

Integration of older refugees

**The integration experiences of older Assyrian, Cambodian and
Somali refugees in Wellington**

by

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ABSTRACT

Older refugees have special needs for long-term integration into their country of resettlement, however sometimes the needs of this group are forgotten. The purpose of this research was to identify activities and services older refugees consider helpful for long-term integration into a local New Zealand community. Barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services, and ways of overcoming these, were also sought. As a case study, interviews with nineteen Wellington-based Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees aged 50 years and older were carried out.

The results highlighted differences in the level of integration between Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees depending on their backgrounds and length of residency in New Zealand. However, despite these differences most older refugees require independence, social interactions with family and friends, family responsibilities, access to religious services and strong ethnic networks for integration into the community. Other integration-related activities sought by older refugees are English lessons, employment, voluntary work and cross-cultural interactions. Over time and with increased familiarity with their new environment, older refugees seek integration-related activities that expose them to the wider community. Successfully integrated older refugees have the ability to be caregivers of younger family generations and provide aid to the wider community.

The main barriers to participating in integration-related activities are segregation from family members, lack of independence, poor English, failing physical and mental health, inadequate finances and poor access to information. In light of this, it is recommended that the family reunification policies be reviewed along with evaluations on the effectiveness of integration-related programmes of resettlement agencies, service providers, ethnic communities and religious groups. Educating older refugees on their rights to essential services, and setting realistic expectations on the delivery and provision of such services, are also recommended.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

New Zealand began its involvement in refugee resettlement with the arrival of 841 Polish children and their guardians in 1944. It is now one of thirteen countries in the world to receive refugees for resettlement under the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Refugees resettled under this programme are mandated as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and are called *Quota Refugees*. An overview of the number of Quota Refugees resettled in New Zealand over the past two decades is shown in Figure 1 below. A further breakdown of the number of Quota Refugees by nationality is presented in Appendix I.

Figure 1: Quota Refugees granted residence in New Zealand (1979/80 – 2001/02)

Region	Year			Total
	1979/80 – 1989/90	1990/01 – 1999/00	2000/01 – 2001/02	
Africa	0	2,481	509	2,990
Asia	8,287	1,975	652	10,914
Eastern Europe	126	255	0	381
Latin America	0	26	0	26
Middle East	253	1,960	336	2,549
Total	8,666	6,697	1,497	16,860

Source: Adapted from New Zealand Refugee Law, RefNZ Statistics (2003)

In addition, some non-UNHCR mandated refugees seeking asylum in New Zealand are granted refugee status. These people are called *Convention Refugees* and typically claim asylum when they arrive at our borders or at the expiry of a temporary permit. The number of people granted refugee status in recent years is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Number of people granted refugee status in New Zealand (1992/93-1999/00)

Year	Number of people granted refugee status (Convention Refugees)	Number of people refused refugee status
1992/93	128	1543
1993/94	68	638
1994/95	134	293
1995/96	147	793
1996/97	180	1060
1997/98	282	1078
1998/99	582	2288
1999/00	520	1901

Source: New Zealand Refugee Law, RefNZ Statistics (2003)

The total number of Quota Refugees resettled in New Zealand over the past 22 years is 16,860 people. Included in the annual refugee quota are some “at risk” cases, including older refugees who experience discrimination by other host nations because of their perceived inability to resettle or provide positive employment skills. Older refugees are a small, but vulnerable group who often experience failing health, barriers to learning new languages and fear of unknown situations. These characteristics can isolate older refugees making them less likely than younger generations to integrate into a new country (Chenoweth 2001:1; Burton and Breen 2002:48-49). Older refugees are also less likely to integrate than general immigrants who obtain residency in New Zealand. Under the immigration points system the “General Skills Category” specifically seeks migrants who will increase New Zealand’s levels of human capital and is therefore biased towards young people with employment skills and qualifications. A person aged 56 years or over is not eligible to apply for residency in New Zealand under this category (New Zealand Immigration Service 2003b). Subsequently, older refugees arriving in New Zealand are a unique group and have special needs for resettlement and integration. Previously resettled

refugees undergoing the natural process of aging also share many of these special integration needs.

After the initial resettlement period, the long-term integration of older refugees in a host community is very important. Successfully integrated older refugees have the ability to provide vital leadership roles within the family unit and are likely to become active members of their cultural group and the wider community. There are many levels of integration including accessing health facilities, using public transport, supporting the education of younger family members, participating in social groups and taking active community leadership roles. The levels of integration vary according to the unique characteristics of each refugee, including their mental and physical abilities (Chenoweth 2001:1; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002).

Given these varying levels of participation, evaluating the success of older refugee integration into a new country becomes difficult. Social service workers, family members and refugees themselves differ on how to define successful integration. More importantly, it is difficult for refugee resettlement agencies and wider community groups to know what services to provide for this particular group. Generalist policies and practices can also lead to the ill adjustment of older refugees and therefore it is important to obtain a sound understanding of their integration needs.

Thus the purpose of this research is to investigate the integration experiences of older refugees into their local New Zealand community. To achieve this, a case study of Assyrian, Somali and Cambodian refugees living in Wellington was chosen. The research specifically aims to identify activities and services that assist older refugees to integrate into their community. Through the eyes of older refugees, the effectiveness of integration-related programmes and policies are explored along with mechanisms for improving them.

1.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The overall AIM of the research is:

To identify activities and services that older refugees consider helpful for integrating into Wellington.

The specific OBJECTIVES are:

1. To identify activities and services older refugees currently participate in, or want to participate in, to assist their integration into Wellington.
2. To identify any barriers preventing older refugees from accessing these integration-related activities and services.
3. To explore possible means of improving or delivering integration-related activities and services to older refugees.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study of refugee resettlement and integration is multidisciplinary. For example, it falls under development studies, migration, ethnic minority studies, international law and international relations. For this reason there is no unified theoretical approach to the study of refugees (Malkki 1995). The study of refugee resettlement and integration varies depending on the nature of the refugee plight and the form of resettlement. For example, refugees may be fleeing as ‘victims of war or external aggression’, or they may be subject to ‘internal ethnic cleansing’ as a result of the political and economic motives of others. Refugees may be relocated as internally displaced people (IDPs) to other areas of their homeland, resettled as refugees in a neighbouring country (local integration), or when other options are considered inappropriate, they may be resettled in a third country (Black 2002). Political, economic, social and environmental factors at national and international levels will therefore influence the various studies of refugee resettlement and integration.

Leading on from this is the interconnectedness of refugee studies and discourse of development. Black (2002) contends certain forced migration situations are induced as a result of development. Examples include people displaced by major public works such as dams, and political elite seeking power over resources, territory or the state. Black further adds refugee situations are complex situations where meeting refugee needs are not simply technical issues, but also political ones. Humanitarian aid in refugee situations “*may be driven as much by supply (excess food stocks, defence of strategic interests, guilt)*”, as it is by refugee demand for shelter, safety and basic food provisions. Thus the interconnectedness of development studies and refugee studies provides an opportunity for shared learning in the field of research.

Given the involuntary and often abrupt displacement of refugees, many research projects in this area adopt functionalist models that are action-oriented (Barth 1981; Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; Cernea 1993, 1996). This recognises the importance of social understanding of the refugee situation as well as dispensing a mutual benefit to refugees. In addition, the emergence of alternative development approaches implies development research and practice should be relevant to the wants, priorities

and goals of underprivileged members of society (Friedmann 1992; Chambers 1997). Relating this to refugee studies implies integrating the knowledge, experiences, needs and wants of refugees into research studies and in effect giving them an opportunity to improve their own lives.

Bearing all of the above in mind, the theoretical framework used in this research is a realist approach. Activities and services accessed by older refugees are viewed as the underlying mechanisms enabling them to become integrated members of their community. Likewise, policies and practices are viewed as the underlying structures that influence the level of integration of older refugees (McKendrick 1999:45; Kitchin and Tate 2000:21). The alternative development approaches highlighted earlier influence the nature of this research as it incorporates the experiences and opinions of older refugees in order to better understand their integration needs and promote their well being.

1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this paper a number of different terms are used and these are defined in the following section. Key concepts are also clarified by a review of current literature.

1.4.1 Definition of the term ‘Refugee’

The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees defines a ‘refugee’ as a person who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

(UNHCR 1951)

1.4.2 Quota Refugee

New Zealand is a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and as such accepts 750 refugees per annum for resettlement. These refugees are referred to as *Quota Refugees* or *mandated refugees*. The New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS) is responsible for selecting Quota Refugees and bringing them to New Zealand. Family reunification cases may also be included in the quota refugee system if the family member meets UNHCR resettlement requirements (Gray and Elliott 2001b; NZIS 2002:15-18; UNHCR 2002).

Quota Refugees spend their first six weeks in New Zealand at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Auckland. This centre provides initial accommodation, medical services and an orientation programme with basic language lessons. At the end of the six-week induction, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) assists refugees to resettle into local communities around the country. RMS is a non-government organisation and one component of its resettlement programme includes the co-ordination of volunteer support workers who directly assist refugees with the resettlement process. RMS is also closely networked with local ethnic communities through its Cross-Cultural Workers and trained Social Workers. Other non-government agencies provide resettlement support such as counselling, language training, budgeting advice and interpreting services (Crosland 1995; NZIS 2002:16; RMS 2003).

Additional categories for refugee immigrants exist in New Zealand alongside the quota refugee system. *Convention Refugees* typically claim refugee status or political asylum when they arrive at a New Zealand border. The number of accepted Convention Refugees in recent years is around 300 people, however these cases are based purely on merit so in any given year there may be more or less. The *Refugee Family Quota in the Family Sponsored Stream* allows family members to reunite with refugees who have been legally resident in New Zealand for a minimum of 3 years. These family members often come from refugee-like situations, but because they are not necessarily mandated as refugees by UNHCR they apply for resettlement in New Zealand through standard immigration channels. The *Refugee Family Quota* policy was introduced in October 2001 when the *Humanitarian Category* (designed to respond to cases of compelling humanitarian need that fell outside the strict “immediate family” reunion criteria) was closed¹. The *Refugee Family Quota* is restricted to 300 places and unlike the case-by-case selection of the Humanitarian Category is allocated by random ballot (NZIS 2002:17-18; NZIS 2003a).

¹ Cabinet papers reveal the Humanitarian Category (for serious physical and emotional humanitarian cases) was often used as a residual family reunification avenue to the standard Family Category. It was complex and difficult for applicants, sponsors and administrators with applications taking on average 36 months to process. The Humanitarian Category became a lengthy, difficult and costly exercise to administer for both the state and refugees. As a result, policy adjustments in the form of the closure of the Humanitarian Category and the establishment of the broader Refugee Family Quota policy eventuated (Minister of Immigration 2000a, 2000b, 2001).

1.4.3 Older refugee

The exact age of an *older* refugee is not clear in the literature. The term *older* is often interchanged with *elderly*, which refers to people 65 years and over. However, the term *older refugee* is sometimes used to include people younger than 65 years, but who share characteristics of *elderly refugees*. In addition, the use of the age 65 to describe older refugees becomes meaningless when the average life expectancy for many of them is below this. For example, Cambodians have a life expectancy at birth of 57 years and as a cohort, only 56% of males and 47% of females will reach 65 years (United Nations Development Programme 2003).

For the purpose of this research, an older refugee is a refugee who is aged 50 years and above. They may have arrived in New Zealand as an older refugee or may have become one since resettlement.

It is not known how many older refugees there are in New Zealand, however the number is considered relatively small. At the time of the 2001 Census the number of immigrants aged 50 years or older residing in New Zealand was 245,097. This figure comprises older people who arrived under the refugee quota system as well as standard immigrants entering under the Business Category and the General Skills Category (New Zealand Immigration Service 2003b; New Zealand Statistics 2003). Given the annual number of refugees entering New Zealand is low (750 Quota Refugees plus 300 Convention Refugees) the total number of older refugees, including those who have become 'older', is considered small. Numbers aside, it does not diminish the vulnerability and special integration needs of older refugees residing in the country.

1.4.4 Integration

The term *integration* is used to describe one part of the resettlement process of refugees. It is considered the longer-term process through which refugees become full and equal participants in the various dimensions of society (Canadian Council for Refugees in Gray and Elliott 2001a:20). Refugees contribute to the dominant society's social and economic well being while retaining their own cultural identity. It is a two-way process involving participation and co-operation of both refugees and members of the dominant receiving culture (Ho, Bedford and Cooper 2002:vi). Integration is used with other resettlement terms including *settlement*, *acculturation* and *assimilation*. *Settlement* generally refers to the initial acclimatisation and early stages of adaptation into the host country, while *acculturation* is the gradual modification and renegotiation of values or practices without giving up ethnic and cultural identity (Berry 1980, 1987; Walker 2001:8). *Assimilation* is more distinct from integration in that it is characterised by the refugee group 'melting' into the dominant host society (Berry 1980; Valtonen 1994).

The level of integration experienced by refugees varies depending on the characteristics of the individual and their relationship with the host society. To a large extent refugees must desire integration otherwise segregation and the traits of assimilation begin to occur (Berry 1997; Liev and Kezo in Gray and Elliott 2001a; Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002).

