



**“It affects me as a man”:
Recognising and responding to former refugee
men’s experiences of resettlement.**

An exploratory study in Dunedin, New Zealand.

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Executive Summary

Former refugees bring many valuable skills and attributes to the communities in which they settle. Providing tailored support to refugees in the early stages of settlement increases the opportunities for them to contribute their skills and knowledge to our communities. This support needs to take into account the fact that former refugees can experience resettlement differently, according to their gender or age (Innocenti, n.d.). However, the particular experiences of men regarding forced migration and resettlement are not often researched (Affleck, Selvadurai, & Sikora, 2018).

Dunedin is a small city in the South Island of New Zealand that became a designated resettlement location for former refugees from Syria and Palestine late in 2015. By 2018, staff in some organisations that provide services to assist former refugee families to settle in Dunedin (hereafter “service providers”) had noted that former refugee men tended to be less engaged in community life in the city, compared to their wives and children.

This small-scale, exploratory study was conducted by a team of consultants from the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, at the University of Otago. The purpose was to understand how former refugee men have experienced settling into Dunedin, and to make suggestions for ways they could be supported to participate more fully in society. Three focus groups were conducted with 16 former refugee men, and in-depth interviews were also conducted with 14 individuals working across eight service provider organisations¹. This report also refers to research studies relating to the resettlement of refugee men in other contexts, where this helps to contextualise our findings, and to make informed suggestions. However, it should be noted that our findings do not indicate how many of the other former refugee men in the city share the concerns raised in in the focus groups.

Summary of Key Findings

1. **Men experience settlement in particular ways that are shaped by their understanding of male identity.** Many men who attended the focus groups related how settling in New Zealand had impacted their ability to fulfil their traditional role in their family, and how this has affected their self-esteem and self-confidence. Men in all three focus groups spoke on this topic and this finding is in keeping with other research that suggests that men can experience forced migration in particular ways due to their gender identity.

¹ A list of the organisations from which participants were drawn is provided in Appendix B.

2. Among the men we interviewed, **work is seen as central to their ability to lead a fulfilling life** and integrate into New Zealand society. Men in all three focus groups emphasised that working hard is part of their identity as Syrian men. Many of them stated their belief that working is the best way for them to integrate into life in Dunedin. Men in all three groups also raised a number of other challenges they face resulting from low family incomes, suggesting that finding work or starting a successful business would not only enhance their personal wellbeing, but also resolve a number of practical problems. The challenges of navigating bureaucratic requirements for setting up a business in a second language, and a perception that loss of welfare benefits demotivates them from taking up paid employment, were also mentioned in the focus groups as perceived barriers to employment.
3. Among the men we interviewed, the **challenges of learning English in a classroom environment** was seen as the primary barrier to finding work or setting up a business. Many men in the groups also highlighted how their limited knowledge of the English language hampers their ability to interact effectively with government agencies. Some service providers noted in interviews that former refugee women seem to be more engaged than their male peers in attending English classes and completing homework tasks. Men in all three focus groups expressed a preference for learning English through working in an English-speaking environment, rather than in a classroom. Problems with the timing of classes and getting transport to classes were also mentioned in focus groups and interviews.
4. The men we interviewed are **interested in playing an advocacy role** for their family and are interested in opportunities to raise issues about the experience of settlement in Dunedin with decision-makers. Many of the men displayed a conviction that if they could communicate directly with key decision-makers, the challenges they are facing could be resolved. This may demonstrate a lack of understanding of social systems in New Zealand, which might need to be improved. Nonetheless, communication between former refugees and service providers could be improved through the formation of former refugee advocacy groups and/ or discussion forums.
5. Among the men we interviewed, **acts of welcome and kindness are particularly appreciated**, and make a positive difference to their experience of life in Dunedin. Many of the men, in all three focus groups, expressed gratitude to the New Zealand government for accepting them as refugees, and to volunteers and neighbours in Dunedin, including the Māori community, who have been welcoming and supportive.
6. **Service providers are mostly aware of the particular challenges former refugee men face**, but are not always sure how best to address them. Some feel they could benefit from more resources and/or guidance about how to support the men to meet these challenges. Particular training in how Syrian or Palestinian men might exhibit poor mental health could be valuable, as well as improving service providers' understanding of how masculine identity is understood in the former refugees' culture of origin and how this may be impacting their experience of resettlement.

7. **Frontline service providers are vulnerable to 'burn-out'** if not well-supported. In particular, the potential for secondary trauma should be recognised by all employers, including those using freelance interpreters. Therefore, any additional measures taken to respond to men's experiences of settlement should be resourced adequately and not place additional expectations on an already-stretched staff.

The findings and suggestions provided in this report are not intended to divert resources and attention from the particular needs of women and children from refugee backgrounds. Almost all the suggestions in this report are for initiatives that should be open to both men and women, with the exception of targeted support to men to adapt to their new social status and family role in New Zealand (and a female-centric version of this could also be developed). Rather, we hope this report points to the importance of additional resources being invested in refugee resettlement, in ways that can respond to the different experiences of men, women, and young people. We are confident such investment can have many positive benefits over the longer term, as former refugees become active contributors to our community earlier in their settlement process.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of staff at the Dunedin office of New Zealand Red Cross in organizing this study. We also extend our thanks to staff at WellSouth who provided us with funding to cover basic research costs. And we thank all those former refugee men and service providers who gave up their time to speak with us and share their insights.

1. Background

1.1 Men's experiences of forced migration and resettlement

Gender awareness in refugee research has tended to focus strongly on female refugees (Affleck et al., 2018). While there are important reasons for attending to the impact of forced migration on women, refugee men can also face particular challenges relating to their gender;

There are... a number of vulnerabilities of the refugee experience that are unique to men; the loss of the 'provider and protector' role, the stigma of being dependent on relief agencies after a disaster, and the lack of self-determination that accompanies the refugee experience separate men from their traditional masculine identities, roles and relations (Affleck et al., 2018, p. 25).

Indeed, in some cases, refugees who are men can be seen as more dangerous, or less vulnerable, than female or child refugees, and this can lead to them being offered less support (Hart, 2008).

Former refugee men can face particular challenges to their mental health, and may express distress differently from women (Affleck et al., 2018). There is, then, a risk of their mental health being overlooked or misunderstood, if support agencies only recognize expressions of distress which are more common among women. The loss of control over one's life that results from forced migration can be challenging for concepts of masculine identity (Jaji, 2009), and men, in particular, can struggle to accept what they perceive as a lower social status post-migration (Jansen, 2008). Men who are former refugees are also more likely than their women counterparts to suffer from social isolation, which can further negatively impact their mental health (Sollund, 2001).

Unemployment is a particular risk factor for depression among former refugee men (Beiser & Hou, 2001). It can also be associated with increased conflict in refugee families (Rees & Pease, 2007). Unemployment and underemployment have been found to affect the wellbeing and self-esteem of Somali men resettled as refugees in Australia, driving a sense of dissatisfaction with their life in their new home (Hebbani, 2014).

