding physical and sexual violence within marriage or between people co-habitating. It must be noted however, that the definition of domestic violence refers only to physical violence and that sexual violence is limited to only 'forced sexual intercourse'.

In the Republica Srpska there is no specific domestic violence legislation. In terms of sexual violence, rape is prohibited, however, rape within marriage is not recognised (Asylum Aid, 2001).

Reintegration of the Family

Research by Peele and Andric-Ruzicic(1999) found that when men came home after war, reintegration into the family was fraught with difficulty and in some cases led to domestic violence. Some men felt threatened and frustrated as they saw that their roles had been taken over by women. The men felt 'left out' or 'unnecessary'. Women, on the other hand, felt a new sense of freedom and accomplishment which they may have been denied before, and were now reluctant to give up. Also, the sheer length of time of separation also contributed to the difficulty of reintegration.

The above research found that the crisis of family reintegration did not necessarily lead to violence but is correlated with domestic violence when the men used violent methods to reassert themselves in the family and gain the family's attention.

Discrimination

The US Dept of State Report (2001) says that there is little legal discrimination against women, with women serving as judges, doctors and professors. However, the report also states that Bosnia-Herzegovina is a patriarchal society, and few women actually hold positions of real power: political or economic. IHFHR (2000) reports that the major obstacles to participating in public life are a result of traditional attitudes to the roles of men and women. Women are primarily expected to take care of the family and children while men are the breadwinners and decision makers.

Also resulting from the above attitudes is the gender division between high schoos. Textile, economic and social high schools are considered female schools, and technical schools considered male. Compounding

this in rural areas, girls do not often continue their education after elementary school – for economic reasons but also because it is believed that it is women's role to stay home and look after the family and children.

Further discrimination against women exists in employment. Women have lost their jobs in favour of returned soldiers, and gender-related discrimination cases are on the rise. Women and men may receive relatively equal levels of pay when employed by state-owned organisations but this is not the case in private organisations. Women have had difficulty claiming their maternity leave allowances, and cases have been reported of women losing their jobs due to pregnancy. In law enforcement agencies, women are grossly underrepresented with most units having only 3-4% women (US Dept of State, 2001).

A Note regarding Bosnian Muslims

It should be noted that most Bosnian Muslims are not particularly religious, having their origins in a communist, secular country,. Even though the religious aspects of the Muslim identity were strengthened during the conflict, many of the cultural and religious practices of Islam such as women's clothing (the hijab and the chador), and the ban on alcohol and pork are virtually insignificant in the Bosnian Muslim community (Colic-Peisker, 2003).

Colic-Peisker (2003) also points out that while the Muslim identity took on a new, largely negative meaning in the West post September 11, most Bosnian Muslims feel immune to this. As Europeans, Bosnians don't outwardly exhibit signs of their religion, they see themselves as the 'invisible Muslims'.

Refugee Experience

Countries of First Asylum

The first place of refuge for most Bosnian refugees was in neighbouring Croatia or Serbia, before being granted temporary asylum in other European countries, the largest number in Germany. Many refugees then moved on, in many cases after a number of years spent 'in limbo', to permanently resettle overseas. The UNHCR Refugees by Numbers Report (2003) states that in 2002 there were 372,000 Bosnian Refugees who whose main countries of asylum were Serbia/Montenegro, USA, Sweden, Denmark and The Netherlands.

Since the start of the conflict in Bosnia, (in 1992) over 35,000 Bosnian refugees have come to Australia (Misic, 2001), with around 1,400 arriving in NSW only, between 1998-2003 (DIMIA, 2004). It should be noted that the number of Bosnians in Australia may be well underreported as many defected to Croatian or Serbian identities upon arrival, while others declared themselves as 'Yugoslavs'.

Resettlement in Australia

Family and community hold huge importance to Bosnians. They also provide a major source of practical support during resettlement, and allow refugees to retain and rebuild a sense of their identity. Many Bosnians remain geographically close, and in both Perth and Sydney there are large residential concentrations of over 1000 people or more (Colic-Peisker, 2003).

Employment

For any refugee, looking for work can be an extremely difficult time, when language and cultural barriers become even more apparent than normally. Many Bosnian refugees were professionals whose formal qualifications were not recognised, and this caused them to either accept jobs they would not normally accept in their homeland or rely on welfare payments. This loss of occupational status and underemployment can be very difficult and lead to an 'identity crisis' (Colic-Peisker, 2003).