In New Zealand, several agencies operate to assist the integration of refugees in the community. Examples include Refugees as Survivors (RAS) who offer trauma-counselling services to refugees, the Telephone Interpreting Service (TELIS) offering national 24-hour access to interpreters and ESOL Home Tutors who provide individual home-based language tuition. The Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) runs a variety of "life-skills" programmes to support the integration of refugees. These include legal education programmes covering family law, tenancy law and consumer law. The Service offers advice, information and cross-cultural support for refugees, and provides home-based assistance for families at risk. RMS has also initiated socially oriented sewing classes for Somali women in Auckland and

Hamilton where many of the participants are older refugees. The Wellington Senior Centre provides another social meeting point for elderly people, although older Wellington-based refugees do not appear to access this to any great extent. The Citizens Advice Bureau has recently reviewed their information services for migrants in New Zealand. Outcomes of the review are enhanced access to information through documents printed in foreign languages and the re-training of staff to provide better assistance to migrants (New Zealand Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux 2003).

In assessing the level of refugee integration into a host society, a 1997 survey by the UNHCR shows resettlement countries generally have little established criteria. The most commonly used measures are economic-oriented and largely ignore the personal perspectives of refugees (Gray and Elliott 2001a). However, the need to include non-economic measurements such as the experiences of refugees is emerging. For example, Humpage (1998) looks at the intercultural adjustments of Somali adolescent refugees in Christchurch schools, while Bihi (1999) explores the adaptation of culture by Somali adults. Crosland (1991) investigates the experiences of Cambodian women to identify gender related resettlement barriers, while Smith (1994) looks at the differing attitudes to English language acquisition among Laotian refugee families in Wellington.

Another non-economic measure of successful integration is the reluctance of refugees to return to their homeland (Kibreab 2003). Resettled refugees may enjoy civil, social and economic citizenship rights in the form of employment and social services (e.g. housing, schools, healthcare and social security), and over time the importance of repatriation diminishes. In North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand where refugees enjoy citizenship rights and a decent standard of living, they tend to remain regardless of whether the conditions prompting displacement are removed. This is particularly the case for refugees from rural subsistence farms. If they return to their homeland they are unable to use the skills acquired in exile (e.g. factory skills and commerce) or access modern social services (e.g. healthcare, education, clean water and transportation). Despite the reluctance for repatriation, monetary and non-monetary remittances show many refugees retain a level of attachment to their homeland. Opposition to political regimes, family members remaining in the homeland and patriotism influence these flows (Diaz-Briquets and

Perez-Lopez 1997). Remittances sent by refugees resettled in New Zealand are already well noted by Bihi (1999:107) and NZIS (2002:64).

Chenoweth (2001:1) provides some insight into everyday integration-related actions of older refugees giving another form of measurement. These include:

- Seeking better health through a new health care system;
- Accessing neighbourhoods beyond walking distance from home;
- Using public transport;
- Having intimate knowledge of the lifestyles of younger family members at work and school;
- Giving input into family matters;
- Having decision-making authority;
- Participating in social groups with other elders;
- Communal eating; and
- Talking about their homeland with others.

Aptly summarised, Gray and Elliott (2001b:10) state the development of integration measurements need to take into account both subjective and objective factors, as well as the experiences of different ethnic groups. Within the different ethnic groups integration of sub-groups (e.g. elderly, women and youth) also need to be considered. In the case of older people, the New Zealand works of Humpage, Bihi, Smith and many others do not compare refugee integration across different ethnic groups and nor do they specifically relate to older refugees. Likewise, Crosland focuses on Cambodian integration issues only, but notably two-thirds of her sample comprises older women. Using a case study of older refugees from the Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali communities, this research aims to build on their work.

1.4.5 Barriers to integration

Regardless of age, there are many barriers preventing refugees from integrating into a host community. These include the background of the refugee, lack of employment, language difficulties and unrecognised qualifications. These economic barriers are considered major obstacles to integration, however there are also social barriers including physical disabilities, mental health, racism, family segregation, lack of ethnic support and inadequate community networks (Pernice and Brook 1994, 1996; Gray and Elliott 2001b; UNHCR 2001:24; Waxman 2001; NZIS 2002). Many of these economic and social barriers are interrelated and cumulatively affect the level of integration experienced by refugees (Montgomery 1996).

The same integration obstacles are common across countries. This is exemplified by Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) who find regardless of the European Union Member State or the background of the refugee, common obstacles to integration exist. These are employment, language competence, racism and the individual personality of the refugee. How a refugee reacts to the loss of their country, family and social status, and how these personal traits are received in the social structures of the host country are common obstacles to integration. Some integration obstacles are however unique to some countries, for example welfare systems, citizenship rights for refugees, bureaucratic processes and socio-cultural contexts (Mestheneos and Ioannidi 2002).

In addition to the integration obstacles described above, sub-groups such as older refugees experience unique challenges to integration into a host country. These include a loss of social status and cultural identity, failing health and the inability to learn new languages. These problems are influenced by the nature of their plight and are exacerbated by the process of natural aging. Some of the unique challenges of older refugees are detailed below.

Social status and cultural identity

Omidian (in McSpadden 1997) uses a case study of Afghan refugees in the United States to illustrate the changing relationships between older refugees and younger

family members during the resettlement process. Afghan culture and religion are challenged as younger generations adapt to the strongly anti-Islamic environment and the social status of elderly diminishes. Compounded by their reliance on public welfare to provide for their families, older Afghan refugees experience levels of disrespect, isolation and loneliness (McSpadden 1997:1139-1140).

Furthermore, younger adults and children enter school or the workplace where they learn the language and skills of the new culture. In contrast, older refugees experience relinquished social and institutional connections, and lose the basis of their self-esteem and social worth. Children seek fresh sources of expertise and new external influences, which undermines the traditional authority of elders. The diminished relevance within the family coupled with the loss of outside connections reduces the capacity of older refugees to integrate into the host community (International Psychogeriatric Association 2000:38).

In a case study of elderly Vietnamese refugees in Britain, Alibhai-Brown (1998) reports that they seek freedom from further persecution and do not wish to be treated like second-class citizens in their new country. In addition to a loss of social status within the family, their sense of well being is affected by racial abuse and attack. The elderly Vietnamese refugees wish *“to be treated as individuals with specific needs and abilities, not as part of some mass ‘lost’ people”*.

As with other Asian migrant groups Alibhai-Brown observes *“there is a reluctance to depend on the state, partly because of their culture and partly because they are conscious they are ‘only refugees’ who should not demand any rights”*. Elderly Vietnamese refugees seek to rebuild their lives psychologically and a sense of independence from the state and from family is an important step towards this.

Health

Age related physical and mental health problems are also barriers to older refugee integration. Mental health specialists in host countries are considered ill prepared to serve the needs of older immigrants and the availability of their children to negotiate the system for them is limited. Thus older refugees can be seen as difficult to work

with and have less potential to benefit from mental health services (Abbott 1989; International Psychogeriatric Association 2000:38). In addition, older people may not recover as well as younger generations from the trauma of displacement as they have a greater attachment to their homeland and future prospects and opportunities to rebuild their lives are limited in scope. Therefore mental health problems and poor integration are often exaggerated for older refugees (Burton and Breen 2002:47).

In a comprehensive literature review of mental health issues for Asians living in New Zealand Ho *et al.* (2002:52) highlight the prevalence of depression in older refugees. Depression is triggered by poor English language skills, a lack of emotional support networks and limited involvement in activities outside the home. It is illustrated by feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety and marginalisation from the host society. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is another mental illness older refugees are vulnerable to. In a study of Cambodian refugees living in Dunedin, Cheung (1994) identifies the highest rates of PTSD are in those aged 65 and above.

Education, training and employment

In the same study Cheung (1995) finds refugees who are older and less educated are also less acculturated than other demographic groups. However, no gender difference in acculturation exists and this is attributed to the equal integration opportunities that local sponsorship programmes give to males and females (e.g. attending language classes, getting involved in school activities, receiving assistance in finding employment). This follows on from the work of Padilla (in Cheung 1995) who found no gender difference in the overall degree of acculturation, but increased acculturation with increased levels of education and income.

Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999:35-39) suggest the time and skills required for refugees to become functionally literate in English may be underestimated in New Zealand. Older refugees have limited exposure to New Zealand society and may find it more difficult than a younger person to learn and remember a new language. Therefore their ability to integrate into New Zealand is much less than younger generations. Other barriers to learning English are the lack of funds for tuition coupled with impairing physical and mental conditions.

In the *New Settlers Programme* Watts, White and Trlin (2001) and White, Watts and Trlin (2001) present further support that tuition costs are a barrier to language learning by adult refugees and migrants. The increasing level of student fees has affected enrolments in a number of New Zealand educational institutions. In addition, Watts *et al.* (2001) and White *et al.* (2001) observe the main attendance difficulties for adult learners are childcare, transport and family responsibilities. To address these issues, some New Zealand educational institutions are arranging crèche facilities, rescheduling alternative times for classes, providing flexible entry points to courses and subsidising tuition (Watts *et al.* 2001). When English lessons are undertaken, the preferred method is the National ESOL Home Tutor Scheme (White *et al.* 2001).

In addition to these barriers, older refugees are not often targeted by interventions such as vocational training or non-formal education and this diminishes their ability to develop new skills and adapt to the host society. When they do receive assistance, it is often given in a blanket fashion (Burton and Breen 2002:48). Opuku-Dapaah (1995) observes the low levels of skill adaptation in a study of 385 Somali adult refugees living in Toronto, Canada. Somali refugees forty years and older (including many who are still capable of working) represent three-quarters of the total sample that are unemployed. In a case study on the economic adjustment of recently arrived refugees in Australia, Waxman (2001) also links English language competency to the likelihood of employment. Furthermore, Smith (1994) finds many members of the Laotian refugee community in Wellington have some proficiency in English, however this has failed to translate into high skilled employment.

1.4.6 Why integration of older refugees is important

Naturally there are many others barriers to older refugee integration into host countries. The previous examples are not exhaustive. The important point to note is that older refugees have unique challenges to integration, as do other sub-groups. However despite their special needs, older refugees can make a substantial contribution to the resettlement process and therefore their integration into the community is very important. UNHCR (2001:24) and Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999:34) contest the widely held assumption that older refugees are passive and dependent. Older refugees can be highly motivated and come from environments where they are more likely to be givers than receivers of aid. Older refugees make active contributions to the well being of their next-of-kin and become dependent in a full sense only in the final stages of disability or illness.

The tragedy of older people who have been forcibly displaced is that they have been robbed of the means to provide for others in the manner they would wish.

(UNHCR 2001:24).

Older refugees also have an important role in maintaining cultural traditions, and passing on folklore, customs and traditional practices to younger members of the community. This is particularly important where children grow up with little or no knowledge of their homeland. Older refugees provide childcare and tend to people who are ill. Equally, older refugees provide leadership in resolving community conflicts and administering traditional justice systems (Burton and Breen 2002:48-49).

Clearly the integration of older refugees in host countries is important. Older refugees will not be active in these roles if their social status is diminished, their health needs ignored and they experience forms of isolation, dependency and marginalisation.

1.4.7 Activities and services that assist the integration of older refugees

Since the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other resettlement agencies have intensified attention towards integration-related activities for older refugees. The misconceptions social workers, care givers and resettlement agencies have about the integration needs of older refugees and the importance of involving older refugees in the decision making and planning processes is evident (Chenoweth 2001). For example, an Australian survey found teachers perceived older refugee learners to be inwardly interested in hobbies, grandchildren, celebrations, food and previous occupations. In actual fact they were more interested in outward-focused functional activities such as managing disputes, conversation, medical issues, news and current affairs (Nicholls and Raleigh in Altinkaya and Omundsen 1999:38).

Religious practice and social interactions promoted by this is also seen as assisting refugees to integrate into a new culture. Alibhai-Brown (1998) observes religion can underpin the values refugees live by and therefore it may be essential for day-to-day life. In a case study of Cambodians in the United States, Men (2002) found elderly people frequent temples more than other age groups because they have the time to do so and it is a social gathering point for them. However, Men also notes that over time religion and traditional customs are lost as they seem 'out of place' in the host community. The acceptance of refugees by religious communities in host countries and the rise of ministries among refugees themselves are increasingly encouraged in the resettlement process (Blume 1996:22, Vitillo 1996).

Cultural elements also play a particular role in how elderly deal with the natural process of aging and integration into host communities. Pang (in Park 2002) finds self-care methods including their frame of thinking, physical exercise, hygiene, nutrition and religion play a role in how elderly Korean immigrants in America deal with aging and mental health issues (Park 2002: 608).

In April 2001 Sweden hosted an International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (ICRIRR). The objective of the conference was to:

“review the challenges faced by elderly refugees in the resettlement experience and present successful programmes that help them become better-socialised, healthier and active members of their community, thereby restoring their place of dignity and leadership”.

(Chenoweth 2001)

Conferences focussing so intently on older refugee integration have not occurred in New Zealand making it difficult for people and organisations to gauge their effectiveness in integrating this group into the community. In addition, the opinions of older refugees on integration-related activities and services are not widely voiced. The study of integration-related activities and services specifically for older refugees is therefore important for filling the information gaps between what is needed and what is delivered. This is particularly relevant to resettlement policies and practices, which are often generalist by nature and do not necessarily cater for vulnerable groups such as older refugees.