Former refugee men from socially conservative cultural backgrounds may also struggle to adapt to parenting in a new socio-legal context (Deng & Marlowe, 2013). As fathers are often expected to play a disciplinarian role in conservative cultures, encountering legal and cultural prohibitions on punishments that are both legal and socially-acceptable in their country of origin may leave them confused about how to fulfill the role of father in their new home. Changing gender dynamics resulting from changed economic circumstances and encountering different cultural norms can

also lead to increased conflict within refugee families (Rees & Pease, 2007).

This study is not the first, then, to note that former refugee men can experience resettlement in particular ways that impact their wellbeing and social integration. The commonalities between our findings and wider research literature suggest that there are particular challenges that many refugee men will face during resettlement, across a number of contexts. The existing research suggests these challenges will be particularly acute when men are resettled from a socially conservative society to a socially-liberal one, and when there is a sharp drop in resettled refugee men's socio-economic status compared with their previous life. The research also indicates these post-migration challenges can have a significant negative impact on the mental health of men.

However, this report also presents some distinct findings. We find that work carries a huge importance to the sense of masculine identity of the Syrian men we interviewed and they see it as central to their role in their families. We also find that these men largely perceive classroom-based learning as a challenge to their adult identity as men, and that they have an interest in playing more of an advocacy role in the city.

1.2 Refugee resettlement in New Zealand

As of 2019, New Zealand formally resettles 1000 refugees each year, in collaboration with UNHCR. The government has announced that this quota will be raised to 1500 refugees per year by 2020. Current resettlement sites in New Zealand are Wellington, Nelson, Waikato, Manuwatu, Dunedin, Invercargill, and Auckland. There are plans to develop up to six new resettlement sites to accommodate the increased quota from 2020, mainly in rural areas.

Resettled refugees in New Zealand receive permanent resident status and can apply for full citizenship after five years. Permanent residency entitles them to many of the same entitlements as full citizens, such as welfare benefits, access to primary and secondary level education and access to the healthcare system.

Responsibility for the refugee resettlement programme in New Zealand lies with the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment. Their resettlement strategy is organized around five outcome areas which were developed in consultation with former refugees in NZ. These outcome areas are self-sufficiency, housing, education, health and wellbeing and social participation. New Zealand Red Cross (hereafter NZRC) is the primary provider of resettlement support for refugees arriving in New Zealand under this programme.

According to the most recent publicly available government statistics, between 30-35% of former refugees are in paid employment after five years in New Zealand

(New Zealand Immigration, 2017). Over half of former refugee families live in social housing after five years, and over 90% access GP services within their first year in New Zealand.

NZRC is contracted by the government to provide 12 months of intensive support to former refugee families, under the 'Pathways to Settlement' programme. This programme provides professional and volunteer support to families to find housing, navigate government agencies and settle in to daily life in New Zealand. NZRC also provides a 'Pathways to Employment' programme that supports individuals from refugee backgrounds to access education and employment opportunities. This support is extended for up to five years.

1.3 Refugee resettlement in Dunedin

As of early 2019, hundreds of former refugees have been resettled in Dunedin. The majority are originally from Syria, while a minority are originally from Palestine. These two groups have quite different migration pathways; while the majority of Syrians were based in Lebanon before resettlement, Palestinians have often spent many years living in a variety of countries before being settled in New Zealand.

As Dunedin became a refugee resettlement site relatively recently, the city lacks the community infrastructure that has grown up in Auckland and Wellington to support former refugees. For example, both large cities have community organisations that offer a 'hub' for former refugees, as well as providing a range of specially-tailored training and long-term social support. These organisations are often led by former refugees who have been living in New Zealand for many years.

In recognition of this gap, NZRC staff in Dunedin provide additional settlement support to former refugees in Dunedin beyond the first year. There are a mix of English-speaking and bilingual workers involved in the 'Pathways to Settlement' programme. Hundreds of volunteers have also been recruited by NZRC to help former refugee families adapt to life in Dunedin during their first six months, although many informal friendships continue after this initial period. In Dunedin, there are also staff working on the 'Pathways to Employment' programme. This initiative provides support for former refugees to access employment opportunities and to access further and higher education.

A number of government agencies in Dunedin also have significant levels of interaction with the former refugee population. These include healthcare providers, Ministry of Social Development, schools, police and Housing New Zealand. English Language Partners are contracted to provide initial English language classes to the former refugees, and a number of these students go on to take further ESOL classes at Otago Polytechnic.

Organisations in the wider Dunedin community sector have also begun to engage with former refugees. There is a refugee steering group under the auspices of Dunedin City Council (DCC) which contains representatives from DCC and NZRC as well as community organisations. Arai Te Uru Whare Haroua, a community health and community development organization, has recently hired a bilingual worker to engage with former refugees. A volunteer who has been operating an informal drop-in centre for former refugees out of Dunedin Community House. A local Marae has hosted welcome events for the former refugees. And a number of church-based organisations have also had some engagement with the former refugees.

1.4 Former refugee men in Dunedin

Men and women who are former refugees in Dunedin face a number of shared challenges such as learning English, adapting to new cultural norms, navigating new social systems, keeping in contact with family members around the world and coming to terms with being forced to migrate from their former home. However, service providers in Dunedin have also observed that the former refugee men have been struggling with some particular challenges, and have been less involved in social participation than either women or youth with a refugee background.

Service providers in Dunedin have noted some particular impacts of resettlement on former refugee men in the city. Disruption to masculine family roles and associated family conflicts have been observed among some refugees resettled in the city. There is concern about disengagement from community life among men in particular, and the possible impact on their mental health. Concerns have also been expressed about the impact of prior trauma on men, and whether stigma about admitting to suffering from poor mental health may prevent them accessing support services. It has also been noted that former refugee women have tended to be more consistent in attending ESOL classes than their male counterparts, and are somewhat more successful at transitioning to further ESOL study at the Polytechnic, although individual experiences vary.

While these concerns do not apply to all former refugee men in Dunedin, the challenges identified by service providers in Dunedin do resonate with wider research literature, as outlined in the section 1.1. A concern to understand more about men's experience of resettlement in Dunedin was the starting point for our study.

2. Overview of the Study

2.1 Purpose and scope of the study

By 2018, a number of service providers in Dunedin had noticed that refugee-background men are particularly socially isolated, relative to women and children, and some of them may be struggling to adjust to resettlement in the city. The purpose of this study was to understand how former refugee men have experienced resettlement in Dunedin so far, with a view to gaining insights about how they could become more engaged in community and civic life in Dunedin.

Our study was therefore limited to a focus on former refugee men in Dunedin, and service providers who interact with them directly on a regular basis. To include as wide a range of perspectives as possible, an invitation was sent out to all former refugee families in Dunedin for the men to attend one of three focus groups. 16 men attended these focus groups. All of the men who attended are originally from Syria, and their backgrounds covered a range of regions in Syria including both urban and rural upbringings. The majority of the men who attended the focus groups were aged 40-65, and were fathers. Three of the men who attended made reference to being in paid employment, which is proportionally lower than the national average for former refugee employment.