For working-class Bosnians who often come from rural areas, finding employment can also be a traumatic time, however, they may find Australia offers more employment opportunities than their homeland. Many Bosnian refugees have overcome welfare dependency and found employment, often through links to ethnic communities (Colic-Peisker, 2003).

Bosnian Community in Australia

Immigration to Australia increased significantly in the 1960s (DIMIA, 2004). Significant number of Bosnia-Herzegovina-born have arrived in Australia since 1991 due to conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

The social organisation of the Bosnia-Herzegovina-born in Australia depends mainly on their ethnic / religious background (DIMIA, 2004). Bosnian Muslims are inclined to associate with other people of their Islamic faith and in 2003 this community had two mosques in Melbourne and another two in Sydney. Bosnians of Serbian Orthodox background tend to associate with other Serbian Orthodox people, and those of Croatian background associate with other (Roman Catholic) Croatians.

At the 1996 census, there were 13,614 Bosnia-Herzegovina-born persons in Australia, and by the 2001 census there were 23,910, an increase of 76% over that period (DIMIA, 2004). Of these, Victoria had the largest number, with 8,570 (36%) followed by New South Wales with 7,030 (29%).

Entrants to New South Wales from 1998 - 2003

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003, 1,453 Bosnia-Herzegovina-born entrants have come to NSW, 1,288 under the refugee & humanitarian program, and 165 under family & skills program (DIMIA, 2004).

The following statistics relate to these 1,453 people.

- Of this population, 48.6% were males, and 51.4% females.

  18% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 16% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 16% were males 40 years and over.
  17% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 20% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 14% were females 40 years and over.

- 57% of Christian faith and 13% of Muslim faith; the religion of 27% is recorded as “unknown”.

- It is indicated that 58% spoke Serbian, 21% spoke Bosnian, 4% spoke Croatian, and 2% spoke Serbo-Croatian, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 1,453 in NSW, 23% had less than 10 years of education, 5% completed 10 yrs, 32% had 11-12 years, and 20% had over 12 years of education. For 20% the years of education is not known.

  The following table shows the major languages spoken by entrants to NSW in this period from Serbia & Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia), Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Croatia:

	Country of origin	**Serbia & Montenegro**	**Bosnia & Herzegovina**	**Croatia**
Language spoken				
Bosnian		1,089	305	0
Serbian		745	843	1,803
Croatian		458	58	211
Other		573	247	328
Total		**2,865**	**1,453**	**2,341**

This indicates that the majority of the people who were identified as Bosnian-born and who came to NSW at this time were actually Serbian speakers (843 of them); while the Bosnian speaking people who arrived in NSW at this time came primarily from Serbia & Montenegro (1,089) and then from Bosnia (305).

Thus when dealing with clients from any of these communities from the Former Yugoslavia, care needs to be taken to determine whether they identify themselves by the country of origin, or by the language that they speak.

Women's Voices

DV Causes:

The group offered the following as causes of domestic violence:

There have been changes in roles in the new country. Women started to adopt the ways of their neighbours, and asked for domestic duties to be shared between husband and wife, which was different from how it was in Bosnia. Also, they exerted their rights to refuse to do things that they had previously done.

At the same time, both husband and wife experienced unemployment, difficulties with new ways of parenting, yet there was no or very limited support to help then through these transitions. This resulted in loss of self-esteem for both partners.

Domestic violence was not a new feature of the community – it had happened 'back home'. However, the women felt that the amount of it had been exacerbated by the difficulties in resettlement.

Prevention & Education

The groups made the following suggestions for prevention of and education about domestic violence:

1. Form social groups for women

   The community felt that there was a great need for community based arts and crafts programs for women, so that they could get together in a social environment and share experiences of life in the new country, including difficult issues, such as domestic violence. The activities suggested included yoga, tai chi, and silk painting.

   It was suggested that education programs and information sessions could be held within these social groups, and that by listening and communicating more, the women would be able to help each other with negative experiences. Sharing information on where to go for help was seen as very important, and there was a suggestion for a help line and telephone service for Bosnian women.

2. There was a request for anger management courses for children, giving them options on how to solve problems without aggression.

3. It was felt that priests and other religious leaders should get involved in developing community support systems against domestic violence in the Community.