The New Zealand Immigration Service is currently undertaking a major initiative on refugee resettlement in the form of the *Refugee Voices* project (Gray and Elliott 2001a; Gray and Elliott 2001b; NZIS 2002). This research project aims to collate the views, experiences and expectations of recently resettled refugees and longer-term refugees (4-6 years) living in New Zealand. Research on this scale has not been done before in New Zealand. The findings from *Refugee Voices* are intended to fill information gaps on refugee resettlement and ultimately improve their well being. The project covers many ethnic groups and ages including some elderly Assyrian and Somali refugees. *Refugee Voices* is intended as an exploration of wider refugee experiences rather than a concentrated investigation of elderly integration-related activities and services. However, the interim report comprehensively documents the resettlement challenges of *recently resettled* refugees and highlights the practical housing, employment, finance, health, education and language needs of older refugees in this group (NZIS 2002). Many of the observations support existing findings on the

resettlement challenges of older refugees. The report on the resettlement and integration needs of *longer-term* refugees is yet to be issued.

While *Refugee Voices* already provides useful information on older refugees, it is not intended as a comprehensive study into the integration-related activities and services desired by older people. This research therefore aims to identify the specific activities and services that help older refugees to integrate into their New Zealand community. Barriers to accessing these activities and services are also explored. This type of research is useful for resettlement agencies and community groups who are involved in the planning and implementation of integration-related activities for older refugees.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

2.1 METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the Theoretical Framework section, a realist approach is adopted for this research. A realist theoretical framework is concerned with the identification of what causes something to happen and how extensive the phenomenon is. Realism enables a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to be adopted (Kitchin and Tate, 2000:21). Applied to this research, realism is concerned with identifying the quantifiable activities and services older refugees engage in, and the qualitative influence this has on their feelings of integration into their local community. Epistemology influences the method of data collection and under a realist framework this can range from structured questionnaires to less structured in-depth interviews. It can also involve participant observation and the interpretation of secondary empirical data (McKendrick 1999:45). For this research a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions were used in semi-structured interviews. In terms of analysing and presenting the data, this has the advantage of providing a quantifiable list of activities and services that lead to the integration of older refugees, while at the same time explores qualitative patterns in the levels of integration.

2.2 METHOD

2.2.1 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

The main method of data collection for this research was semi-structured interviews with older refugees. Semi-structured interviewing comprises a series of open and closed questions with probes to cover different aspects of the topic. The same questions were asked in each interview to ensure consistency and reliability, although additional questions were asked to extract more information and explore areas in greater detail.

The semi-structured interview questions in this research were aimed at identifying the activities and services that help older refugees integrate into their community. A copy of the interview questionnaire is provided in Appendix II.

Key informants and secondary data

Key informants were approached to obtain information on existing research and integration related programmes for older refugees. Key informants included the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), the New Zealand Immigration Service (NZIS), Age Concern New Zealand, Senior Citizens Advice Bureau, the Wellington Senior Centre and members of the Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali communities.

Secondary data was also sourced to investigate the subject of older refugees and their levels of integration. Secondary data included academic literature, official statistical information, policy documents, conference minutes and organisational reports.

2.2.2 The sample

The sample of refugees interviewed consisted of the following groups and numbers:

- 6 Assyrian refugees
- 7 Cambodian refugees
- 6 Somali refugees

A total of 19 people were interviewed. All refugees interviewed were Quota Refugees residing in Wellington and included family reunification Quota Refugees. Convention Refugees and family reunification immigrants from refugee-like situations were deliberately excluded from the sample. The rationale for this is Convention Refugees and immigrants voluntarily left their country and may have more financial security than Quota Refugees. Arriving with personal possessions and being able to resettle with families already well established in New Zealand makes their integration experience different from Quota Refugees who arrive with nothing. In addition, Convention Refugees and family reunification immigrants do not receive

the same resettlement services as Quota Refugees (e.g. Mangere orientation, RMS support worker networks).

Figure 3: Demographics of sample

Ethnicity	Sex		Current age	Number of years living in NZ	Number of years living in Wellington
	Male	Female			
Assyrian	√		66	7	7
Assyrian	√		66	8	8
Assyrian	√		50	6	6
Assyrian		√	73	7	7
Assyrian		√	56	8	8
Assyrian		√	50	6	6
Cambodian	√		66	18	18
Cambodian	√		55	23	23
Cambodian	√		55	23	23
Cambodian	√		51	22	17
Cambodian		√	60	23	23
Cambodian		√	56	21	21
Cambodian		√	56	18	18
Somali	√		54	6	6
Somali		√	65	4	4
Somali		√	56	2	2
Somali		√	54	5	5
Somali		√	50	3	3
Somali		√	52	6	6

Note: One other male Somali refugee was interviewed, however this subject is excluded from the total sample because he was a Convention Refugee.

Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali ethnic groups were selected for the case study because they originate from different geographical locations and between them exhibit a diversity of culture. A comparison between integration needs of older people from the Middle East, Asia and Africa was sought to identify any cultural or ethnic differences and similarities. The Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali ethnic groups were also chosen because they are some of the larger community groups of refugees in New Zealand². The Assyrian ethnic group included refugees from Iraq and Syria, although it is recognised Assyrians may originate from other countries. All refugees have resided in New Zealand for at least 2 years, enabling the research to focus on the long-term integration needs rather than initial resettlement needs.

Participants for the study were identified from a variety of sources. The Assyrian and Somali refugees were identified through RMS and their links to these community groups. The Cambodian refugees were selected from the Cambodia Trust Aotearoa New Zealand database, and lists provided by RMS and the Cambodian Association.

The research aimed to encompass a group that is generally representative of the population. Given the relative small sample size a *Convenience* sampling framework was adopted with a particular emphasis on balancing gender and age among the group. The overall sample therefore included males and females with ages ranging from 50 to 73 years.

The choice of Wellington as the research location was selected for a number of reasons. Resettlement agencies and related services are located in New Zealand's main centres and therefore refugees tend to be highly urbanised. The three ethnic groups of interest to this research are prominent in Wellington and it was not necessary to go elsewhere in the country. As the political centre, Wellington also houses the policy arms pertaining to New Zealand refugee law as well as the head offices of age and refugee related agencies such as RMS, Age Concern and the Senior Citizens Advice Bureau.

² The total number of Cambodian, Somali and Assyrian Quota Refugees resettled in New Zealand between 1979/80 and 2001/02 are: Cambodian (4,666), Somali (1,596), Iraq/Syria (2,066) (Adapted from New Zealand Refugee Law, RefNZ Statistics 2003).

2.2.3 Procedure

The interviews were conducted between mid-July and early September 2003 with the assistance of interpreters for 12 of the total 19 interviews. An interpreter from RMS provided assistance on the 6 interviews with Assyrian refugees, however 2 of these did not require significant interpreting services because their comprehension of English was very good. 5 out of 7 interviews with Cambodian refugees were conducted in English and without the use of interpreters. The Cambodian refugees arrived in New Zealand approximately 20 years ago and therefore their grasp of the English language was very good. The remaining 2 Cambodian refugees could understand much of the interview questions, however a family member was used in each case to clarify points and to convey the opinions of the refugee. A Somali community member and a family member were used as interpreters for 4 of the 6 Somali interviews. The remaining 2 interviews with Somali refugees were conducted in English and without an interpreter.

The interviews were typically conducted in the homes of refugees or at their place of business. It was important to conduct the interviews in environments where the refugees felt comfortable sharing their experiences and expressing their opinions. Mindful of cultural differences and relationships between men and women, the interview with the Somali man was conducted in the presence of his wife at their home.

Some of the interviews were tape recorded and this proved helpful for directing attention to the interview rather than note taking. Some of the refugees were hesitant about being recorded on tape and this was respected. Overall the refugees were very open to assisting with the research and felt comfortable answering the interview questions.

2.2.4 Ethics

The plight of refugees is a traumatic experience. Refugees are considered a particularly vulnerable group and research into resettlement issues may provoke re-trauma. Care was taken to provide a supportive and familiar environment in which refugees could talk freely about their integration into the community. Ensuring each interview was a positive experience for the participant was very important to the research design.

Ethics approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Victoria University Ethics Committee.

The ethical precautions adopted in this research included:

- Informed consent to participate in the research;
- Assurance of confidentiality and privacy of participants;
- Signed consent from the participants to present the data collected; and
- The option for participants to withdraw from the research project without reason.

In addition, staff at RMS reviewed the interview questions before they were used and did not think they would cause undue harm to the refugees. RMS also offered service links to trauma counselling, however this was not needed.

2.2.5 Data analysis

The research design has significant qualitative aspects providing information about the 19 Wellington-based refugees interviewed. Therefore no attempt should be made to generalise the findings to the wider older refugee population in New Zealand. However, the results are likely to give a good picture of integration needs of older refugees and should be considered with other work relating to this age group.

The data collected in this research is analysed under three main themes including a section on refugee backgrounds (demographic data). The three main themes are:

- Activities and services considered helpful for integrating older refugees into the community.
- Barriers preventing older refugees from accessing integration-related activities and services.
- Means of improving and delivering integration-related activities and services to older refugees.

Given the research design is largely qualitative, the data analysis does not employ significant empirical analysis to interpret the findings. Instead it looks for patterns of social behaviour that can lead to general conclusions. However, some parts of the analysis have been undertaken by looking at the proportions of those who responded to a particular question. The percentages are intended to give an idea about the proportions of those interviewed. Bearing in mind the total sample size is 19, the actual numbers are small and this should be considered when interpreting the findings.

2.2.6 Limitations

Self-reporting bias

There is self-reporting bias in the interviews conducted, particularly where refugees were asked to rate themselves. For example, self-rating on languages they can read, write and speak. As a general benchmark, their grasp of a language was determined by their ability to read, write and speak it with understanding.

Family member bias

The use of amateur interpreters such as family members posed a problem. Care was required to ensure the interpreter did not incorporate his or her own opinions in the response of the older refugee. Family members also posed another dilemma for older refugees who may have felt uncomfortable expressing their needs or opinions in the presence of younger generations. However, some refugees spoke openly about intimate health issues and their social status within the family unit even in the presence of family members.

Expertise

The vulnerability of refugees to re-trauma and my lack of expertise in the mental health area meant direct questions about mental health issues and how they became refugees were not asked. Only generalist questions about their health and resettlement experience from their country of origin to New Zealand were asked. Refugees were left to volunteer information in these areas and some of them did.

Cross-cultural research and researcher bias

Cross-cultural research poses many challenges aside from the obvious ones of language barriers and intimate knowledge of customs, beliefs and traditions. It is important for researchers to recognise their own conditioning towards another culture and the influence this has on research design, analysis and presentation of findings (Faithorn in Crosland 1991:38). For example, my own Asian ethnicity, adult education work in East Africa and resettlement support work with Middle Eastern refugees in New Zealand have shaped the conditioning I have towards Cambodian, Somali and Assyrian cultures. This cultural conditioning has influenced my understanding and interpretation of the integration needs of older refugees from these groups.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

As outlined earlier, the overall AIM of the research is to identify services and activities that older refugees consider helpful for integrating into Wellington.

The specific OBJECTIVES are:

1. To identify activities and services older refugees currently participate in, or want to participate in, to assist their integration into Wellington.
2. To identify any barriers preventing older refugees from accessing these integration-related activities and services.
3. To explore possible means of improving or delivering integration-related activities and services to older refugees.

To assess the specific aim and objectives, the RESULTS section is separated into four main areas. These are:

- Refugee backgrounds (demographic data);
- Activities and services refugees consider helpful for integrating into the community;
- Barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services; and
- Suggestions from refugees for improving access to integration-related activities and services.

3.1 REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

The refugees interviewed come from very different backgrounds and bring with them a diverse range of attributes including languages, skills, qualifications and culture. This section explores some of their diversity.

3.1.1 Languages

The refugees were asked the languages they could communicate well in. These languages and the number of people who could speak, read and write them are presented below.

Figure 4: Languages refugees communicate well in.

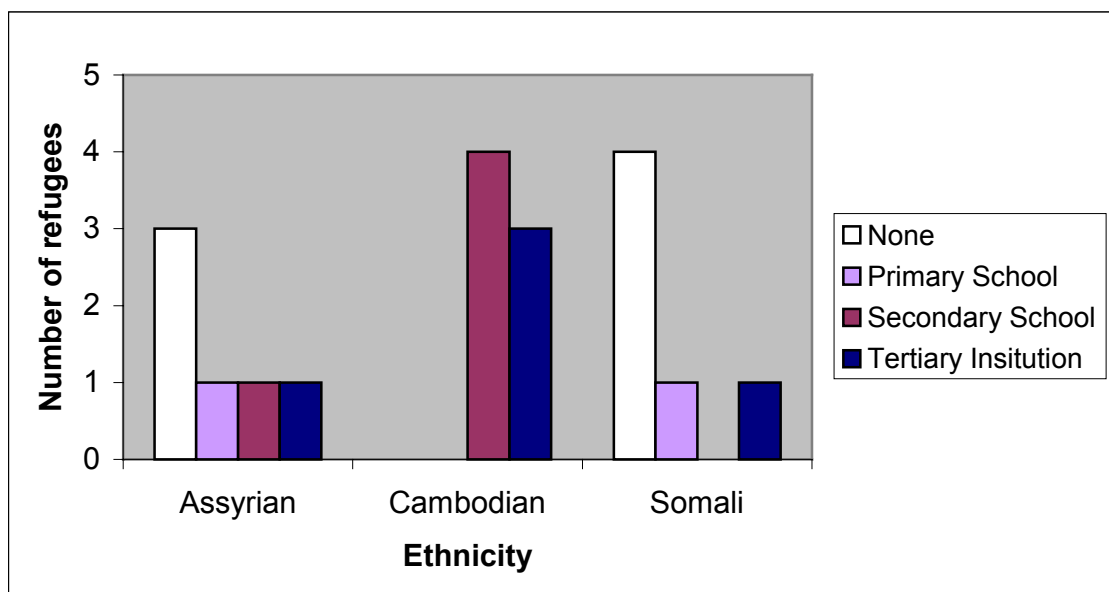
Language	Number of refugees who can speak, read and write the language (with understanding)								
	Assyrian (total of 6 people)			Cambodian (total of 7 people)			Somali (total of 6 people)		
	Speak	Read	Write	Speak	Read	Write	Speak	Read	Write
Arabic	√√√ √√√	√√√	√√√				√	√	√
Assyrian	√√√ √√√	√√√	√√√						
Cantonese				√√√	√√	√√			
English	√√	√√	√√	√√√ √√√	√√√√	√√√	√√	√	√
Farsi	√								
French				√√√	√√	√√			
Greek	√√	√√							
Italian							√		
Khmer				√√√ √√√√	√√√ √√√√	√√√ √√√√			
Kurdish	√√√√	√	√						
Mandarin				√√√	√√√	√√√			
Russian							√	√	√
Somali							√√√ √√√	√√	√√
Thai				√	√	√			
Turkish	√								
Vietnamese				√	√	√			
Average	3.7	1.8	1.5	3.3	2.9	2.7	1.8	0.8	0.8

As a general observation, most of the Cambodian and Assyrian refugees can speak 3 languages, while the majority of Somali refugees (typically the women) can only speak in their mother tongue. The male Somali refugee skews the results for the Somali group as he is fluent in Somali, English, Russian and Arabic, and has some basic understanding of Italian. Assyrians can read and write in at least one language, while Cambodians can read and write in at least two languages. Excluding the male Somali refugee, most Somali women cannot read or write in any languages.