Our team also interviewed 14 individuals working across a range of agencies in Dunedin; NZRC, WellSouth, the Ministry for Social Development, English Language Partners and Otago Polytechnic, and in local community organizations. A full list of the organisations in which service providers are based is provided in Appendix B.

2.2 Research Methods

Former refugee men were interviewed in focus groups led by Dr Rachel Rafferty and assisted by a bilingual interpreter and a note-taker. The conversations were semi-structured, and explored their perspectives on the resettlement process, the challenges they have encountered and their hopes for the future. The focus groups were recorded digitally, as well as in the form of detailed notes.

In depth interviews were also conducted by members of the research team with 14 individuals working directly with former refugees as service providers. The interviews covered topics including particular challenges facing the former refugee men, examples of resilience and success they have observed, any barriers to men accessing their services and their awareness of any cultural differences that may be impacting the men's experience of resettlement.

Both the focus groups and service provider interviews were reviewed systematically in order to identify common themes, and to build a picture of the particular experiences of former refugee men in Dunedin and what can be done to better address these. Following the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), themes were identified as repeated patterns of meaning. The most prevalent themes across the interview data were identified according to the frequency with which they appeared in the interview notes, their spread across numerous participants, and their relevance to the purpose of the study. These themes form the basis for our findings in this report.

The study followed ethical guidelines for researching with refugee background participants published by the organisation Changemakers². This included ensuring the men were fully informed about the purpose of the study and had an opportunity to give their consent to participate with the knowledge they could withdraw at any time. The findings of the study will be shared with research participants, and we hope that this report can lead to men who are former refugees being supported in more targeted ways to achieve greater wellbeing and become more engaged in the communal life of Dunedin.

2.3 Limitations

It is important to be realistic about what can be understood from our findings and what cannot. The focus on men's experiences of resettlement mean that women and children's perspectives did not fall within the scope of this study. However, it needs to be clear that we are not advocating that men's needs be advanced at the expense of other former refugees. Ideally, targeted support could be made available to men, women and youth from refugee backgrounds according to the particular challenges they face in the resettlement process, and the particular strengths that they bring to their new home.

Moreover, the 16 men who attended the focus groups may not be representative of the whole population of former refugee men in Dunedin. While every effort was made to publicise the focus groups to all the former refugee men in Dunedin, those who attended may be subject to selection bias; it is likely that those who are least happy with their experience of resettlement in Dunedin were those who were most likely to attend the focus groups.

² Available online at:

<https://crf.org.nz/sites/default/files/staff/Guidelines%20for%20Research%20with%20Refugees%20in%20New%20Zealand.pdf>

It should be also noted that these findings are most relevant for men in midlife who are fathers, as this was the main demographic group that took part in the focus groups. As all participants were originally from Syria, and now living in Dunedin, our study cannot determine if male refugees from other backgrounds experience resettlement in New Zealand in similar ways.

Nonetheless, these 16 men did bring up many of the same concerns, suggesting that there is, at least, a segment of former refugee men in Dunedin who are facing common challenges in their experience of resettlement. Many of the experiences recounted by men in the focus groups were also reflected in interviews with service providers, which suggests that their experiences may be shared by other former refugee men in Dunedin. We have also drawn on wider research literature into men's experiences of forced migration and resettlement across a number of countries and found that a number of the issues raised by the 16 men in the focus groups have been observed in cases of refugee resettlement in other parts of the world.

As our findings have been derived from multiple sources of evidence (focus groups, interviews and existing research literature), they have a strong level of trustworthiness. While we cannot make simple generalisations about all former refugee men in New Zealand on the basis of this exploratory study, it is likely that some of the challenges experienced by these men will also be relevant to the experiences of other men from refugee backgrounds resettling in New Zealand and beyond.

3. Findings

3.1 Resettlement impacts men in particular ways

In keeping with the research literature outlined in section 1.1, the men who attended the focus groups experience resettlement in particular ways that impact their sense of masculine identity. As one participant said directly “it affects me as a man”. In particular, they emphasized the difficulties of unemployment (which is quite common among newly resettled former refugees) and how this impacts their sense of self, as well as their role as husband and father in their families.

Their ideas of masculine identity and the role of men in the family seem to be closely linked to their cultural identity. Many men in the focus groups made reference to the importance of employment for their sense of self. This was often framed in statements such as “we are Syrians, Syrians work hard”. A number of the men discussed the impact of long-term unemployment on their wellbeing, describing feelings of being trapped, powerless and unable to live fully. This echoes other research findings that unemployment and underemployment have negative impacts on the mental health of former refugee men (for example, Hebbani, 2014). The men also mentioned they have a sense of obligation, stemming from their culture of origin, to give financial assistance to their wider family. A number of men in the focus groups expressed a sense of disappointment that they are not able to meet those obligations under their current circumstances in New Zealand.

When questioned about the impacts of resettlement on family dynamics, most of the men acknowledged that the move to New Zealand has impacted relationships within their family. Some communicated an increase in spousal conflict, while others expressed fears that their children are becoming ‘out of control’. A number of men reflected on the change from when they lived in Syria and had a clear role as a breadwinner and disciplinarian in the family. There was some variation between those who accept this change with equanimity and good humour, and those who have some feelings of loss and regret. A few men in the focus group expressed particular concerns about their role as father. They stated a concern that because New Zealand laws prevent them from using mild forms of physical punishment with their children, their children no longer listen to them. They didn't seem familiar with other ways to be a guiding influence on their children. They expressed fears for the wellbeing of their children, and for their bond with their children, as a result of these changes. This is in keeping with Deng & Marlowe's (2013) findings that refugee background men from conservative cultures can struggle to find new ways of fulfilling the role of father when resettled in a more liberal society.

By reporting these points, we are not advocating that efforts be made to establish men in an authoritarian role in their families. Rather, we believe it is important to recognize that former refugee men can find it difficult to adapt to the degree of change in their family role, and this rapid change can be a source of conflict that has

negative impacts for all family members. We believe it is worth considering how men in this position could be assisted to adapt to these changes and develop a new identity as husband and father that allows them to contribute actively to the family, in a more equal partnership with their wives and children. Additionally, both former refugee men and their families could benefit from increased assistance in developing new parenting skills beyond physical discipline

3.2 The importance of paid work

Most of the men in the focus groups emphasized the importance of work for their sense of purpose and wellbeing, as well as the importance of being able to provide financially for their family. They also identified a number of challenges they face in daily life that relate to lack of income, including living in accommodation that they view as unsuitable for their needs, and struggling to purchase items that add to their quality of life, such as Syrian bread. Almost all of the men we interviewed identify work as the primary means for them to build a new life and to integrate into the Dunedin community. Many of the men also stated their belief that working for a local employer would be the best way for them to learn English (see below).