4. Use and development of community services

The women felt that counselling should be used by couples before the problems became serious. However, it was felt that there were not enough counsellors or other service providers such as settlement workers, DV workers, aged and youth workers for the community, and those that exist are only able to provide superficial intervention as they are so busy and overworked.

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CROATIA

Geography and Demographics

Croatia is located in Europe along the Adriatic coast and its southern end borders Bosnia and Herzegovina. Serbia and Montenegro are east of Croatia and Hungary is on Croatia's northern border.

It has a population of 4.42 million people.

Ethnic Communities

The major ethnic communities in Croatia are the Croatian people which make up 89.6% of the population. Minority communities include Serbians 4.5% and Bosniaks 0.5%.
Other minority communities in Croatia include Hungarian, Slovenian, Italian, Roma, Albanian and Montenegrin peoples.

Principle Languages

The official language of Croatia is Croatian, which is spoken by 96% of the population. Other languages spoken include Serbian, Italian, Slovenian, and Hungarian.

Principle Religion

About 88% of the Croatian people are Roman Catholic. Smaller religious groups include Eastern Orthodox, Islam and Protestant.

Source: The CIA World Factbook

History and Political Background

The Former Yugoslavia

The Communist Republic of Yugoslavia was named in 1929. At the end of WWII, the Communist Partisan leader Marshall Tito gained power and

ruled for roughly the next 40 years, managing to quell any ethnic disturbances. Yugoslavia was made up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

After WWII, Croatia emerged as economically prosperous and a movement began calling for its autonomy from Yugoslavia. This resulted in a series of purges on Croatia's residents during the 1970s.

When Marshall Tito died in 1980, signs of the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started to appear. A system of government was put into place where the presidency rotated from one state to another, which resulted in Croatia's economy grinding to a halt.

Serbian repression of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo gave further cause to nationalist rivalries and raised fears of a Serb-controlled federation. As Soviet States fell around 1989, Croatians started calling for independence and an end to communism.

The Fight for Independence

Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia, on the June 25th 1991. Immediately troops from the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) were despatched to frontier areas. A month after the declaration of independence, civil war broke out.

In 1991, Serbians in Croatia constituted about 12% of the population, but, armed by the military, Serb guerrillas managed to seize about a third of Croatian territory. Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2004) says that in the process, Serb forces murdered or forcibly removed virtually all non-Serbs living there - nearly a quarter of a million people. Civilians accounted for half of those killed. Ex-Serbian President Slobodan Milosovic has been indicted to the International War Crimes Tribunal for his role in this and other massacres.

Most of Croatia's major towns came under Serb attack as the war progressed. Croatia formally cut all ties with Yugoslavia on October 8th 1991 after a JNA raid on the parliament in the capital, Zagreb. This date is now Croatian Independence Day.

After several ceasefires brokered by the European community failed, the UN brokered a cease fire in January 1992 which left the territory taken by the Serbs in Serbs hands. This also left large numbers of Croatian refugees who had been displaced in the takeover of their towns.

For the next three years, the cease-fire held a tenuous peace during which minor conflicts occurred. In August 1995, however, Croatian forces mounted a campaign (Operation Storm) to reclaim Krajina – the Serb held territory. This was fast and successful, but resulted in 140,000 – 200,000 (estimates vary) Serb refugees fleeing to Bosnia/Serbia.

In December 1995, the Dayton Agreements were signed, with all parties committing to a permanent cease fire – not only in Croatia, but in Bosnia as well, where Croatian forces had been fighting Serbs and Bosniaks.

Today, repatriation of refugees from the war back to Croatia is still an ongoing issue. This mostly applies to Croatian Serbs. 300,000 – 350,000 Croatian Serbs were displaced during the war, and it is estimated that only roughly 110,000 had returned by June 2001 (HRW, 2003). Serbs in Croatia before the war numbered over 12% but are now under 4%. Human Rights Watch accuses the Croatian government of not fostering a political environment conducive to the refugees' return (2003).