3.1.2 Education before arrival in New Zealand

The sample has varying levels of education qualifications ranging from no formal schooling to tertiary degrees. In addition, refugees spent from 6 months to 8 years in refugee camps and some received education services such as English language lessons while there. The levels of formal education attained by refugees are outlined in the graphs below:

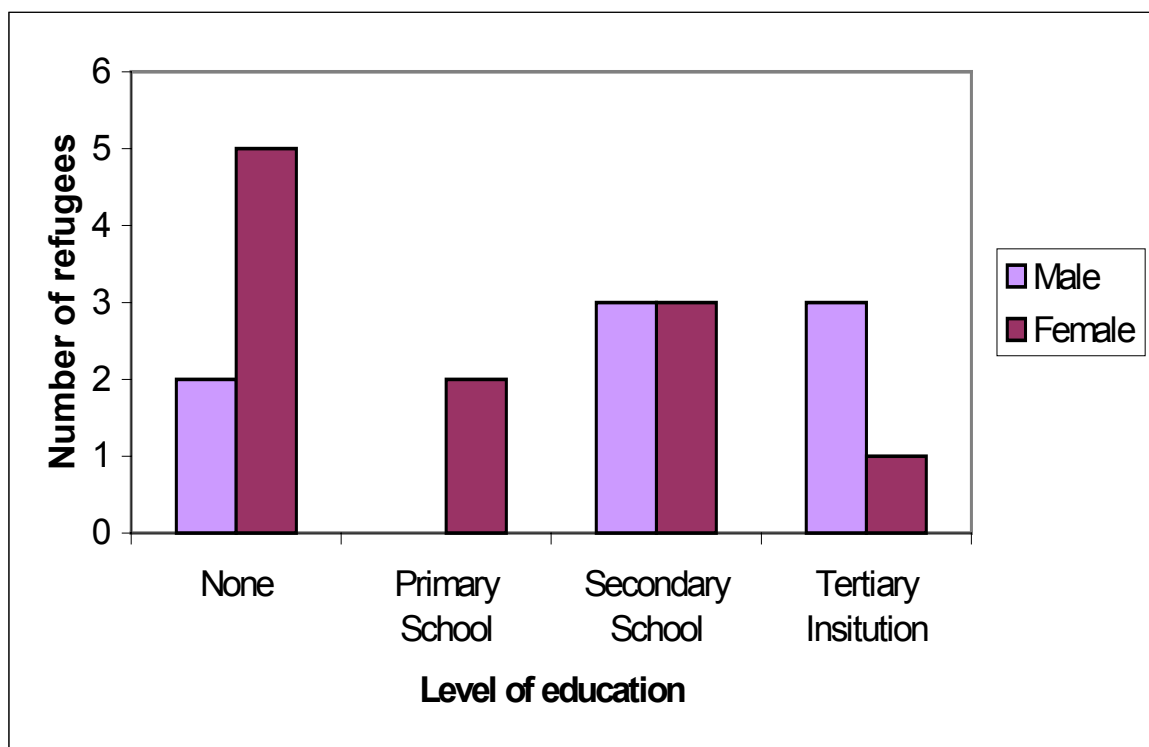
Figure 5: Formal education by ethnicity



Cambodian refugees have at minimum attended secondary school with some members of the group attending tertiary education institutions, including vocational training centres. The Assyrian and Somali refugees have a wider spread of formal schooling from none at all to tertiary education. Seven of the twelve Assyrian and Somali refugees have no formal schooling at all.

Of the total sample, males tend to have higher education qualifications than women, particularly in the Assyrian and Somali groups. The two tertiary qualified people in these groups are men, while four of the five Somali women interviewed have no formal schooling. Figure 6 shows the differences in education by gender for the total sample.

Figure 6: Formal education by gender.



Total number of people interviewed by gender: Male (8), Female (11)

3.1.3 Employment and other skills of refugees

Previous employment

The refugees interviewed bring a variety of employment skills and qualifications to New Zealand. Most refugees have formal work experience acquired from their homeland, neighbouring countries or during their time in refugee camps. The employment characteristics of refugees before arriving in New Zealand are summarised in Figure 7.

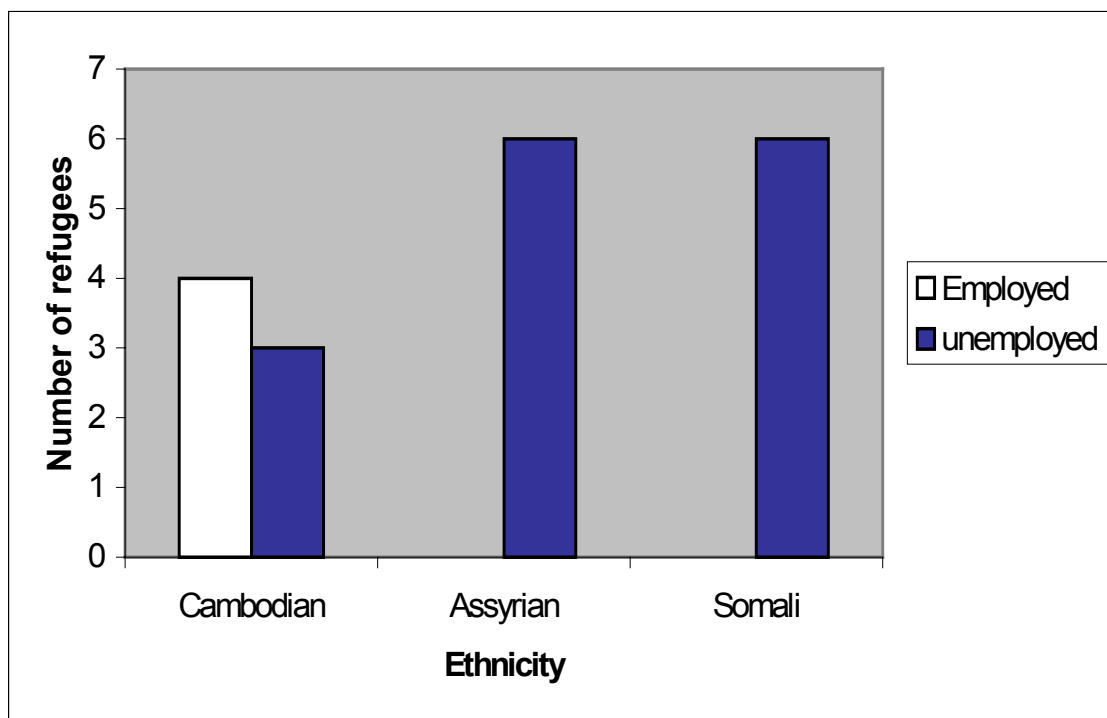
Figure 7: Previous employment

Ethnicity (and number of people interviewed)	Unemployed		Employed	
	Number with no formal employment	Reason for unemployment	Number of people formally employed	Type of employment
Assyrian (6)	1	Raising family & managing household	6	<i>Sales and service</i> (chef, coffee house owner and operator) <i>Trade work</i> (crane operator, factory worker) <i>Professional</i> (accounts manager, secretarial work) <i>Government</i> (army personnel)
Cambodian (7)	0		7	<i>Sales and service</i> (hardware store owner and operator, restaurant owner) <i>Trade work</i> (seamstress) <i>Professional</i> (civil engineer, teacher) <i>Government</i> (Navy personnel)
Somali (6)	3	Raising family and managing household. Volunteer women's community leader	3	<i>Sales and service</i> (convenience store retailer, butcher in local market) <i>Professional</i> (marine engineer)

All of the Cambodian refugees were formally employed in their homeland before arriving in New Zealand. One Assyrian woman and three Somali women were not employed but assumed the traditional and important role of managing the family household. In addition to raising her family, one Somali women volunteered as a community leader for women. The most common occupations were in the sales and services industries with most businesses being owned and operated by the refugees and their families. This was particularly so for the Cambodian group.

Current employment

Figure 8: Employment status of older refugees in Wellington

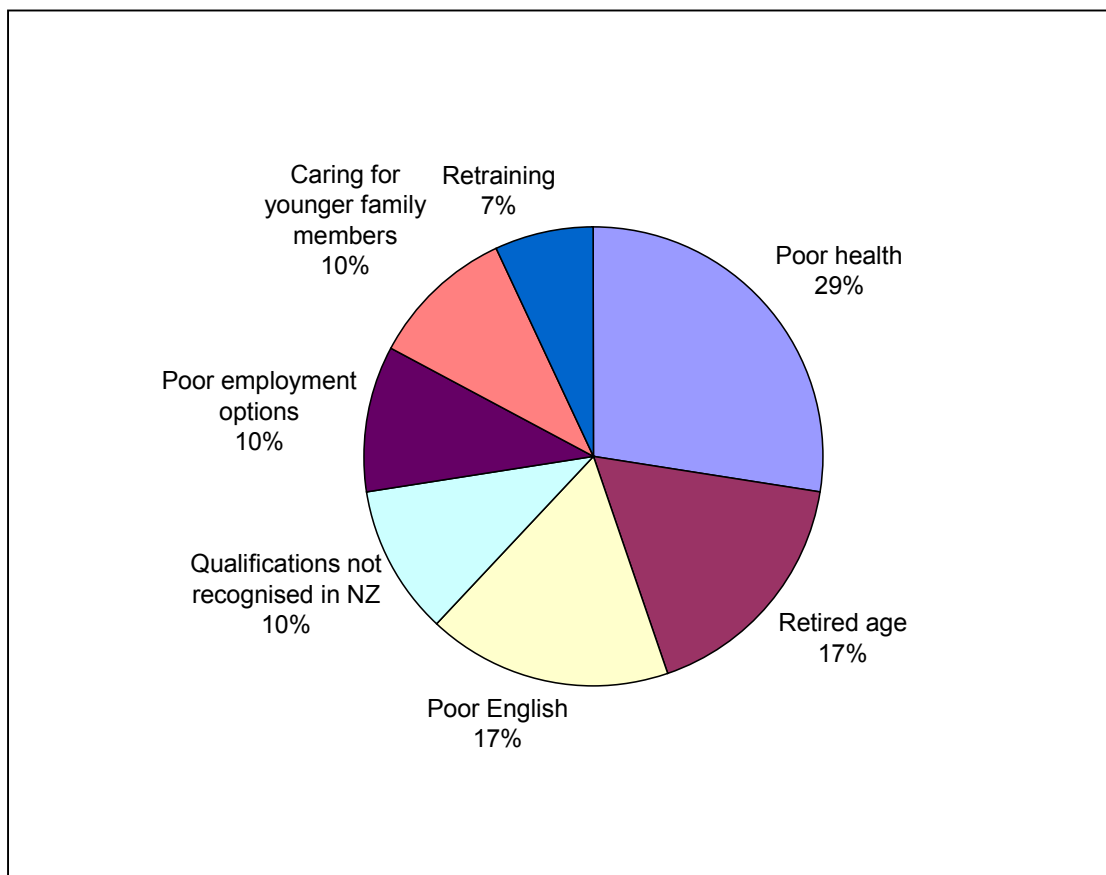


Four of the total nineteen older refugees have formal employment in Wellington. All of these people are Cambodian, have at minimum secondary school education and were previously employed in Cambodia. Three of the four employed Cambodian refugees are self-employed as a restaurant owner and operator, a taxi driver and a contract-building manager. The three remaining Cambodian refugees are unemployed respectively due to poor health, having reached retirement age and volunteer work at a

daughter's family business. On arrival in New Zealand the Cambodian refugees, including those currently unemployed, took up whatever work they could find. This included factory work (wool testing, sewing), restaurant kitchen hand jobs, telephone lineman work and lawn mowing. Employment was usually acquired between 1-2 years after arrival with one woman starting work the day after her arrival in Wellington.