Many of the men stated their belief that work was the best way that they could integrate into life in Dunedin. When asked about other activities that might engage them in the interim, as they learn English and adapt to New Zealand work culture, they all returned to the importance of work and none of them offered other suggestions for integration. This reinforces the conviction that many of them articulated, that work is central to their sense of self, and to their role in their family. This suggests that efforts to assist former refugee men to find employment and / or start successful businesses in Dunedin have an extremely important impact on their experience of resettlement.

Gaining a regular income from work or entrepreneurship affords former refugees an important degree of independence and self-determination, supporting their mental health and general wellbeing (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hebbani, 2014). However, resettled refugees can face a number of barriers to gaining employment, including non-recognition of qualifications and work experience, lack of opportunities to learn the local language, and discrimination (Campion, 2018). They are often employed in lower-status and less-skilled positions than they held in their country of origin, and in lower-status and less secure jobs than the general population (Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000). However, their likelihood of earning a living increases when they have personal networks inside and outside their community that they can draw on – especially links to influential members of the host society (Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2018). They can also be more successful in gaining employment when they have knowledge of the local language, and gain recognition for prior education and work experience (Campion, 2018).

Challenges to finding employment, which were identified in focus groups and service provider interviews, include the need to learn English, a perception voiced by some men that unskilled employment does not pay much more than welfare benefits, and difficulties gaining recognition of prior experience and qualifications in New Zealand. There are, however, also successful cases of former refugee men finding employment and starting businesses in Dunedin that may hold some lessons. Patterns noted from focus groups and service provider interviews suggest that individuals who take a pro-active approach are more successful, that the support of spouses can be helpful, that friendships outside their community can be helpful for finding opportunities, and that Palestinians who have already had to adapt to another culture due to long routes to resettlement seem to find it easier to adapt to New Zealand work culture. It may also be the case that former refugee men who have experience in manual trades may find it easier for their experience to be recognised in New Zealand, compared to men with professional qualification and experience.

3.3 Difficulties learning English in a classroom

Learning the local language is a key factor in enabling former refugees to integrate into their new society and have economic opportunities (Waxman, 2006). While former refugee women can face barriers relating to childcare and lack of prior access to formal education (Phillimore, Ergun, Goodson & Hennessey, 2007), our study suggests that some former refugee men can experience particular difficulties with learning English in a classroom environment.

The men in the focus groups all expressed how important learning English is for their experience of resettlement in Dunedin and this was also echoed in interviews with service providers. At the same time, the men and the service providers that were interviewed outlined a number of challenges to learning English in a classroom environment. Although some of these challenges also affect women who are former refugees, some are unique to men who are former refugees. These factors may help explain a pattern in Dunedin of former refugee men being more likely to drop out of English language classes at earlier levels, compared to women counterparts. Statistics provided by Otago Polytechnic indicate that refugee background men are less likely than women counterparts to enroll in their ESOL classes, although they progress with a similar rate of success to higher levels once enrolled.

One service provider working in language teaching noted that their students who are men from refugee backgrounds attend class less regularly and complete less homework than their female peers. Another service provider gave an anecdotal account of a male former refugee student being teased because his wife had performed better in a class test. However, other service providers pointed to an example of a husband who had been extremely supportive of his wife learning

English. Taken together, this suggests that experiences are not uniform across former refugee men in Dunedin, but there is a pattern of less engagement in ESOL classes by men compared to women counterparts.

For some of the men, at least, the loss of their masculine provider identity may be part of their reluctance to attend English language classes. A number of the men in the focus groups expressed that they do not see a place for themselves, as adult men, in a classroom-learning scenario. Instead, many of them asserted that working in an English-speaking environment is the best way for them to learn English. A number of them also expressed their perception that the English classes are not directly relevant to employment, even though they acknowledged that their limited knowledge of English is an important barrier to gaining work or starting a business.

Other challenges noted in focus groups and service provider interviews are the timing of classes, difficulties with accessing affordable transport to and from classes, lack of literacy in their first language in some cases, the prevalence of female volunteer English tutors meaning that some men will not feel comfortable to have a tutor come alone to their home, and possible impacts of prior trauma on former refugee's ability to concentrate in class. Concerns were also raised by service providers that former refugees seeking to transition into more advanced language classes at Otago University or Otago Polytechnic are not currently provided with tailored course advice, or accurate information on the implications of their study choices for their student loan entitlements.

These findings suggest that it would be worth exploring alternative models of language education and attempting to offer a variety of approaches to learning English that former refugees can choose from, according to their needs and preferences. It is also likely that some former refugee men might be more engaged in English language learning if it is more directly orientated towards preparing for paid employment and/ or starting a business.

3.4 Interest in playing an advocacy role

Men in all three focus groups identified aspects of their life in Dunedin that they would like to see improved. A number of them recounted attempts they made to raise issues with government agencies or advocate for their families' needs to individuals they view as decision-makers. These men displayed a belief that such personal advocacy could be successful if they could gain access to the right people. This belief may be a result of misunderstanding the egalitarian and depersonalized nature of government systems in New Zealand, and may derive from experiences of Syrian society where, according to the men's accounts, personal connections and influence were a more common way for them to resolve problems.

Men in two of the focus groups spoke about adapting to the democratic norms of New Zealand, which they view as positive but also require them to learn new ways of operating. Men in the most well-attended focus group were enthusiastic about the idea of an elected committee of former refugees that could raise issues with service providers and decision-makers. They were clear that the members of this committee should be chosen by former refugees only and that the membership of the committee should not be permanent. When asked if the current divisions in Syrian society might make it difficult for a single group to come together and represent former refugees in Dunedin, they responded that they did not believe this would be a problem.

The creation of a committee, which we believe should involve women and youth representatives as well, could play an important role as a clear channel of communication between former refugees and service providers. It could also be a means to explain transparently how government systems work in New Zealand, and for former refugees to build a more cohesive sense of community in Dunedin. It could also have some benefits for men who are currently unemployed or otherwise disengaged, by enhancing their sense of agency and giving them an opportunity to play an active leadership role in Dunedin.

These potential benefits do need to be counterbalanced with the risk that former refugees' hopes that government systems can be changed could be raised but then dashed. There is also a risk that identity divisions relating to the war in Syria could be a source of conflict in such an advocacy group, or lead to certain sub-groups being excluded from opportunities to participate. For these reasons, any such committee would need to be carefully organized and facilitated to minimize these risks and maximize positive outcomes.

3.5 Appreciation for welcome and support

Despite the challenges they have encountered as they adapt to life in Dunedin, many men in the focus groups expressed their appreciation for the support they have received in New Zealand. A number of them acknowledged their gratitude that New Zealand has offered them residency and the opportunity to build a new life. They also expressed appreciation for the general kindness and welcome they have received from the wider Dunedin community. A number of them praised the efforts of their settlement volunteers, and emphasized that this support had been essential in navigating life in Dunedin. Some also acknowledged the extra efforts of NZRC in providing social support beyond the first year and beyond contractual expectations.