Women of Croatia

The Croatian Representative at the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women stated that:

- *The disturbing violations of women's rights in which women were used as part of the tactics of ethnic cleansing took place at the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992.*
- *Women accounted for 23% of the wounded and 20% of killed civilians during the war in Croatia, and 24% of disappeared or forcibly removed persons.*
- *Women were captured and detained in prisons, where, according to the accounts of some of the 744 women who were subsequently released from camps in Serbia, the conditions were extremely poor. Women were maltreated and often beaten.*
- *There were accounts of mass rape of women, the pattern and time of which suggested strongly that it was used as a method of ethnic cleansing. Rape was perpetrated within the occupied territories of Croatia and in the detention camps located in Serbia (UN, 1995.)*

The Social (post-war) Context of Women

"There were so many deaths in my family, so much death and injuries, lots of people were badly injured, some were never the same again, everything changed".
(Croatian focus group participant, 2004t)

According to the 2003 US Department of State Human Rights Report NGOs in Croatia say that violence against women is a widespread and underreported problem. The report also states that contributing factors are alcohol abuse, psychological consequences of war and poor economic factors.

A study of thirty three cases of domestic violence in Croatia and Bosnia found a general theme regarding the onset/aggravation of violence to be

the return of soldiers, nationalism, aggravation of social position and financial situation resulting from refugee status or from economic dependence of either

husband or wife as a consequence of economic crises and refugee status (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2003).

Official government statistics on women experiencing domestic violence do not exist, although B.a.B.e, an NGO based in Zagreb, states that police reports and the experience of women's groups which help women victims of violence indicate a constant increase of violence. In 2001, B.a.B.e reports that police had 11,197 domestic violence interventions ie, approximately 29 interventions per day. The real figure would be much higher, given the fact that many women do not report the domestic violence they experience.

Awareness of domestic violence has increased in the last 5 years, and in the last year police have had guidelines to deal with specific domestic violence cases and have received training as part of a community policing program. However, IHFHR, in its Women 2000 Report, says that the police still consider domestic violence to be a largely private issue (even calling it 'kitchen violence') and often belittle and blame women who are victims.

The Legal Framework

Until July 2003, prosecution of domestic violence fell under the Law on Misdemeanours, which meant that violence within the family was sanctioned differently and less severely than violence outside the family. In July 2003, the Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence was adopted (BaBe, 2003).

It should be mentioned that the movements towards a comprehensive legal framework to deal with domestic violence have all occurred within the last ten years as a result of persistent lobbying by women's NGOs. Prior to this, domestic violence was rarely spoken of publicly, marital rape was not defined as a criminal act, definitions of family violence were narrow, and victims of domestic violence could not get immediate protection from perpetrators (BaBe, 2003).

Women and Employment

Unemployment is a major problem in Croatia, and one which impacts heavily on women, especially women in the 40-50 age group, who find it virtually impossible to find a job anywhere except the black market.

The overall unemployment rate in 2002 was 22.3%, but this extends to well over 30% in many rural areas. Women account for about 55% of the unemployed (Croatian Employment Service, 2003). IHFHR says that nearly every second woman waits between one and eight years to find a job.

The labour market shows a large division between men and women which, according to IHFHR, women find acceptable. The division relates to the fact that men have better paid jobs, and confirms the stereotype

that men have power, make decisions and earn a lot more money than women, while women fulfil the roles of mother, teacher, assistant, secretary etc. There is a wide belief in Croatia that a woman's place is in the home with the children.

Women experience discrimination, especially as employers believe that all women will eventually have children and they will therefore have to pay maternity leave allowances.

Croatian Community in Australia

Here in Australia our community had silent prayer groups while the war was on, 20 to 30 of us would get together and pray for our family and friends in Croatia.

(Croatian Focus Group Participant, 2004)

There have been three major waves of Croatian migration to Australia. The first wave consisted of mainly rural, working class Croatians who, started to arrive in the Ballarat Gold Fields, from 1854 until WWII.

The next wave of migration was from 1947 – 1960. This wave consisted primarily of post WWII refugees who had been living in refugee camps in Europe. Many of these refugees were well-educated, and in response to Australia's call for skilled labour, hoped to regain the status they had once had in their own communities. On arrival in Australia, many were disappointed to discover that their qualifications were not recognised, and economic necessity meant accepting work as unskilled labourers.

From the late 1940s to the late 1950s, the majority of the approximately 50,000 Yugoslavs who arrived in Australia as displaced persons were Croatian (Budak, 1988, in DIMIA, 2004)

The third wave of Croatian migration began in 1961 when, in response to high unemployment, communist Yugoslavia opened its borders and allowed its residents to seek employment abroad. In the period 1961 – 1976, the total number of Yugoslav-born in Australia increased from 49,776 to 143,591 (Paric, 1991), of whom a substantial proportion was Croatian. This group of immigrants was diverse; it included a large number of rural dwellers escaping worsening conditions, but also included many skilled and educated workers who were fleeing anti-Croatian sentiment within Yugoslavia. This skilled group of Croatians mainly arrived during the 1980s, as the Croatian 'education boom' of the 1970s had created a surplus of professionals who could not find work due to the severe depression which started in 1980 (Stubbs, 1996, in Colic-Peisker, 2002).