All of the Assyrian and Somali refugees are currently unemployed even after having lived in Wellington between 2-8 years. Apart from the 4 employed Cambodian refugees, the remaining refugees receive a Social Welfare Benefit (e.g. unemployment, sickness or child support benefit). The reasons for unemployment among older Somali, Assyrian and Cambodian refugees are illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Reasons for unemployment among older refugees in Wellington



Refugees often gave more than one reason for the cause of their unemployment with the most common reasons being poor health, having reached the retirement age of 65 and the inability to speak English. The inability of refugees to communicate well in English means employment options are limited to low skill and low paying jobs. Furthermore, refugees with tertiary or vocational qualifications find their certificates are not recognised in New Zealand. Two refugees are subsequently retraining at tertiary institutions in Wellington. Older refugees caring for younger family members are not actively seeking employment because their role as child minders enables other skilled family members to take up better paying full-time employment. Retired people and those with poor health are also not seeking formal employment. Poor employment options for older refugees also discourage them from actively seeking work. Refugees commented that even if they could find a cleaning job where English is not essential, jobs with low paying wages do not make them financially better off when the costs of not being able to care for younger family members and manage their household are taken into account. Refugees consider themselves better off on a social welfare benefit, particularly with the onset of aging and associated failing health.

3.2 ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES OLDER REFUGEES CONSIDER HELPFUL FOR INTEGRATING INTO THE COMMUNITY

3.2.1 Feelings of integration

The literature reveals refugees must desire integration into a host community in order for them to experience full and equal levels of participation. Therefore, before asking the integration-related activities and services they access or want, older refugees were asked:

Do you want Wellington to be your home?

and

Does Wellington feel like home?

Do you want Wellington to be your home?

Nearly all of the refugees want Wellington to be their home.

The common reasons for wanting to live in Wellington are:

- Personal safety and security;
- National peace (unlike the conflict or war torn nature of their homeland);
- Immediate family established here;
- Comfortable and accustomed to a lifestyle in Wellington;
- Better living conditions (particularly compared to rural areas in their homeland where power, clean water and good health facilities are not guaranteed);
- No reason to return to the homeland (as their former livelihoods are lost).

Many refugees are sad to leave their homeland, but are thankful for resettlement in New Zealand where the people are friendly and well natured. Most refugees do not wish to permanently return to their homeland. With reference to Iraq, an Assyrian refugee commented “*we had a rich country, but it wasn’t for the people*”.

Two Assyrian refugees commented that refugees have no choice in their country of resettlement and for them New Zealand was not their preferred country. A European or North American country would have been better because they are closer to the Middle East. Although they had no say in the matter, they are content having New Zealand as their new country and are making every effort to build a long term life in Wellington.

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, one of the Cambodian refugees initially wanted to return to Cambodia to help rebuild the nation. However, his children have grown accustomed to New Zealand life and after visits to the homeland do not wish to live there permanently. For the sake of his family, the Cambodian refugee is content staying in Wellington and no longer wishes to return there.

Does Wellington feel like home?

Figure 10: Does Wellington feel like home?

Ethnicity	Yes	Partially	No	Average length of resettlement (years)	Total respondents
Cambodian	√√√√√√√√	√		21	7
Assyrian	√√	√√	√√	6	6
Somali	√√√√	√√		4	6
Total	13	5	2	N/A	19

Most Cambodian refugees consider Wellington their home. They do not consider Cambodia their home any more. This is because they have lived in New Zealand on average for 21 years. Wellington feels like home because they have:

- Raised their families here;
- Enrolled children into schools;
- Invested in private businesses;
- Established friends and community support networks; and
- People (in Wellington and New Zealand) are very friendly.

These factors give them a sense of security and therefore they are happy with Wellington as their home. The reason one Cambodian did not fully consider Wellington his home is due to job dissatisfaction. He does not feel his employment skills are being fully utilised as a taxi driver in Wellington.

The Somali and Assyrian refugees who consider Wellington home also think so because they have family here, children enrolled in schools and have established a support network of friends and community members from their own ethnic group. Compared to the Cambodian group who associate with other Asian groups and the wider New Zealand community, little cross-cultural support networks exist for the Assyrian and Somali groups.

The reasons (in order of recurrence) why Assyrian and Somali refugees do not feel Wellington is their home are:

1. **Dispersed family** – Many refugees are not reunited with all of their close family members. They worry about the security of family members who remain in their homeland and/or areas of conflict. Without their family nearby, Wellington does not feel like home.
2. **Language** – A lack of English reminds refugees they are foreigners to Wellington and therefore it does not feel like home. Their ability to

concentrate on English lessons is hampered by the trauma associated with their plight as refugees and concern for family members overseas.

3. **Knowledge of New Zealand systems** – Not knowing how to access services and not understanding fully the rules, policies and practices operating in New Zealand make refugees feel unfamiliar with Wellington and therefore it does not feel like home.

A Somali woman summarises these three points with her comment:

“It’s like my hometown, but it’s different. Language is a problem, my husband and children are not here. I know where everything is in Somalia, but not here. I miss family.”

In summary, older refugees in this sample desire integration into the Wellington community and over half the group feel they have achieved this. This is particularly the case for the Cambodian refugees who have resided in New Zealand on average for 21 years. Members of the Somali and Assyrian communities who have lived here for only 2-8 years do not feel fully integrated into the community. The integration-related services and activities accessed and desired by the older refugees in the sample are outlined in the next section.

3.2.2 Integration-related activities and services currently accessed by older refugees in Wellington

Refugees were asked about the services they access and the activities they participate in that make them feel integrated into Wellington. They were also asked for any additional activities and services that they wished to access and the reasons why they wanted them.

Figure 11: Activities and services currently accessed by older refugees that make them feel integrated in Wellington.

Activity or service	Number of people who currently access the activity or service						Total
	Assyrian		Cambodian		Somali		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Social interactions with family & friends (of the same ethnicity)	√√√	√√√	√√√√	√√√	√	√√√ √√	19
Religious activities (e.g. church services, religious festivals)	√√√	√√√	√√√√	√√√		√√√	16
Ethnic community meetings (e.g. to discuss community issues)	√√√	√√√	√√√√	√√	√	√	14
Caring for children, grandchildren	√	√	√√√√	√√√		√√√√	13
Household chores (e.g. grocery shopping)	√√	√√√		√√		√√√√	11
Accessing health services	√√	√√√		√	√	√√√	10
Exercise (e.g. walking)	√	√	√√	√	√	√√√√	10
Interactions with Wellingtonians (e.g. neighbours, service providers)			√√√√	√√	√	√√	9
Involvement in the schooling of children or grandchildren	√	√	√√	√		√√	7
Using interpreting services	√	√				√√√	5
Driving independent of others			√√√	√√			5
Employment			√√√	√			4
Membership in Wellington sports clubs or cultural societies			√√	√	√		4
Promoting culture & religion to others (e.g. youth)			√√		√		3
TV and radio (to keep up with current events)			√		√	√	3
Using public transport				√√		√	3
Language courses (e.g. English lessons)						√√	2
Other education courses & training	√					√	2
Accessing library and community information services				√	√		2
Travelling around NZ (to see new places and visit friends)	√		√				2
Hobbies (e.g. playing musical instruments)	√						1

The list provided in Figure 11 is not exhaustive, but it gives an indication of the activities and services older refugees currently access and which help them feel integrated into the community. Refugees may participate in all of the above activities from time to time, but only those they specifically mentioned as helping them feel integrated are recorded.

Of the total nineteen refugees interviewed, all consider social interactions with family and friends of the same ethnicity as the most important activity for integration into the community. Other important integration-related activities are religious gatherings at the church or mosque, and ethnic community meetings to discuss current events and community issues. These culture-based interactions provide older refugees with mental, physical and spiritual support. Family-related activities such as caring for younger members and household chores are important for making older refugees feel useful and occupied. The ability to independently access health services and familiarity with their doctor are also highly rated as integration-related activities.

Nine of the total nineteen refugees rated English language lessons as an important integration-related activity, however only two Somali women are currently attending English language courses at either the Multicultural Centre for Learning and Service Support (MCLASS) or ESOL classes. Most refugees have previously attended language courses through ESOL or MCLASS and found this helped with their initial integration. Most Cambodian refugees ceased formal English lessons once their grasp of functional English enabled them to find employment.

Some differences in integration-related activities accessed by older refugees across the Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali groups exist. The Cambodian refugees generally feel more integrated into the community because of independence obtained through employment, the ability to drive private vehicles and membership with wider community groups. The community groups include membership with a Wellington golf club and the Chinese Cultural Centre where both sport and cultural activities take place. Through their employment, many Cambodian refugees interact on a daily basis

with other cultures outside the Asian community and this is considered one of the more important integration-related activities for this group.

Language barriers, mobility and unemployment mean the Assyrian and Somali refugees have less interactions with the wider Wellington community than the Cambodian refugees and therefore interactions with Wellingtonians is not rated highly as a current integration-related activity. The Assyrian and Somali groups rate easy access to health services and the availability of interpreters as important for making them feeling integrated into the community.

3.2.3 Additional integration-related activities and services older refugees wish to access

Older refugees tend to participate in integration-related activities and services that are currently affordable, physically accessible, or must be accessed out of necessity (e.g. health services). However, older refugees require additional services and express a desire to be actively involved in other activities in order to improve their level of integration into the community. Some of the activities older refugees wish to participate in are ones where they are givers of aid rather than receivers. The additional integration-related activities and services desired by older refugees are outlined in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Additional integration-related activities and services sought by older refugees

Activity or service	Number of people who wish to access the activity or service						Total
	Assyrian		Cambodian		Somali		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Family reunification	√√√	√√√	√	√		√√	9
Increased social welfare benefit	√√	√√				√√√	7
English learning			√	√√		√√√	6
Employment (including higher skilled employment)	√	√	√		√	√√	6
Non-waged employment	√√	√√				√	5
Information about NZ systems			√			√√√	4
Health and fitness (e.g. swimming, gym sessions)	√	√			√	√	4
Promoting culture			√	√√	√		4
Group shopping excursions (e.g. grocery shopping)						√√√	3
Intercultural excursions and discussion groups				√	√		2
Vocational training	√	√					2
Resettling new migrants				√√			2
Visit family and friends around NZ						√√	2
Sight seeing						√√	2
Driving lessons						√	1

Although differences exist regarding the number and type of additional integration-related activities and services older Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees wish to access, there are some common activities and services. Their reasons for wanting to access these activities and services overlap and are therefore grouped together in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Common reasons for wanting additional activities or services

Activity or service	Reasons for wanting activity or service
Family reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reunite entire family; • Ensure safety of family members; • Remove mental stress caused by the uncertain whereabouts of family members in war torn countries and conflict areas.
Increased social welfare benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve financial situation to pay for rising utility bills and cost of basic living. • Be able to afford other integration-related activities and services (e.g. swimming pool entry fees and public transport to recreational facilities)
English learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence (e.g. to access medical services and participate in school activities without relying on translators or family members); • Improve self-esteem and confidence.
Employment (including higher skilled employment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence; • Improve financial position; • Utilise skills and experience acquired overseas • Remove reliance on social welfare services; • Improve self-esteem.
Non-waged employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep busy, active and to feel useful.
Information about NZ systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence; • Know how to access services (e.g. emergency services to call for help if needed); • Understand NZ systems (e.g. politics for intellectual discussions, business and banking systems to set up own business).
Health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve physical and mental health. • Therapeutic benefits
Promoting culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain ethnic culture in own children and wider community; • Close the growing cultural gap growing between young and old refugee generations
Group shopping excursions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove reliance on family members to do household chores (e.g. grocery shopping)
Intercultural excursions and discussion groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To talk about current affairs; • Share culture; • Share experiences (e.g. refugee plight) with other people and improve the healing process.
Vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better employment opportunities; • Improve self-esteem.
Resettling new migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share resettlement experiences with new migrants • To smooth the resettlement process for new migrants in NZ
Visit family and friends around NZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep in contact with distant family and friends; • Explore more of NZ and learn about NZ culture.
Sight seeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore more of NZ and learn about NZ culture.
Driving lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence to transport self and children.

The most common additional integration-related action sought by all groups is family reunification. For Assyrian and Somali refugees, these family members are located in countries where war or conflict is currently occurring. For them, the desire to have their family reunited is very intense. Two Assyrian and two Cambodian refugees wish to have family members who were separated and resettled in Europe reunited with their immediate family in New Zealand. In these cases their physical safety is not a concern, but feelings of mental stress are caused by the isolation from loved ones.

Other dominant services and activities desired by Assyrian and Somali refugees are increased social welfare benefits and employment. Many refugees from these groups commented the cost of living is rising and they are struggling to meet daily expenses on their current benefit. They have insufficient funds without even considering access to other integration-related activities or services.

“The benefit is too little. Food and power is expensive....the benefit has not risen with the cost of living. We are not able to purchase basic food....fresh vegetables are too expensive.....we can't afford to buy clothes.”

Assyrian refugee

Many of the Somali and Assyrian refugees are characterised by poor health, little formal education, low employment skills or having reached retirement age. These refugees are not in a position to find employment and raise their financial position. However, five of the twelve Assyrian and Somali refugees indicated an interest in part-time non-waged employment to keep active and to feel useful. Given their age and fragile nature they indicated low paying employment is not worth forgoing the social welfare benefit, but light voluntary work would increase their level of social interaction and sense of belonging.