Many of the men highlighted these experiences of welcome and kindness as an important counterbalance to more frustrating experiences. Such friendliness and

informal support seems to have impacted them positively, and from their accounts, gives them a sense of belonging in Dunedin. The importance of such actions for refugee resettlement deserves to be recognised, therefore, and should continue to be provided in the future.

3.6 Service providers' awareness of men's experiences

Many of the concerns and challenges the men identified in the focus groups were also highlighted by interviewees from service provider organisations. Service providers showed awareness of the tendency towards social isolation among former refugee men, of family conflict in response to changing roles, of difficulties learning English in a classroom, of particular challenges for former refugees who are not literate in their first language to learn English, and of psychological challenges stemming from encountering new cultural norms. This suggests that the findings above reflect a wider pattern among at least some former refugee men in Dunedin, and that service providers are well-informed about the challenges men face.

There were some differences in how service providers and the men in the focus groups spoke about mental health. Most service providers were concerned about the men's mental health and would like to connect men who are struggling with professional mental health services. Many of the men in the focus groups did highlight the negative psychological impacts of unemployment and their experiences of violence in Syria. However, they explained that when they were referred to counseling upon expressing difficulties with systems in New Zealand, instead of being supported to make a formal complaint, they were left feeling frustrated. The men's lack of interest in counselling services may indicate that mental health is a taboo subject among Syrians in Dunedin, or it may indicate that these men prefer to focus on practical rather than emotional problems. Alternatively, it may also indicate differences in communication style – direct expressions of anger may be normal in Syrian culture, while in New Zealand the same assertive approach could be interpreted as a sign of poor mental health. In chapter 4, we suggest adopting a trauma informed approach (outlined in Appendix A) that does not assume all former refugees are traumatised, nor that all expressions of frustration result from trauma, but is also sensitive to culturally-specific ways of understanding mental health and of expressing trauma or negative emotions when these are present.

The other notable difference in the perspectives of service provider interviewees and men in the focus groups relates to expectations of one another. Almost all of the men in the focus groups displayed strong expectations of support from government agencies, which a number of them stated they were told to expect before they arrived in New Zealand. All of the men who raised the issue of unemployment seemed to view it as resulting from external barriers beyond their control.

Somewhat differently, service-providers were aware that their organisations are constrained by limited resources. A number of them highlighted the importance of former refugee men taking a pro-active approach to building a life of their choosing in Dunedin, alongside receiving support from agencies and the wider community. We suggest that more communication between former refugees and agencies may help to clarify their mutual expectations of one another. The advocacy group suggested above could be a useful format for these discussions.

3.7 Service providers need additional support

Taking the interviews with the service providers as a whole, our impression is of highly-committed individuals who are often stretched beyond their capacities in trying to support former refugees in Dunedin as effectively as possible. With that in mind, we want to be very clear that we are not advocating for additional expectations to be placed on individuals or organisations without also supplying them with the necessary resources to meet those expectations. We are confident that providing additional resources to support former refugees in the early years of settlement, especially regarding learning English and developing employment and business opportunities, would be a sound investment that brings many beneficial returns to our society over the long-term.

It is worth noting that the small number of service provider interviewees who expressed a sense of being overwhelmed work in organisations that are not dedicated service providers for former refugees. Part of their stress seemed to result from others in their management structure not having a clear understanding of the issues they face in their role, and not providing them with tailored support to meet the particular challenges of working with former refugees, including secondary trauma. Secondary trauma refers to the emotional disturbance that can result from hearing about the traumatic experiences of others (Jenkins & Baird, 2002). These interviewees stated that they did not feel they were adequately supported by their organisations to cope with these stresses. This may be particularly important for new resettlement locations, as staff face additional pressures to develop functioning systems within a short space of time.

Overall, service provider organisations are working hard to meet their contractual obligations and daily problem-solving is already a huge task. Many seem to have little opportunity for necessary rest and recuperation, which risks burn-out, and the constant ongoing workload makes it difficult to find time for coordinating efforts across agencies. It could be valuable, therefore, for other organisations, such as the City Council or appropriate NGOs, to provide additional support in facilitating coordination and developing a long-term strategy for the city as a whole to support former refugees in achieving their potential to become active contributors to civic life in New Zealand.

3.8 Particular experiences of younger men

The focus groups were not attended by young men engaged in the formal education system. However, two of the service providers we spoke to highlighted concerns about barriers to them accessing further training and education after school. This is not just an anecdotal observation; Ministry of Education data shows that only around 20% of young former refugees who arrive in NZ late in their schooling typically achieve the university entrance qualification, compared with a national average of 50% (Ministry of Education, personal communication, November 23, 2018).

Careers teachers in Dunedin schools and course advisers in local tertiary education institutes have not necessarily been trained to facilitate former refugees in accessing further or higher education, though efforts are now ongoing. Currently, not all universities and further education institutes in New Zealand have a system for recognizing former refugee students as priority learners and ensuring they are supported to succeed in the face of the particular challenges many of them face. Young men from a refugee background face a particular disadvantage in accessing university education; while female students from a refugee background can apply for a dedicated scholarship in New Zealand, there is no scholarship open to young men on the basis of having a refugee-like background.

Young men are also typically more likely to 'act out' as a response to past exposure to violence (see Zona & Milan, 2011). This may impact on their school experience as they may be punished more often than female students with a similar level of trauma, if school personnel are not trained to recognise gender-based differences in how poor mental health can be expressed.

4. Suggestions for responding to men's experiences of resettlement

As outlined in this report, resettlement can impact men in particular ways. The suggestions in this chapter draw on research and practice from other countries, and other regions of New Zealand. Based on the findings presented in the previous chapter, these suggestions are offered with the aim of focusing additional resources on initiatives which are likely to positively impact men's experience of resettlement in Dunedin. As mentioned previously, we do not sanction withdrawing resources from other sub-groups of former refugees, but rather we would like to see additional resources targeted towards supporting all former refugees to have a positive experience of resettlement.

4.1 Accessing opportunities for work and entrepreneurship

Under existing arrangements NZRC provides Pathways to Employment support for refugee-background migrants for up to five years after arrival. This programme assists all adult former refugees with planning a career, applying for jobs and generating opportunities for paid employment. While substantial efforts are made through this programme, and there are numerous success stories, resources are stretched and it is not currently possible to offer extensive one-to-one careers guidance to every former refugee in Dunedin. In particular, as a relatively new resettlement centre, Dunedin lacks some of the community infrastructure, such as refugee-led support organisations, that provides additional support to newly-arrived refugees in other parts of New Zealand, and in other countries.

Our findings suggest that finding additional resources to provide further support for them to find employment and / or start successful businesses could have important benefits for former refugee men and, by extension, their families. We have, therefore, looked for models of successful practices around the world that could be resourced and adapted to the Dunedin context, as well as reflecting on how research knowledge could be turned into models of successful practice.