Most of the third wave of migrants settled in industrialised Australian cities, as few opportunities in rural areas were available. Tkalcevic (1980, in DIMIA, 2004) says that lack of English, lack of education or lack of

recognition of their qualifications, cultural dissimilarities and unmet expectations, made it difficult for this group to settle. Political diversity within the Croatian community and tension with other ethnic groups from the former Yugoslavia were among issues that Croatians faced during their resettlement.

Of the Croatia-born in the 1996 census, 86.2% had arrived before 1981, so it is clear that the Croatian population is a well-established one. Since the crisis in the Balkans during the mid-late 90s there has been some small growth in the Croatian population in Australia.

As a result of their strong family life, sense of community and willingness to work hard, most-Croatia born people have settled and adjusted to life in Australia well. Podravac (1988, in DIMIA, 2004) however, states that Croatians are underrepresented in the professions and a large percentage perform unskilled or semi-skilled work such as in the building trades. Further, the patriarchal nature of Croatian society may have impeded women from achieving their full potential in Australia as the primary roles of women are often still seen to be child bearer and home maker, especially in the older generations and in Croatians from rural areas. Croatian women who do work are concentrated in unskilled work and social services, and there were substantial discrepancies in the education levels and qualifications of male and female Croatia-born in 1996.

Almost 30,000 settlers from the republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have migrated to Australia since 1991 due to the conflicts there (DIMIA, 2003). Many have come under Australia's Humanitarian program and many are Croatian.

However, separate data on the Croatia-born was not captured prior to the 1996 Census, when 47,015 people declared that they were Croatia-born. By contrast, 69,173 people in the 1996 census declared that they spoke Croatian at home.

The 2001 census recorded 51,860 Croatia-born persons in Australia, with the largest number being in Victoria (36.6%) followed by New South Wales with 35.5%.

Entrants to New South Wales from 1998 to 2003

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 2003, 2,341 Croatia-born entrants have come to NSW, 2,229 under the refugee & humanitarian program, and 112 under the family & skills streams. The following statistics relate to these 2,341 people.

- Of this population, 50.3% were males, and 49.7% females.

16% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 18% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 17% were males 40 years and over.
16% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 17% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 17% were females 40 years and over.

- 80% were of Christian faith; the religion of the remaining 20% is recorded as “unknown”.

- It is indicated that 77% spoke Serbian, and 9% spoke Croatian, with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 2,341 in NSW, 26% had less than 10 years of education, 5% completed 10 yrs, 35% had 11-12 years, and 17% had over 12 years of education. For 17% the years of education is not known.

The following table shows the major languages spoken by entrants to NSW in this period from Serbia & Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia), Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Croatia:

Country of Origin	**Serbia & Montenegro**	**Bosnia & Herzegovina**	**Croatia**
Main Language Spoken			
Bosnian	1,089	305	0
Serbian	745	843	1,803
Croatian	458	58	211
Other	573	247	328
Total	**2,865**	**1,453**	**2,341**

This indicates that the majority of the people who were identified as Croatian-born and who came to NSW at this time were actually Serbian speakers (1,803 of them); while the Croatian speaking people who arrived in NSW at this time came primarily from Serbia & Montenegro (458) and then from Croatia (211).

Thus when dealing with clients from any of these communities from the Former Yugoslavia, care needs to be taken to determine whether they identify themselves by the country of origin, or by the language that they speak.

Women's Voices

This section discusses the resettlement experiences of Croatian women who were consulted during this project, and their understandings of domestic violence within their communities. Throughout the focus groups women spoke of similar experiences, the strong sense of loss, social isolation, cultural considerations and family pressures was often in conjunction to the excitement and novelty of new beginnings in Australia.

Causes of Domestic Violence in the Croatian community

The women who were consulted acknowledged that domestic violence was not a new phenomenon in their communities but had happened back home in their homelands. In particular it was suggested that it occurred quite significantly in small rural communities; however the traditional means of coping with it on the individual and community level was to ignore the problem, and not talk about it.