The Assyrian and Somali refugees who are seeking employment are generally in their early 50s, have some formal education or vocational training, and reasonable physical health. The type of employment options they seek are establishing their own retail business or using professional skills and experience (e.g. accountancy, chef work). These fields are ones where they have prior work experience from overseas or have

subsequently retrained in them. This particular group of refugees experience a high degree of frustration as they know they are equipped with vocational skills, but are unable to crystallise this into paid employment. A tertiary qualified refugee expressed his frustration with being unable to find employment with the comment:

“If I can’t study, can’t get job, can’t afford own house – how can I accept this New Zealand as my country? I need to get job..... Life without work is like cigar without light.”

The Somali women with no formal education or work experience indicated it is traditional for older people in their culture to take up light work such as cleaning jobs in their later years. They indicated a willingness to work in part-time cleaning jobs, but the low wages are not cost effective for them in light of foregoing the social welfare benefit and the disruption employment will cause to their domestic and family responsibilities.

Other integration-related activities and services desired by Somali and Assyrian refugees include English lessons, information about New Zealand systems (e.g. how to establish a business, understanding immigration policies), health and fitness (e.g. swimming, gym workouts), and group excursions (e.g. grocery shopping). Learning English is not a high priority, but the refugees indicated it would be useful for going about daily tasks in the community. Older refugees express a desire for home tutoring 2-5 times per week where lessons are based on functional literacy and informal conversations as opposed to formal language learning in a classroom.

In contrast, Cambodian refugees do not generally wish for increased social welfare benefits, employment, information about New Zealand systems, better access to health and fitness, and organised excursions around the community. Cambodian refugees are already employed by waged or non-waged work and feel financially secure in their current positions. One Cambodian refugee however does seek higher skilled employment to better utilise his work experience from overseas.

After two decades residing in New Zealand, most Cambodian refugees are familiar with New Zealand systems or know where to seek information if necessary. They

have well-established social networks and confidence to independently move about Wellington. The therapeutic benefits of health and fitness activities are important for aging Cambodian refugees, however Cambodian refugees do not wish for better access to sport and leisure facilities because their access is already good. Generally, Cambodian refugees feel the most integrated of the three groups and therefore do not desire many activities and services to improve their personal levels of integration. The Cambodian refugees are more interested in helping others. Many of the interviews with Cambodian refugees tended to move away from their personal needs and wants, and refocused on the integration of refugees in general. Therefore the activities Cambodian refugees want to be involved in are promoting their culture (particularly to young Cambodians), intercultural activities and discussions, and helping resettle newly arrived refugees and migrants.

Some of these wider community activities are desired by the male Somali refugee who is tertiary qualified and enjoys intellectual discussions about culture and community issues. He is generally content with his level of integration having almost qualified with a New Zealand University degree and being an active member in wider community clubs. The other Somali refugees and the Assyrian refugees are more concerned with accessing activities and services that will improve their personal level of integration. They are positive about their resettlement experience in New Zealand, but appear to be still dealing with their own level of integration into Wellington, without thinking about the integration of others or wider community issues. The concern this latter group has for others is focused on those worse off in their homeland. Many Somali and Assyrian refugees indicated they send remittances to family members in their homeland.

3.3 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING INTEGRATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

3.3.1 Ease of accessing current integration-related activities and services

In order to identify any barriers to integration, the ease in which older refugees access current integration-related activities and services was established. Of the activities and services currently accessed by older refugees, some are easy to access while others are difficult. The common reasons for easy access are outlined in Figures 14.

Figure 14: Reasons for easy access to integration-related services and activities

Reason for easy access to current integration-related activities and services	Number of times the reason was given		
	Assyrian	Cambodian	Somali
Ability to independently use private transport	√√	√√√√√	
Good physical and mental health	√	√√√√	
Don't need to rely on others		√√√	
Familiar with health services and health professionals		√	√√
Established networks (e.g. know how to source information and assistance)		√√	
Good community organisation (e.g. event planning, communication via newsletters)		√√	
Services and facilities are in walking distance			√√
Public transport is cheap and easy to access		√	√
Familiar with NZ systems		√	
Interpreters are accessible			√

The Cambodian refugees find it easy to participate in integration-related activities and access services because they can independently mobilise themselves. Good health enables them to drive private vehicles and they do not need to rely on family members. Knowing where to find information and using established networks to seek help (e.g. friends, community information centres) also make participating in activities or accessing services easy for the Cambodian group. Few Assyrian and Somali refugees find accessing current activities and services easy, but for those that do it is because they can mobilise themselves independently by driving, walking or using public buses. Understanding the health system, familiarity with medical practitioners and access to interpreters on doctors visits make accessing health services easy for some refugees.

3.3.2 Barriers to accessing current integration-related activities and services

Not all activities and services currently accessed by older refugees are easy to access. The reasons for difficult access are presented below.

Figure 15: Barriers to accessing current integration-related activities and services

Reason for difficult access to current integration-related activities and services	Number of times the reason was given		
	Assyrian	Cambodian	Somali
Unable to mobilise self (i.e. can't drive or no car)	√√		√√
Reliant on availability of family members		√	√√√√
Poor physical health	√√√		√
Unable to speak English / communicate	√√		
Poor access to interpreters		√	√√
Not enough money to pay for services (i.e. social welfare benefit is insufficient)	√√		√
Lack of support for older people from the community	√√		

Some refugees, particularly Assyrian and Somali refugees, find accessing current integration-related activities and services difficult. The main barriers to accessing current activities and services are the inability to mobilise themselves leaving them reliant on family members to transport them everywhere. Many of the Somali women have to wait for their husband or other family members to return from work to drive them to the supermarket. Even if they could afford taxis, they are unable to communicate in English to order one. Poor English stifles their confidence to use public buses and unless services are in walking distance, they can remain housebound. Lack of access to interpreters also makes participation in activities and services difficult. As an example, a Somali woman commented:

“WINZ [Work and Income New Zealand] people very friendly and helpful, but communication difficult. Don’t understand what they want.”

An Assyrian refugee suffering from a diabetic condition exemplifies the problems of older refugees. It had rained heavily the day before our interview and she missed her appointment with the doctor due to a combination of no access to a private vehicle, unfamiliarity with the bus system and lack of money to pay for a taxi. Subsequently she did not have her prescription renewed and was missing out on her daily medication. Her greatest disappointment was the medical centre’s failure to follow up (e.g. with a telephone call) to find out why she missed her appointment. In other instances, she mentioned she could not renew her prescriptions on time because the social welfare benefits she receives are insufficient to cover monthly household bills without covering her regular medical costs. Even with a community services card, the subsidised doctor’s fee is sometimes unaffordable. On transporting the Assyrian refugee to a rescheduled appointment with the doctor, the problems accessing medical services and the frustration experienced by the Assyrian women were observed. Despite having no comprehension of English, a professional translator was not made available to her. At the last minute, the medical staff used an Assyrian-speaking relative of another patient who happened to be in the Waiting Room.

Throughout the course of the interviews many other Assyrian and Somali refugees commented that the social welfare benefits are insufficient for accessing additional integration-related activities and services on top of paying for the basics of living. Lack of money prevents refugees from participating in more activities than they wish. In addition, Assyrian and Somali refugees commented they do not participate in many activities outside the home because of mental stress from worrying about family members overseas.

Compared to the Assyrian and Somali groups, the Cambodian refugees do not find accessing current integration-related activities and services difficult. Only one case of difficulty exists and that is where a Cambodian woman sometimes needs to rely on her children to act as translators on doctors visits. The Cambodian woman is not aware of her rights to translating services and the medical centre does not promote them either. Most Cambodian refugees do not share the same welfare benefit problems as the Assyrian and Somali refugees because the majority have higher incomes generated from employment and those who are retired have established family support and financial security around them.

3.3.3 Barriers to accessing additional integration-related activities and services

Of the additional integration-related activities and services older refugees wish to access (refer back to Figure 12) many barriers to doing so exist. These are presented in Figure 16 along with an indication of the ethnic groups that find them barriers. Note, not every ethnic group seeks to access each additional integration-related activity or service. In these instances, “N/A” for *not applicable* is used.

Figure 16: Barriers to accessing additional integration-related activities and services

Activity or service	Barriers to accessing activity or service	Assyrian	Cambodian	Somali
Family reunification	Removal of the case by case <i>Humanitarian Category</i> and replacement with the ballot-run <i>Refugee Family Quota in the Family Sponsored Stream</i> .	√		√
	Current immigration policies make family reunification more difficult.	√		√
	Don't understand the family reunification and general immigration processes.		√	√
Increased welfare benefit	Refugees have little voice and when they do have their say it feels ignored by policy makers.	√	N/A	√
English learning	Aging makes it difficult to retain information - too old to learn.	√	√	√
	Can't concentrate on lessons because worrying about family members overseas.	√		√
	Formal English classes are uninviting and not functional (want functional literacy e.g. informal conversations instead).	√	√	√
	Feel uncomfortable joining a class.	√	√	√
	Lack of confidence in learning.	√	√	√
	Family obligations (e.g. can't leave children or grandchildren to attend classes)			√
	Courses are expensive	√		√
Employment (including higher skilled employment)	Too old and too daunting to start new career.	√	√	√
	Poor health.	√		√
	English is not considered adequate.	√		√
	Qualifications are not recognised in NZ.	√		√
	No formal education or qualifications to get a good job.			√
	Only eligible for low skill and low paying jobs. Low wages are a disincentive to forgo the social welfare benefit and to find child minders.			√
	Employment discrimination against migrants and refugees.	√		√
	Cost to retrain in the same field in NZ is unaffordable.	√	√	
	No networks to find a job.			√
	No understanding of NZ business systems to set up own business.			√
Culture and religion (e.g. cleaning offices in traditional clothing (hibjab) can be difficult).			√	

Figure 16 continued.

Activity or service	Barriers to accessing activity or service	Assyrian	Cambodian	Somali
Non-waged employment	Don't know how to find it.	√	N/A	√
Information about NZ systems	Don't know how to access information or to get involved with community activities.	N/A	√	√
	Cannot communicate information needs with community workers and service providers.			√
Health and fitness	Unaffordable cost of fitness facilities (e.g. gym memberships too expensive).	√	N/A	√
	Fitness centres are remote from residence.			√
	Cost of transport to and from fitness centres.	√		√
	Culture and religion (e.g. Muslim women unable to exercise around men, hibjab is difficult to exercise in).			√
	Medical problems prevent participation in basic exercise.	√		√
Promoting culture	Too busy with employment – not enough time to organise events and activities.	N/A	√	√
	Feel uncomfortable taking the initiative.		√	
Group shopping excursions	No services for this currently exist.	N/A	N/A	√
Intercultural excursions & discussion groups	Don't know how to get people involved.	N/A	√	√
Vocational training	Retraining is expensive – education institutes are profit-driven. Books and tuition fees are unaffordable and it is difficult to repay student loan.	√	N/A	N/A
	Job at end is not guaranteed. There is no financial incentive to retrain.	√		
	Difficulty filling out forms.	√		
Resettling new migrants	Feel uncomfortable taking the initiative.	N/A	√	N/A
	Don't know who to contact.		√	
	Don't know which migrants need/want help.		√	
Visit family and friends around NZ	No means of private transportation.	N/A	N/A	√
	Transportation costs are expensive.			√
Sight seeing	Don't know how to access activity.	N/A	N/A	√
	Cost of sightseeing trips.			√
Driving lessons	Cost of obtaining licence.	N/A	N/A	√
	Poor English – won't be able to sit the licence tests.			

3.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO INTEGRATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The suggestions offered by refugees to improve the delivery of integration-related activities and services that they currently access or want to access are outlined in Figure 17. In some cases refugees could not express any solutions to improve their access to integration-related activities and services, but welcomed ideas from others.

Figure 17: Improving access to integration-related activities and services

Activity or service	Suggestions and comments to improve older refugee access to integration-related activity or service
Translators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase accessibility and affordability of translators (e.g. for meetings with WINZ staff, doctor’s appointments and parent-teacher interviews in schools).
Family reunification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee agencies increase level of lobbying government for policy changes on behalf of refugees.
Increased social welfare benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government review what level of social welfare benefit is reasonably comfortable for a refugee, taking into account the special needs of older refugees (e.g. increased medical costs); • Government redistribute more income tax to community groups. Allocate funds to elderly (not young sports teams). Allow elderly and community groups to implement, manage and monitor activities and services for older people.
English learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase/improve access to home tutoring for further English lessons; • Home tutors 2-5 times per week (depending on the individual), 1 hour per session; • Gender sensitive home tutors (e.g. female home tutors for female refugees).

Figure 17 continued.

Activity or service	Suggestions and comments to improve older refugee access to integration-related activity or service
Employment (including higher skilled employment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government review current services for employment and language training for older refugees; • Government improve employment seeking services for older people (e.g. establish courses on setting up businesses - tailored for ethnic minorities and preferably taught in mother tongue languages); • Employment training courses specifically for older refugees and tailored for their slower learning speed (mixed ethnic groups in class if feasible); • English speaking mentors to help establish businesses; • Government provide better access to computers for retraining and job seeking.
Information about NZ systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional literacy classes on how to access and understand NZ systems (e.g. politics, business management)
Health and fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical car on standby to pick up patients unable to access medical facilities independently. • Improve access to translators at medical facilities. • Discount gym memberships for older people (particularly if fitness is required for medical reasons).
Promoting culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government provide funding for programmes promoting cultural diversity.
Vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment training courses specifically for older refugees and tailored for their slower learning speed (e.g. longer training period); • Remove profit-orientation in training institutions for older refugees; • Education institutions and Study Link provide more assistance on the enrolment process and completing allowance/loan forms.
Visit family and friends around NZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving lessons.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The results highlight some interesting integration needs for older refugees. These are discussed and summarised in this section under the following headings:

- Refugee backgrounds;
- Activities and services older refugees consider helpful for integrating into the community;
- Barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services; and
- Suggestions for improving access to integration-related activities and services.