Some programmes provide a package of employment and business skills training for former refugees, alongside English language learning. For example, in New South Wales, a government programme offers support to gain recognition of overseas qualifications, learn employability and business skills, find skilled employment and work experience placements, and learn English (NSW Government Department of Industry, n.d.). Meanwhile an NGO in Canada, MOSAIC, offers one-to-one career counselling sessions for former refugees and runs hiring events and workplace tours. These programmes are similar to the Pathways to Employment scheme in

New Zealand, but also point to further services that could be offered if additional resources are allocated.

Recognition of existing skills and qualifications is a challenge for many migrants, and is particularly severe for former refugees who may not have been able to gather documentary evidence of their qualifications when forced to migrate (Campion, 2018). A useful model is provided by the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (Council of Europe, n.d). Based on available information and a structured interview with the refugee, this 'passport' brings together a succinct overview of their skills, education, employment experience and language proficiency. This can then be shared with prospective employers. This is currently a pilot project in the European Union, and if it is successful, New Zealand may wish to develop a similar initiative.

There are also examples of successful social enterprises, where a business has specifically been created with the intention of providing employment opportunities for former refugees. A former NZRC volunteer in Hamilton has set up a catering service that provides work opportunities specifically to former refugees (Shrimpton, 2018, December 1,). Similarly, Pomegranate Kitchen in Wellington is a social enterprise providing a home-delivery catering service that involves former refugees at all levels (Pomegranate Kitchen, n.d.)

Former refugees can also start successful businesses that employ others with a refugee-like background. Recently, in Dunedin, a former refugee has started a barber business and has hired a number of other former refugees (Edwards, 2019, February 6). This points to the potential of investing targeted support in resettled individuals who have the skills and experience to start a business, as this can multiply positive outcomes if they employ other former refugees as a result.

While starting a full-time business carries many financial risks, micro-enterprises can be a means for former refugees to use their existing skills, interact more with local communities and generate a small additional income (Fong et al., 2007). Micro-enterprises are small-scale businesses that require only a small capital loan for start-up. Examples include selling crafts online, acting as a freelance gardener, operating a weekly market stall or running an occasional catering service from home. Refugees bring many unique skills to their host countries and microenterprises can be a way for them to share these skills with their local community, as well as building self-esteem and independence. Such programmes have been successful with Syrian refugees in North America, when the former refugees were provided with training in local business norms as well as small-scale financial support (Kleignbeil, 2017, April 15). There are also successful examples of former refugees in Dunedin who have started small businesses, including a trained chef who offers a catering service.

Informal networks can play an important role in increasing former refugees' chances of finding employment (Lamba & Krahn, 2003), especially relationships with members of the host society (Gericke et al., 2018). Therefore, we also suggest it could be beneficial to provide structured opportunities for former refugees interested in starting businesses to build relationships with locals that are part of the business community in Dunedin, who could play a mentoring role. Such relationships may even develop into future business partnerships – in a number of cases, a local partner with knowledge of the local language and laws has been able to support a former refugee to start a successful business (Kleignbeil, 2017, April 15).

Providing dedicated support for refugee background youth - young men and young women- to plan their careers and gain relevant knowledge about possible pathways into further and higher education is also important. Coordination between schools-based careers advisors and tertiary education course advisors would be helpful, as would efforts to ensure individuals in these positions are aware of the particular challenges facing young people from refugee backgrounds. There are initiatives in Dunedin which are currently addressing this, and these efforts should be supported for further development.

4.2 Linking ESOL to preparing for employment

As outlined earlier in this report, research underlines the importance of proficiency in the main language(s) of the host society for former refugee's employment prospects, and for their mental health and social integration. While in other contexts resettled refugee men often acquire the local language to a greater extent than their female peers (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017), in Dunedin, as outlined earlier in this report, former refugee men are achieving less success in classroom-based English-language learning than their female peers.

Grognet (1998) recommends the following strategies for reducing drop-out rates and improving learning outcomes among adult former refugee ESOL learners:

- elimination of barriers to participation, such as transport and childcare,
- focusing on the learners' expressed needs, rather than a pre-set teaching programme, making the teaching materials relevant and local,
- consulting with members of the learners' ethnic community.

We suggest that former refugees in Dunedin could benefit from more choices surrounding models of language teaching, and in particular from programmes that teach language directly relevant for seeking employment. Aside from the above-mentioned example from New South Wales, another example of this in practice is

MCLaSS, a NGO based in Wellington. Alongside beginner English classes, they also offer 'English for Work' classes that require only a very basic level of prior knowledge of English. Consideration could also be given to ways in which volunteering experiences could become a means to improve English and learn more about New Zealand work culture at the same time.

In line with Grognet's recommendation, consideration could also be given to developing community-linked language programmes. There are examples in New Zealand, and beyond, of former refugees developing literacy classes for newer arrivals from the same ethnic group (see Altinkaya, & Omundsen, 1999). Obviously, as Dunedin is a new resettlement site, this could take some time, but it may also be valuable to consider if other Arabic-speakers in Dunedin could offer some form of bi-lingual literacy training for those former refugees who are not literate in any language when they arrive in Dunedin.

There also seems to be some gaps around ensuring that former refugee learners can bridge from foundation-level learning with English language partners to further study at Otago Polytechnic and / or Otago University, if desired. Efforts to co-ordinate between providers, and to provide tailored course advice at the tertiary level can help to address this gap.

4.3 Supporting men to develop a new male identity and family role

Former refugee men can face challenges transitioning from their traditional family role when resettled in a society with very different gender and parenting norms (see Deng & Marlow, 2013). Abrupt changes in family gender relations can be a source of stress in refugee families (El-Masri, Harvey & Garwood, 2013). Gender dynamics in refugee families can also be complex, and involve not only spouses but their sons and daughters (Lokot, 2018). Lowered self-esteem among refugee men can be a contributing factor to increased family violence (Lokot, 2018). On the positive side, in marriages where men respond to these changes by adopting more household responsibilities, and where both partners feel safe to discuss their concerns, there can be increased marital satisfaction (Young & Chan, 2015).

In the focus groups, many of the men appeared to be experiencing a tension between wanting to maintain a connection to Syrian culture, and the need to adapt to cultural norms and social systems in New Zealand. For the men we interviewed, being a Syrian man primarily entails acting as a financial provider and the disciplinarian parent within the family. However, there may be substantial variation in these experiences across different individuals and different families in Dunedin, and it is important that any initiative in this area does not assume that certain gender norms are common to all former refugees. Any initiative should also be

careful to avoid contributing to harmful stereotypes among the wider public about immigrant men being overly-patriarchal.

Nonetheless, we recognise that the changes entailed in moving to New Zealand could be psychologically challenging for some men. They could benefit from some form of support in adapting to these changes and developing a new sense of masculine identity that explores a range of ways that they can support and take care of their families, as well as guide their children. Former refugee women may also benefit from opportunities to reflect on how the changes to their family dynamics resulting from settling in New Zealand have impacted them, positively and/ or negatively.