It was felt that the experiences that men had from the war, such as being imprisoned on one or more occasion, and being the victims of violence, meant that they were prone to bringing the violence home with them.

Further, resettlement in Australia caused a change of the traditional male role and challenges to their masculinity by loss of status through unemployment or language barriers; these adding to the impact on the family and could lead to domestic violence. Indeed, even men who had never used violence in the home before could be drawn into serious conflict during the resettlement phase, with it sometimes continuing for a long time.

Other stressors on the family included money – in particular as it is linked to gambling and alcohol abuse.

Key DV prevention & education themes

The women who were consulted suggested the following as techniques for educating others about domestic violence, and preventing it in that community:

- In all communications, put across the view that "DV is wrong" instead of "In Australia DV is wrong". The latter is giving mixed messages implying that DV may not be wrong in other countries (in particular, the ones where the communities have come from).
- Have a general media campaign against DV
- Have Social Workers include Domestic and Family Violence in the services provided to new arrivals

- Women should be taught financial management. This will lessen their dependence on others in their families, and hence reduce one possible aspect of DV.
- As DV is a crime, women should use the law to the fullest for their own protection; this may mean leaving the husband at the end of the day.

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SERBIA

Geography and Demographics

Serbia and Montenegro is located in south-eastern central Europe and comprises those parts of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) which have not seceded from the federation - namely Serbia, Montenegro and the autonomous Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina. Serbia covers an area of 88,361 square km and is bounded to the west by Croatia and Albania, to the north by Hungary and Romania and to the east by Bulgaria.

Ethnicities

The ethnic composition of Serbia is 62.6% Serbians, 16.5% Albanian 5% Montenegrin and 3.3% Hungarian. Other minority groups make up 12.6% of the population.

Religions

The breakdown of religious groups in Serbia is as follows: Orthodox 65%, Muslim 19%, Roman Catholic 4%, Protestant 1%, other 11%

Languages

Serbian 95%, Albanian 5%

Source: SBS World Guide 2004.

History and Political Background

The Former Yugoslavia

The Communist Republic of Yugoslavia was named in 1929. At the end of WWII, the Communist Partisan leader Marshall Tito gained power and ruled for roughly the next 40 years, managing to quell any ethnic

disturbances. Yugoslavia was made up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro.

When Marshall Tito died in 1980, the presidency of the Republic of Yugoslavia rotated around the member states. The Federation lasted for ten further years under this system but fell apart under the rule of Slobodan Milosevic and his Serbian nationalist rhetoric. Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia all declared independence during the early 1990s. Montenegro was the only nation to elect to remain with Serbia within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Trouble in Kosovo

Kosovo became a province of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after World War II. Although the Albanian-majority province enjoyed significant autonomy, riots broke out in 1981 when Kosovar Albanians demanded that Kosovo be granted full Republic status. In 1989 Milosevic took further power away from Kosovo, implementing a system which involved more direct rule from Belgrade and eliminated Kosovo's autonomy.

After a peaceful resistance throughout the early 1990s failed to yield results, an armed resistance emerged – the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose goal was the independence of Kosovo.

A brutal campaign began against the KLA which also included atrocities against civilians, such as the burning down of homes and towns, widespread rape, the use of human shields, detention of civilians, summary executions and ethnic cleansing (US Dept of State, 1999). NATO intervened with a 78-day bombing campaign from March-June 1999 to protect the human rights of the Kosovar population.

Since June 1999 Kosovo has been under the administrative control of UNMIK (The UN Mission in Kosovo), and the NATO-led Kosovo force (KFOR) has maintained security.

The end of Milosevic

Milosevic's reign came to an end on 5th October, 2000 when, during the Yugoslav Presidential elections, he refused to accept the first round victory of Vojislav Kostunica. He completely underestimated the support for his opposition and hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets and stormed government buildings, forcing Milosevic from power. Vojislav Kostunica became President of Serbia and was joined by Zoran Djindjic as Prime Minister.

After the initial post-Milosevic euphoria, Serbians soon became disillusioned with its politicians; by mid 2002 two elections had failed due to insufficient voter turnout, and reform initiatives stalled. Zoran Djindjic was then assassinated on March 12, 2003. A state of emergency was called and 4,000 people were arrested in a major crackdown on organised crime. Zoran Zivkovic was elected the new Prime Minister.