4.1 REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

A review of the language, education and employment backgrounds of the Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees who participated in this research highlight the diversity older migrants bring to the Wellington community. Collectively the nineteen refugees can communicate in sixteen different languages and bring a range of qualifications and work experience in sales, service, trade and professional sectors.

On average, the Cambodian and Assyrian refugees communicate well in three languages while the Somali refugees communicate well in only one. The difference in language competence is attributed to a combination of differing levels of formal education, employment assignments in foreign-speaking countries and language learning in various countries during their plight as refugees. The Cambodian refugees

have a better grasp of English and this correlates with their longer length of residency in New Zealand. In addition, most Cambodian refugees arrived in New Zealand while still in their 30s and in accordance with observations of Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999) the likelihood of learning English is greater than that of the Somali and Assyrian refugees who arrived with average ages of 50 and 53 respectively.

The Cambodian refugees have higher levels of formal education than the majority of Somali and Assyrian refugees although some individuals in the latter groups do hold equivalent tertiary qualifications to Cambodian refugees. Most of the Assyrian and Somali refugees do not have any formal education at all. This research is not intended to encompass the education services in refugee homelands, however the differences in education are likely to be influenced by infrastructure, political stability during childhood years, cultural importance on formal education, gender and other family influences in the homeland.

A dominant finding from the review of refugee backgrounds relates to employment in Wellington. Four of the nineteen refugees have formal employment and these people are Cambodian. The remaining unemployed Cambodian refugees were formally employed in New Zealand, but have since ceased working with the onset of retirement, poor health or assisting with a family business. In contrast, none of the Somali or Assyrian refugees are employed and the majority are not seeking formal employment.

The differences in employment can be attributed to the Cambodian group resettling in New Zealand at a prime working age. Employment was generally acquired within 1-2 years of resettlement and over the past two decades some have raised enough capital to establish their own businesses. The ease with which Cambodian refugees found employment correlates with their higher education and greater levels of work experience in their homeland. Many acquired service, trade and entrepreneurial skills that have been transferred to Wellington. The Cambodian refugees attribute their comparative level of successful employment to their “hard work ethic” and belief that “no job is beneath them”. It was common for Cambodian refugees to accept low skilled, low paying jobs when they first arrived. They also do not wish to rely on

social welfare services and this confers with similar findings on elderly Vietnamese refugees and other Asian migrants living in Britain (Alibhai-Brown 1998).

By comparison the Somali women and most of the Assyrian refugees see no option other than to remain reliant on the social welfare benefit. It is unfair to conclude that Assyrian and Somali refugees do not have similar work ethics and attitudes towards accepting low skilled and low paying employment as the Cambodian refugees. It is more the circumstances of physical ability, age on arrival, gender roles and the lack of opportunities to find employment with no formal education and little previous work experience that contribute to their unemployment. In addition, their shorter length of residence in Wellington means Assyrian and Somali refugees do not have the capital to establish their own businesses. In this sense, the Cambodian refugees are able to avoid levels of employment discrimination experienced by some of the Assyrian and Somali refugees.

These findings confirm the widely accepted notion that the background of refugees directly affects levels of integration. It also builds on the work of Montgomery (1996), Berry (1997) and Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) where the levels of adaptation and integration depend on the unique characteristics of individual refugees and the ability of socio-economic conditions of host countries to support them.

4.2 ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES OLDER REFUGEES CONSIDER HELPFUL FOR INTEGRATING INTO THE COMMUNITY

4.2.1 Feelings of integration

It was established all refugees desire integration into the Wellington community, regardless of whether New Zealand was their resettlement country of choice. Refugees accept they have been given an opportunity to rebuild their lives in New Zealand and are making steps towards that. Their reluctance to be repatriated to their homeland confirms the findings of Kibreab (2003). The Cambodian, Assyrian and Somali refugees do not wish to return to their homeland because their former livelihoods are lost and their standard of living is better in New Zealand compared to the current levels of underdevelopment or insecurity in their homeland.

The Cambodian refugees feel the most integrated into Wellington because they have well-established families, social networks and new livelihoods. Compared to Somali and Assyrian refugees they have far greater independence. Feelings of high integration are attributed to the Cambodian group residing in Wellington for two decades compared to only 2-8 years for the Somali and Assyrian refugees. Over this period, the Cambodian refugees have acquired sufficient levels of English or have learned to side step language obstacles in order to conduct daily routines and access community services. Being familiar with their surroundings gives the Cambodian refugees confidence to access activities and services, and therefore they feel highly integrated into Wellington. In addition, the Cambodian refugees resettled in New Zealand while in their 30s and the prospect of a long future in this country encouraged them to invest in new livelihoods. This is not necessarily the case for the older Somali and Assyrian refugees who arrived in their 50s. The Somali and Assyrian refugees do not feel as integrated into Wellington because of dispersed families, poor English and being unfamiliar with New Zealand systems. Given their current ages it

remains to be seen whether the Somali and Assyrian refugees will ever experience a time when these barriers to integration are removed.

Two observations emerge from this section.

1. **The length of time spent in a country of resettlement influences the level of integration felt by a refugee.** The longer refugees spend in the new country, the more time they have to acquire language skills, establish families and become familiar with their new environment.
2. **Levels of integration differ between refugees who arrive as elderly and those who arrive young, re-establish themselves and become elderly.** The prospects of a long-term future in a host country give younger refugees more incentive to retrain, find employment and establish families. This equips them with integration support in later years.

4.2.2 Activities and services currently accessed by older refugees that make them feel integrated into the community

Some of the common activities and services currently accessed by older Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees (in order of recurrence) are:

- Social interactions with family & friends
- Religious activities (e.g. Church, Mosque, Temple services, religious festivals)
- Ethnic community meetings (to discuss current issues and resolve problems)
- Caring for children, grandchildren
- Household chores (e.g. grocery shopping)
- Accessing health services
- Exercise (e.g. walking)
- Involvement in the schooling of children or grandchildren

These activities and services reiterate the types of regular actions older refugees need for integration as presented in the overview of the International Conference on the Reception and Integration of Resettled Refugees (Chenoweth 2001). It also illustrates the significance of religion observed in elderly Vietnamese refugees in Britain (Alibhai-Brown 1998), where religion underpins the values refugees live by and therefore becomes important for day-to-day activities. The fact that elderly people have more time than other age groups to frequent religious sites, and therefore the sites become social gathering points (Men 2002), is more than true for the Wellington Buddhist community where on a weekly basis elderly people gather at a local temple for social and religious activities. Many of the Cambodian refugees in this research are part of this older Buddhist community. In accordance with the observations of Blume (1996) and Vitillo (1996) the significant supporting role of religious communities to resettle and integrate refugees should be promoted by the wider community.

The importance of participating in outward-focused activities (e.g. discussing news and current affairs, dispute management and health issues) also emerges along with the therapeutic need for physical exercise. This confirms findings on integration-related activities observed in older refugees in Australia (Nicholls and Raleigh in Altinkaya and Omundsen 1999) and in elderly Korean migrants in the United States (Pang in Park 2002). Furthermore, the Cambodian, Somali and Assyrian refugees in this research confirm the active role older people play as caregivers to younger generations. They illustrate the ability of older refugees to be givers rather than receivers of aid.

In terms of gender analysis, the older Cambodian refugees do not exhibit gender differences in their levels of integration. Cheung (1995) finds no gender difference in the acculturation of Cambodian refugees in Dunedin and attributes this to the equal integration opportunities that local sponsorship programmes give to males and females (e.g. attending language classes, getting involved in school activities, receiving assistance in finding employment). Likewise, both male and female Cambodian refugees in this research have utilised opportunities to access education

services, source employment and be actively involved with local community groups. There is no evidence to suggest any gender differences in the integration of older Assyrian refugees either. However, these findings do not apply so well to older Somali refugees. Despite health disabilities, the male Somali refugee has significantly higher levels of integration into the wider Wellington community than the Somali women as evident by his involvement in university studies and membership with non-ethnic specific clubs. In contrast, the Somali women have much less interaction with the wider community. Many of the activities they participate in are family oriented and while they may have an equal opportunity to access language classes, in reality the barriers of childcare and family obligations mean they do not explore these opportunities. Notably, there are marked differences in education backgrounds where the Somali male is tertiary educated while many of the women have no formal education at all. This aligns with the work of Padilla (in Cheung 1995) who observes increased levels of acculturation with increased levels of education. This finding does have its limitations in that only one male Somali refugee was included in the sample. Further research involving the integration of older male Somali refugees with no or little formal education will confirm the existence of gender differences in levels of integration.

It appears that interactions with the wider community, membership with non-ethnic specific sport and recreation clubs, employment and promoting culture are current activities assisting older Cambodian refugees to integrate into Wellington. The ability to mobilise themselves by private or public transport promotes their level of integration as independence from others raises their self-esteem and sense of well being. Their better grasp of English, self employment and familiarity with Wellington given their longer length of residency in New Zealand enables older Cambodian refugees to be more active in the wider community. In comparison, the majority of older Assyrian and Somali refugees are not equipped with adequate language skills, employment and an understanding of New Zealand systems and therefore do not enjoy the same levels of independence. They find the use of interpreting services and access to education facilities useful for integration and are still at a stage of having limited exposure to the wider community.

In summarising this section, it appears that:

- 1. Regardless of the background of refugees and the length of resettlement, in order to feel integrated into the community most older refugees require social interactions with family and friends, family responsibilities, access to religious services and ethnic community networks.**
- 2. Over time and with increased familiarity with their new environment, older refugees find activities that expose them to the wider community (e.g. employment, non-ethnic specific clubs and promoting culture) are useful for long-term integration.**
- 3. The ability to access wider community activities independently of others facilitates the integration process.**

4.2.3 Additional integration-related activities and services older refugees wish to access

The most common additional integration-related action sought by Cambodian, Assyrian and Somali refugees is family reunification. As highlighted by Gray and Elliott (2001) family reunification provides a sense of responsibility and purpose, as well as providing a support network for refugees throughout the resettlement process. Many of the older refugees attribute their lack of involvement in the community and inability to concentrate on English lessons to emotional distress from the absence of loved ones. This is particularly the case for some of the Assyrian and Somali refugees who do not even know the whereabouts of certain family members.

This illustrates the importance of family reunification in the integration process of older refugees. It reiterates UNHCR calls for governments to consider the special resettlement needs of vulnerable groups, including elderly.

In seeking durable solutions for elderly refugees, the international community should ensure that the tragedy of their exile is not compounded by an old age marked by neglect. In the context of resettlement, this is particularly relevant with regard to attempts to reunite elderly refugees with their families. UNHCR appeals to states to try to facilitate family reunification involving elderly members of a refugee family. While older refugees should benefit from family care and protection, in turn the presence of elderly members will often assist refugee families in their integration efforts. Barriers to family reunification are often a major constraint to successful integration of refugees in their host community.

(UNHCR 2001)

In terms of other integration-related activities and services sought by each ethnic group, some differences exist. The majority of Assyrian and Somali refugees desire access to additional integration-related activities and services that directly improve their current standard of living (e.g. increased social welfare benefit, employment, home tutoring, vocational training, better access to community information, therapeutic exercise, co-ordinated excursions for grocery shopping, social visits and sight seeing). Cambodian refugees (and one well integrated Somali refugee) seek some of the same personal benefits, but are also interested in participating in actions that will improve the livelihoods of others (e.g. promoting culture, resettling new migrants and intercultural excursions and discussions). It is already established that the latter group experiences a higher level of integration into the wider Wellington community and further suggests well integrated older people are more likely to be givers than receivers of aid.

In assessing the additional activities and services sought by the Assyrian and Somali refugees it appears many feel their current financial situation impairs their level of

integration into the community. These two groups are interested in increased social welfare benefits and employment, as they struggle to meet basic living costs without even contemplating participation in additional integration-related activities. As Bihi (1999:107) and NZIS (2002:64) have already observed, refugees in New Zealand have obligations to send remittances to their homeland and this places strains on their already limited funds. Interestingly, those unable to improve their financial and employment situation due to failing health, having reached retirement or having no transferable employment skills are interested in part-time unwaged employment. This suggests **even with lower levels of integration, the spirit of volunteerism exists in older refugees**. People in the latter category would also benefit from increased social interactions, having responsibility and feeling a sense of purpose.

In summarising the additional integration-related activities sought by older refugees it appears that:

1. **The most common additional action sought by refugees is family reunification highlighting its importance in the long-term integration process.**
2. **The additional actions sought by less integrated older refugees are inwardly focused on improving personal levels of integration into the community.** This is particularly the case for Assyrian and Somali refugees who have a shorter resettlement period compared to Cambodian refugees.
3. **More integrated older refugees such as those from Cambodia have a tendency to seek outward-focused activities and services that help others and promote culture.** While the older refugees receive personal satisfaction from participating in these outward-focused activities and services, their contributions have direct benefits for the wider community.