Examples of relevant practices to support men and women in negotiating this transition are difficult to locate, and most of them are focused on involving men in reducing gender-based violence. For example, a Lebanon-based NGO launched a programme in 2016 called 'Ra'- named after the Arabic word for man 'rajol' (Womankind, 2016). It aims to encourage young men to question gender stereotypes within their culture and to change their attitudes and behaviour towards women. Meanwhile, the Norwegian government provides gender equality classes for new immigrants (Higgins, 2019, December 19), and an Egyptian NGO uses Art Therapy to bring together male and female refugees and asylum-seekers to build an understanding of one another's experiences (UNHCR, 2017).

As this is a sensitive area, fraught with the potential for negative outcomes if handled incorrectly, we tentatively suggest the following guidelines for developing any such support programme;

- it should acknowledge participants' links to their culture of origin, and what that means to them, while ultimately supporting them to adapt to new legal and social norms.
- an immigrant man from a similar cultural background who has lived through these changes himself could be a valuable facilitator and role model
- refugee background women should be involved in conceptualizing the programme and should have an equal opportunity to participate in a similar programme to support their adjustment to New Zealand society.
- although having honest and confidential conversations about any sense of loss deriving from resettlement, such a programme should be focused on supporting men to develop a new sense of male identity and a new form of supportive role within their family going forward.

4.4 Opportunities for advocacy and leadership

Our finding that the men in the focus groups were interested in opportunities to advocate for their families to decision-makers, and our observation that there may

be some disparity in the expectations that former refugees and service providers have of one another, suggests that it would be valuable to find mechanisms for former refugees in Dunedin to come together with service providers on a regular basis. Such an initiative would need to be facilitated carefully, so that the former refugees are not given unrealistic expectations about what such advocacy can achieve. Also, it should ensure intra-community divisions related to the war in Syria do not lead to the exclusion of a particular segment of the former refugee population from such representation. If this can be achieved, we believe some form of advocacy group would have important benefits in bringing a former refugee voice into decision-making processes, in improving former refugees' understanding of the systems which impact their lives, in identifying where changes can be made to systems, and in developing former refugees' capacities to self-organise as a community and pursue their shared goals.

Cities in New Zealand which have been refugee resettlement sites for decades have seen a number of refugee-led advocacy groups emerge, which may provide useful models for Dunedin. For example, ChangeMakers Refugee Forum runs forums with refugee background communities every 8 weeks to identify challenges in the resettlement process and generate ideas for resolving these (ChangeMakers, n.d.). This mechanism is an important communication channel between former refugees and service providers, and also between different groups of former refugees. ChangeMakers also runs a drop-in information hub every second week.

The potential to create a hub for former refugees to meet, gain useful information and be supported in their interactions with government agencies deserves to be explored. Research has found that both intra-community relationships and links to other communities and to influential agencies support successful integration of former refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008). A dedicated physical space, even if only available on certain dates, can build community and encourage a sense of belonging in Dunedin. Assigning resources to refugee-led and community-supported initiatives may relieve some of the pressure on settlement support agencies, particularly if they play a role in assisting former refugees after the first year of government-sponsored settlement support.

4.5 Supporting frontline staff

In order to provide services effectively to former refugee clients, organisations need to support their staff to deal with associated stresses. Having individuals remain in posts long-term allows important knowledge and relationships to develop, while a high turnover of staff can be disruptive and could negatively impact the ability of organisations to support former refugees effectively.

To address the concerns raised by some of the service providers in their interviews, we suggest that any individual working directly with former refugees should have access to support to deal with work-related stress and/ or secondary trauma. Such staff can also benefit from management having a clear understanding of their role and the challenges involved. We also suggest that frontline staff may benefit from dedicated training on recognizing different expressions of trauma and poor mental health, including those specific to cultures and genders, and opportunities to learn more about the cultural norms and communication-styles of arriving groups of former refugees. While some organisations have such supports in place, currently our findings suggest is not available consistently to all individuals working directly with former refugees in Dunedin.

4.6 Summary of main suggestions

Work and entrepreneurship

- Find additional resources to support former refugees (men and women) in employment on a one-to-one basis. Can also look to harness existing career support services in Dunedin for the general population.
- Consider social enterprise models, including businesses set up by former refugees, that will primarily hire former refugees.
- Consider funding and supporting micro-enterprises run by former refugees that carry little financial risk.
- Advocate for additional pathways for former refugees to gain recognition of their prior skills and experience, as exemplified by the European Passport.
- Provide opportunities for former refugees to build relationships with business leaders who might act as mentors, or become future employers.

Linking English language learning to work

- Consider offering alternative models of language learning that focus on key vocabulary and cultural knowledge for entering the workforce
- Consider offering 'preparation for employment' courses where a low level of English will not be a barrier to participation, but English language skills can be improved throughout the course.
- Make courses as student-led as possible, in line with best practices in adult education. Rather than one-size-fits-all models, try to adapt language learning to the priorities of the learners, especially at the foundational stages.
- Encourage former refugees to recognise volunteering and community involvement as valuable opportunities for improving their proficiency in English.
- Consider running more group-based conversational meet-ups to practice English alongside one-to-one home tutoring.

Supporting men to adapt to a new masculine identity and family role

- Consider developing a programme of dialogues and/ or workshops for men and women to separately explore their feelings about changes in their family roles resulting from migration to New Zealand, and to envision new types of spousal and parenting roles within their families.

Opportunities for advocacy and leadership

- Consider supporting the formation of one or more advocacy groups to act as a communication channel between former refugees and service providers
- Consider developing a 'hub' for former refugees; a dedicated space for making social connections, accessing relevant information and receiving some support to navigate social systems over the long-term.

Supporting frontline service providers

- Ensure all staff working directly with former refugees are supported by management in their organisation who have a strong understanding of their role and the stresses involved.
- Ensure all staff working directly with former refugees have opportunities to learn about the cultural background of former refugees, and particularly their understandings of mental health and typical ways of expressing distress.
- Ensure all staff working directly with former refugees have access to appropriate mechanisms, such as counselling sessions, to process secondary trauma and work-related stress. It may also be useful to run self-care workshops for staff in such frontline roles.

5. Conclusions

Successfully supporting refugee resettlement is a complex task, but one which can bring many benefits as former refugees contribute their skills and abilities to our communities. Our findings indicate that it is important to attend to men's specific gendered experiences in the process of resettlement, as well those of women that have been more fully researched to date. In particular, we find that, among the individuals we interviewed, resettlement has had particular impacts on their sense of identity as men, and this has placed additional stress on their sense of wellbeing and their family relationships.

This means that a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting refugee resettlement should be avoided wherever resources allow. While developing a tailored approach to supporting refugee integration may require more investment of resources in the short-term, we believe it is a sound investment that can lead to more successful outcomes over the long-term.