On February 4, 2003, the FRY Parliament ratified the Constitutional Charter, establishing a new state union and changing the name of the country from Yugoslavia to Serbia and Montenegro.

Serbian Refugees

Serbian refugees have come from many of the conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia, where Serbian people lived, and where Serbian troops were involved.

During the conflict in Croatia, Human Rights Watch (2003) estimates that around 300,000 Croatian Serbs were displaced. HRW says there are no precise figures detailing how many Croatian Serbs have returned to their homes in Croatia, and has criticised the Croatian government for its inability and inaction in assisting returning refugees. In 1991 Serbs made up 12.1 percent of Croatia's population, but the 2001 census showed their number had fallen to 4.5 percent (HRW, 2003).

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 164,000 Serbs left Kosovo in the seven weeks after Yugoslav and Serb forces withdrew and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) entered the province.

The Human Rights World Watch Report 2003 states that over half a million refugees and displaced persons continued to live in Serbia and Montenegro. Around 200,000 of these refugees are from Kosovo. The report also states that

almost four hundred thousand Serbs and Montenegrins from Croatia and Bosnia lived as registered refugees in the Former Yugoslavia. They were free to opt for Yugoslav citizenship without renouncing their Croatian or Bosnian citizenship first, but the procedure was slow, generally taking from six to twelve months (HRW, 2003).

Women of Serbia

Social Context for Women in Serbia

War-related Violence against Women

While there has not been a war fought on Serbian soil during the conflicts in the Balkans, the conflicts for independence in other parts of Former Yugoslavia (for example, in Croatia and Bosnia) have had great impacts on violence against women. Nationalist propaganda on the TV news was filled with hatred for 'the enemy', and meant that women became a target for the feelings this propaganda generated (Hughes & Mrsevic, 1997). In Autumn 1991, the SOS Hotline, set up to met the needs of women and children who were experiencing violence, started receiving calls from women who were battered after men watched the TV News which reported on Serbian victims of war (Hughes & Mrsevic, 1997). Some

women who called the SOS Hotline reported that this was the first time in their lives they had been beaten (Hughes & Mrsevic, 1997).

Men who fought in the Yugoslav army or in paramilitary groups returned to Serbia traumatised, angry and violent. Many brought weapons such as pistols and grenades and used them to threaten or harm women (Hughes & Mladjenovic, 1999).

"Some of the men who came back from the front (from regular army or paramilitary battalions) continue massacres in their homes: they abuse women, beat their children, sleep with machine guns under their pillows, rape their wives while they are sleeping, destroy the furniture, scream, swear, spit and accuse" (Mladjenovic 1992: 54, cited in Hughes & Mrsevic, 1997).

Alcohol abused increased, and consequently so did violence against women. Men expected emotional understanding and support from the women around them, and saw their wives as people on whom their rage could be displaced (Hughes & Mladjenovic, 1999).

Domestic Violence

The 2003 US Department of State Report on Human Rights acknowledges that high levels of violence against women and domestic violence persist in Serbia, even though in 2002, the Federal Criminal Code was amended to make spousal rape, and other forms of domestic violence, a criminal offence.

Mrsevic (1997) asserts that the primary cause of domestic violence in Serbian society is its patriarchal structure, which tolerates and even encourages aggressive behaviour in men. This in turn results in a wide range of violent behaviours including domestic violence. In addition, Mrsevic (1997) claims, there is a lack of appropriate reaction from institutions whose supposed role is to deal with violence - such as the police, and a shortage of legal provisions which can be implemented to prosecute perpetrators. This has created an environment where domestic violence has gone unchecked for a very long time.

The Victimology Society of Serbia recently conducted a survey on the prevalence, characteristics and consequences of domestic violence in Serbia. They surveyed 700 women, from seven towns and forty villages in Serbia. The results show a disturbingly high level of domestic violence, for example, nearly every second woman surveyed had been subjected to psychological abuse (46.1%), and every third women had experienced physical violence (30.6%) (Les Penelopes, 2003).

Further worrying results from this study were that only 16.8% of victims of domestic violence (physical or/and sexual, most often accompanied by psychological abuse) reported the last violent act to the police, 9.6% looked for help from a social security agency, while 14.8% asked for medical assistance (Les Penelopes, 2003).

The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, in its Women 2000 Report states that even though there are over 30 women's organisations within Serbia and Montenegro that help women who have experienced sexual and domestic abuse, these issues are still not perceived as a matter of social and community responsibility.

Discrimination

The US Department of State's 2003 Human Rights Report on Serbia states that while women do not enjoy the same social status as men, in metropolitan areas women are well represented in several professions including law, academia, and medicine. Women were also active in journalism, politics, and human rights organisations, but poorly represented in commerce. However, the report also cites IHFHR's findings that women's pay is approximately 11% lower than men's.

In rural areas, patriarchal ideas of gender roles mean women are subjected to discrimination such as not being allowed to control property. The report also found that it is common for husbands to control their wives' voting choices.

Serbian Community in Australia

The information in this section is based on data from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA). The country 'Serbia and Montenegro' was created by the Yugoslav parliament in February 2003 and Yugoslavia formally ceased to exist (DIMIA, 2003).

The latest Census in 2001 recorded 55,310 Federal Republic of Yugoslavia-born persons in Australia, with 35.6% being in New South Wales, and 35.5% being in Victoria.

There were four principal periods of migration: the period up to 1948; 1948 – 1960; 1960 – 1990 and after 1990. The fourth period followed the 1991 civil war and the succession of the Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia, leaving only Serbia and Montenegro in the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (DIMIA, 2003).

Entrants to New South Wales from 1998 to 2003

In the 6-year period from 1998 to 3002, 2,865 entrants have come to NSW from the former Yugoslavia, 2,249 under the refugee & humanitarian program, and 616 under other programs (DIMIA 2004). The following statistics relate to these 2,865 people.

- Of this population, 49.6% were males, and 50.4% females. 16% were males under 20 years of age on arrival, 21% were males aged 20-40 on arrival, and 13% were males 40 years and over.

14% were females under 20 years of age on arrival, 24% were females aged 20-40 on arrival, and 13% were females 40 years and over.

- 42% were of Christian faith and 31% of Muslim faith; the religion of 23% is recorded as “unknown”.

- It is indicated that 38% spoke Bosnian, 26% spoke Serbian, and 16% Croatian with the rest speaking a range of other languages. (It is assumed that this refers to the language spoken at home, or an alternative description of the main language spoken by the visa holder, as many people speak more than one language.)

- Of these 2,865 in NSW, 25% had less than 10 years of education, 4% completed 10 yrs, 32% had 11-12 years, and 19% had over 12 years of education. For 20% the years of education is not known.

The following table shows the major languages spoken by entrants to NSW in this period from Serbia & Montenegro (formerly Yugoslavia), Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Croatia:

	Country of Origin	**Serbia & Montenegro**	**Bosnia & Herzegovina**
Main Language Spoken			
Bosnian		1,089	305
Serbian		745	843
Croatian		458	58
Other		573	247
Total		**2,865**	**1,453**

This indicates that the majority of the people who were identified as Serbian-born and who came to NSW at this time were actually Bosnian speakers (1,089 of them); while the Serbian speaking people who arrived in NSW at this time came primarily from Croatia (1,803).

Thus when dealing with clients from any of these communities from the Former Yugoslavia, care needs to be taken to determine whether they identify themselves by the country of origin, or by the language that they speak.

Women’s Voices

During the course of this project, we consulted with a number of women from the Serbian community. They provided their opinions on the causes of domestic violence within their community, and ways of dealing with it (prevention and education).

Causes of Domestic Violence

There were three main causes of domestic violence:

1. Drugs, including alcohol
2. Financial difficulties, including Gambling
3. Bad temper / jealousy

In regard to drugs it was felt that

drugs have a major impact on families. A lot of our men are getting involved in drugs and this has so much to do with the past war and the fact that they have not worked through all the problems that they carry from the war - especially the young men (Serbian Focus Group, 2004).

Gambling was seen as having a similar cause and effect, with many men in the community gambling, leading to financial problems. This could also lead to debt, which was specifically linked to arguments 'when debt comes to a family then real problems happen, couples start arguing, working through debt becomes so important.' But the women felt that there was little help available once people got into debt, and also little help to prevent this from happening.

'Bad temper' and jealousy, when not properly addressed quickly escalated to physical violence.

Prevention of Domestic Violence

In terms of dealing with domestic violence, the women felt that police needed to be more responsive to the needs of women in DV situations, and that the community needed access to more ethno-specific workers, more counsellors / psychiatrists / other professionals to work with families in DV situations.

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