In particular, we conclude that targeting additional resources towards supporting former refugees to generate an independent income, and offering a wider range of models for learning English would likely have a beneficial impact on the settlement experiences of former refugee men in Dunedin. We expect that these initiatives would reduce their social isolation, improve their sense of wellbeing and agency, and may reduce family conflict as well. Supporting former refugee men to develop a new vision of their role in their family, and providing opportunities for individual and collective advocacy may also lead to greater wellbeing and greater engagement in community and civic life in Dunedin.

We also recognise that a number of concerns raised by the men in the focus groups relate to national-level systems, and to the realities of living on a low income in New Zealand for all citizens. Ideally, former refugees would have opportunities to come together with other groups in our society facing these same problems to advocate for policy changes at the national level. Even where this is not possible, there is still value in exploring possibilities to improve former refugees' experiences of resettlement at the local level. We are hopeful that the experiences of all former refugees in Dunedin would be improved by a city-wide initiative to coordinate and plan long-term support for refugee integration, in partnership with former refugees. We believe this would do much to ensure former refugees can build a life of their choosing in their new home, and that it would enable more former refugees in Dunedin to become the engaged members of our society that they wish to be.

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Appendix A: Trauma-informed care and service-delivery

Provided by Heidi Kleinshmidt

The importance of recognising socio-cultural factors influencing trauma:

Providing best practice trauma-informed care requires all aspects of services to be “organised around the prevalence of trauma throughout society” (Kezelman, & Stavropoulos, 2011, p. 112). Transferring this into policy requires understanding that “all mental health treatment is shaped by social and cultural factors, which affect its presumed etiology, structure and treatment.” (Kezelman, & Stavropoulos, 2011, pp. 112) Training needs to include how we can build relationships that are sensitive to hearing trauma narratives and exploring the clients “cultural idioms of distress”. (Ghayda, et al., 2015, p. 39)

The principles of trauma recovery need to be embedded in relationships, so that cultural safety, trust and compassion can thrive. Even though the symptoms of trauma may only appear years later, when someone feels ready and safe to disclose their story (Ghayda, et al., 2015, pp. 22-30), some former refugees may open up the conversation earlier. The timing of disclosure is not always predictable; hence service providers need to be ready from day one.

Attention also needs to be given to the recognition that secondary trauma impacts on all staff, interpreters and reception, as well as volunteers. Having access to debriefing and supervision on a regular basis is crucial as “people who have experienced trauma are at risk of being re-traumatized in every social service and health care setting.” (Klinik Community Health Centre, 2013, p. 6)

Putting trauma-informed approach into practice:

Working from a strength-based approach to empower refugee clients to use their own existing resources may require a cultural shift in Mental Health and Human Service delivery. Creating a climate of hope and resilience comes through acknowledging the client's ability to survive adversity and recognising the strength it has taken to get to where they currently are. It also requires us to teach Western ways as skills, not as identity replacement. It is important to treat the refugee client as an equal and a collaborator, rather than a “victim who should be over it already and only wants attention” (Klinik Community Health Centre, 2013, p.19).

The components of trauma-informed care include:

1. Establishing **foundational core values** within the organisation that show understanding of trauma impact. Refugee research has corroborated that those clients with complex trauma backgrounds need specific acknowledgment of their everyday struggle with power structures that mirror their past failures to be heard.
2. **Recognising sequential traumas:** Refugees not only experience a single event like war and flight from danger (external trauma), they

also have individual histories of traumas, which can include torture, adverse childhood experiences, and intergenerational transmission of trauma stories due to historical repression. They can also face the issues of survivor guilt, sadness about bereavement of family members, and ongoing grief about less obvious losses like amputations or disabilities caused by war wounds.

3. The **loss of connectedness** to their cultural history, traditions and language may have a far-reaching lifelong effect. This requires service providers to enhance their capacity for respect and compassion by creating supportive environments for those who have been made vulnerable through their home countries going to war.
4. The need to provide a **welcoming atmosphere from the waiting room phase to the consultation stage** is crucial. Phase One of Trauma Recovery is the feeling of safety and belonging / fitting in. We are all aware that when we arrive in a new place, our concept of human relations changes. Service providers need to engage with the question of how those with refugee backgrounds perceive “home”, “community” and “clinical spaces.” in their everyday lived experiences. Discussion of this needs to be encouraged so that service providers can take these findings into their practice of providing familiar and welcoming spaces. This means an intercultural exchange between locals and newcomers, i.e. “Doing with, not doing to”.
5. It is important for service providers to offer **clear information**, which is translated in their home language, about their rights and the meaning of confidentiality, as stated in the NZ Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights. Involve the client in decision-making wherever possible.
6. **Continuity of care within the referral system** from GP to hospital, or other advocacy services, is important. That each point of this process and associated activities is informed of the “window of tolerance” i.e. that there is a threshold in which emotions can be tolerated without becoming agitated or anxious (hyperarousal) or shut down (hypo arousal) because of previous experiences of abandonment and rejection.
7. It can be helpful to **check in with the client to make sure that they feel safe talking about their trauma story**. Often being asked to tell their story can be overwhelming if they don't have control over when they feel ready to tell their story. Partner with the client to find out what recovery and healing means for them. They may have lived in isolated refugee centres where they were treated as a collective uniform group, in which their personal identities have been disregarded. Successful intercultural integration requires practices of co-creation and ownership, dialogue and active involvement of the minority culture. Be aware of **institutional re-traumatisation**: telling their story multiple time causes distress, have awareness that

a client's symptoms are an attempt to cope. It is important to communicate that you are interested in "what happened to you?", not "what's wrong with you?"

8. **Trustworthiness** is built through time and close collaboration between service providers, moving from a "care-taking" approach to a collaborative way of working that includes understanding of the cultural context of refugee backgrounds. Trust is a continuous process of negotiation.
9. **Monitor** difficult situations, both in staff settings and client / staff relationships, so that there is transparency about challenges long before a point of conflict.
10. It is good practice to provide **training about trauma exposure response for all staff**, including reception, interpreters and administrative staff. This would include training about relationship awareness, which includes learning more about non-confrontational language. It is valuable for staff who interact with former refugees to learn about how their own conduct and self-care impacts on clients; transferences, secondary trauma and burnout /compassion fatigue can result in over-identification with clients, and a lack of professional distance. These risks need to be managed. Staff can benefit from resources and frameworks for their own self-care and self-compassion which is supported by regular supervision.

References for Appendix A

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Appendix B : List of participant organisations

We thank those individuals from the following organisations who gave an interview to our research team during this exploratory study:

Al Huda Mosque, Dunedin

Arai Te Uru Whare Hauora

Volunteer based at Dunedin Community House

English Language Partners, Dunedin

Ministry of Social Development, Dunedin

New Zealand Red Cross, Dunedin

ESOL services, Otago Polytechnic

Mental Health Services, WellSouth, Dunedin