4.3 BARRIERS TO ACCESSING INTEGRATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Many Cambodian refugees enjoy independence to move about the community and therefore find accessing integration-related activities and services relatively easy. They are advantaged by access to private vehicles, well-established social networks and familiarity with Wellington giving them confidence to be active members of the wider community. For Cambodian refugees seeking outward-oriented integration activities (e.g. promoting multicultural activities and resettling new migrants), the main barriers are not knowing where to find information and not knowing how to get people involved. This highlights **the need for service providers and community organisations to provide adequate information services and supporting structures to assist older refugees with new initiatives.**

The Assyrian and Somali refugees do not share the same level of confidence or independent mobility as Cambodian refugees and therefore encounter more barriers to participating in integration-related actions. Disadvantaged by poor levels of English and failing health, Assyrian and Somali refugees are more reliant on family members and interpreters to go about routine activities such as grocery shopping and accessing health facilities. The Assyrian and Somali refugees also experience budgeting difficulties with current levels of social welfare benefits, while family segregation compounds the emotional stress of resettlement. Lack of employment, the cost of retraining and the practicalities of finding meaningful employment at the end are other barriers for Assyrian and Somali refugees. **This highlights the need for targeted integration services for newer refugee communities than older ones like the Cambodian group.**

With further assessment of the integration barriers experienced by older Somali and Assyrian refugees, it is observed that many consider their lack of understanding of New Zealand systems and the policies behind family reunification as main obstacles. This aligns well with the *realist* theoretical approach applied to this research where policies and practices are viewed as underlying structures that influence the level of integration of older refugees. Refugees who remain segregated from certain family

members prefer the former case-by-case *Humanitarian Category* to the current ballot system of the *Refugee Family Quota in the Family Sponsored Stream*. One of the underlying factors is individual refugees believe they have a higher chance of family reunification under the Humanitarian Category.

The Assyrian and Somali refugees also consider the rates of social welfare benefits insufficient for meeting basic needs. The level of social welfare benefits are comparable to those given to other beneficiaries however in the case of older refugees, their financial situation appears more dire with high medical costs associated with aging and the trauma suffered during their plight as refugees. In addition, older refugees are faced with the unlikely prospect of finding suitable employment given employment discrimination towards their age and unrecognised qualifications. The restricted financial situation of older refugees has a trickle down effect on their participation in integration-related activities. Many cannot afford public transport and entry fees for daily fitness activities they wish to participate in.

Many Assyrian and Somali refugees (and some Cambodian refugees) seek further English lessons, but the cost of tuition, family obligations and lack of confidence to learn deter them. This supports the findings of White *et al.* (2001) and Watts *et al.* (2001) in their assessments of ESOL courses for adult refugees and migrants. Formal English lessons are not a priority for older refugees, however many seek conversational English in the form of home tutoring or social interactions with the wider community. When older people do gain the confidence to attend language classes, many find they are not tailored to their needs. The grouping of older people with different English abilities into one class mean some learners get bored with the lessons while others struggle. This reiterates earlier points and those of Burton and Breen (2002) that integration activities and services for older refugees should not be applied in a blanket fashion.

A question arising from this part of the discussion is how have the Cambodian refugees been able to establish systems that foster independence and overcome barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services? The Assyrian refugees have resided in Wellington for 6-8 years, which is a reasonable time to become familiar with their surroundings and to establish networks for improving

access to integration-related activities and services. One suggestion is a larger community network advantages the Cambodian refugees. Earlier intakes of refugees and family reunification cases concentrated on building up few, but large ethnic communities. These were typically Asian and included Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese communities. In addition to the larger Cambodian intake, many Cambodian refugees arrived in their 30s and have raised children and grandchildren in New Zealand. The presence of second and third generation family members who have even greater confidence to access community services assists the integration of older Cambodian refugees. By contrast, New Zealand refugee immigration in the 1990s is characterised by intakes of numerous smaller-sized ethnic groups, which reflects the rise in conflicts around the world. Consequently, the smaller ethnic communities have less resources to support vulnerable groups such as older refugees (refer to Appendix I for statistics on refugee intakes). For the Somali group, support networks for older refugees are further limited by the segregation (carried over from their homeland) of Somali people into Somaliland and South Somali community groups.

In summarising the barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services, it appears that:

- 1. Main barriers include inadequate access to information, family reunification and social welfare policies, inadequate language provisions and poor employment provisions.**
- 2. All of the barriers raised by older refugees suggest policies, programmes and support networks are not suitably tailored to meet their special needs.**
- 3. While it is acknowledged financial and human resources must be prioritised against the number of people benefiting from such targeted programmes, there is a need for service providers and community organisations to review current systems that directly affect the integration of older refugees.**
- 4. Attention is also drawn to the role of families, ethnic groups, religious bodies and the wider community in assisting with the integration of older refugees.**

4.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO INTEGRATION-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

The suggestions offered by refugees to improve the delivery of current and desired integration-related activities and services are aimed at changes to policies and service providers. These include:

- Greater lobbying by refugee agencies to review family reunification policies;
- A government review of social welfare benefits for older refugees;
- Targeted employment and vocational training for older refugees and migrants;
- Improved job seeking services for older people;
- Transport provisions to improve access to essential services (e.g. medical facilities);
- Subsidised access to sport and recreation facilities;
- Increased provision of translators at government resettlement agencies, medical services and schools;
- Increased Home Tutoring provisions (e.g. 2-5 times per week for 1 hour per session);
- Functional literacy classes for improving access to information, and understanding systems and policies in New Zealand; and
- Increased government funding for ethnic communities to promote cultural diversity.

Many of these suggestions are clearly large in scale with much responsibility placed on government agencies and service providers. While the direct benefits of

implementing such changes would be improved integration of older refugees and the flow on effects from that, many require substantial increases in financial capital and human resources. In the state sector, New Zealand's structural adjustment policies have led to the deregulation of many traditional service provisions as well as reductions in state spending. Under the current political environment raising financial capital and human resources becomes difficult. Non-government resettlement agencies and service providers are also restricted by funds and resources making it questionable whether such suggestions could be implemented. It is also probable that any increased provisions for older refugees will result in the reallocation of resources from other areas. This raises the issue of whether reallocating such resources is of most benefit to the wider refugee community and New Zealanders at large. These issues aside, it does not diminish the need for government, resettlement agencies and community groups to review current integration services for older refugees and to seek solutions that will improve levels of older refugee integration to some degree.

The last point appears critical for the issue surrounding family reunification. Clearly there is discontent with the policy changes for family reunification suggesting a review of the effectiveness of current avenues is required. In anticipating the need for reviews following the implementation of new policies, Immigration Officials have made steps towards this with recommendations for an evaluation into the effectiveness of the Refugee Family Quota policy in early 2004 (Minister of Immigration 2001). In emphasising the importance of family reunification and the need to build the capacity of existing "tiny ethnic minorities" introduced to New Zealand in the 1990s, the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) further recommends the New Zealand Refugee Quota be increased from the current 750 places to 1,000 places. 300 of these places are recommended for family linked reunification (Cotton 2001, 2002).

In addition to addressing national policy issues, attention must be drawn to service providers, community groups and older refugees themselves. If the needs and wants of older refugees cannot be delivered upon then resettlement agencies, service providers and community groups can play an important educating role in ensuring refugee expectations are realistic. Being honest with what services are deliverable from the outset may improve the levels of integration of older refugees. In the case of

family reunification, RMS believes this may allow older refugees to come to terms with family segregation and at an earlier stage move on with integrating into their new community (Cotton 2001).

From another angle, barriers to accessing integration-related activities and services need to be anticipated and removed. With reference to comments made by Altinkaya and Omundsen (1999) it must be recognised New Zealand has a special obligation to provide English language and other information to refugees given they did not come to New Zealand by choice. Barriers to participation (e.g. transport and child care for English lessons) need to be eliminated and services must focus on the expressed needs of older refugees. This requires consultation and active involvement of older refugees right from the start, and aligns with the alternative development approaches emerging in refugee and development studies. In light of this, the avenues through which refugees can voice their opinions should be reviewed at local, regional and national levels. Are the needs, wants and priorities of older refugees adequately voiced through social workers, regional resettlement advisors and at the national Tripartite meetings?³ Furthermore, resettlement agencies and community groups have important education and advocacy roles. The older refugees in this research indicate they lack access to essential services and educating them on their rights (e.g. the right to a translator on doctors visits) is a step towards empowering older refugees to demand their rights and receive better services.

In summarising this part of the discussion:

- 1. Older refugees participating in this research call for a review of government policies relating to family reunification and social welfare benefits. They also seek improved service delivery with regards to education, vocational training, employment and health.**

³ The National Tripartite Consultation on Refugee Resettlement is a biannual meeting attended by relevant government officials, non-government resettlement agencies (including refugee representatives) and UNHCR. The meetings provide an avenue for knowledge sharing between parties and discussing refugee resettlement issues.

- 2. In addressing the above point, service providers have a responsibility to review their programmes and policies in order to assess their effectiveness and to identify areas of enhancing service delivery. Being inclusive of older refugees in the design, decision making and implementation of service provisions is also encouraged.**

- 3. It is recognised the needs of older refugees are not always deliverable and resettlement agencies, government and community organisations have an obligation to educate refugees on what is realistic. Educating refugees about their rights and empowering them to demand their rights are also recommended.**

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was:

To identify services and activities that older refugees consider helpful for integrating into Wellington.

The specific objectives were:

1. To identify activities and services older refugees currently participate in, or want to participate in, to assist their integration into Wellington.
2. To identify any barriers preventing older refugees from accessing these integration-related activities and services.
3. To explore possible means of improving or delivering integration-related activities and services to older refugees.

The experiences of the 19 Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees from Wellington provide a clear picture of the special integration needs of older refugees. Their responses provide concrete results for each of the objectives and these are summarised in the following section. Recommendations for integration-related provisions for older refugees are also provided along with the identification of areas for further research.

The main activities and services older refugees consider helpful for integrating into the community are:

- Family reunification;
- Social interactions with family & friends (of the same ethnicity);
- Religious activities (e.g. Church, Mosque or Temple services, religious festivals);
- Ethnic community meetings (to discuss current events and community issues);
- Caring for children and grandchildren, and being involved in their schooling;
- Household chores (e.g. grocery shopping);
- Social welfare benefits;
- Access to health services (including the use of translators);
- English learning (e.g. social and conversational English lessons, home tutoring 2-5 times per week);
- Other education courses & vocational training;
- Exercise (e.g. walking, swimming, gym sessions);
- Interactions with the wider community (e.g. neighbours, service providers);
- Interpreting services;
- Driving independent of others;
- High skilled employment;
- Non-waged employment (where formal employment is not a viable option);
- Membership in sports clubs or cultural societies;
- Promoting culture & religion to others (e.g. youth);
- Access to library and community information services;
- Group shopping excursions (e.g. for grocery shopping);
- Intercultural excursions and discussion groups;
- Resettling new migrants;
- TV and radio (to keep up with current events);
- Use of public transport;
- Travelling around NZ and sightseeing (to see new places and visit friends); and
- Hobbies (e.g. playing musical instruments).

The main barriers to accessing integration related activities and services are:

- Segregated family members and family reunification policies;
- Lack of independent transportation (e.g. unable to drive, no vehicle and unfamiliar with public transport);
- Lack of independence and reliance on family members;
- Unable to speak English and communicate with others;
- Inability to learn English due to aging, lack of confidence, impractical course content, cost, family obligations and transport barriers;
- Unemployment due to inadequate skills, unrecognised qualifications, poor health, cost of retraining, inadequate training provisions and no financial incentives;
- Poor physical health, and unable to afford health and fitness facilities;
- Poor access to interpreters;
- Not enough money to pay for services (i.e. social welfare benefit is insufficient) and integration-related activities (e.g. recreational activities) are unaffordable;
- Unfamiliar with NZ systems;
- Limited support networks and poor access to information and services; and
- Lack of support for older people from the community.

Suggestions for improving the level of integration of older refugees are:

- A government review in consultation with key stakeholders of family reunification policies;
- A government review in consultation with key stakeholders of social welfare benefits for older refugees;
- An evaluation of policies and programmes of resettlement agencies and service providers (e.g. health centres, recreational bodies, budgeting advisors, trauma counsellors) for their effectiveness in delivering essential services to older refugees;

- The enhancement and tailoring of integration-related activities and services (e.g. language courses, information services and vocational training provisions) for older refugees and migrants;
- Educating older refugees on their rights to essential services and setting realistic expectations on the delivery and provision of such services;
- A review of the avenues where older refugee voices can be heard and active involvement of older refugees in the planning, decision making and implementing stages of integration-related activities and services for older people; and
- Active involvement of ethnic communities, religious groups and families in the development of integration-related activities and services for older people.

Key points to note regarding the integration of older refugees into the community are:

- Refugee backgrounds, the ability of host communities to support the resettlement process and the length of time spent in a country of resettlement influences the level of integration felt by a refugee. The longer refugees spend in the new country, the more time they have to acquire language skills, establish families and become familiar with their new environment.
- Levels of integration differ between refugees who arrive as elderly and those who arrive young, re-establish themselves and become elderly. The prospects of a long-term future in a host country give younger refugees more incentive to retrain, find employment and establish families. This equips them with integration support in later years.
- Regardless of the background of refugees and the length of resettlement, in order to feel integrated into the community most older refugees require social interactions with family and friends, family responsibilities, access to religious services and ethnic community networks.

- Over time and with increased familiarity with their new environment, older refugees find activities that expose them to the wider community (e.g. employment, non-ethnic specific clubs and promoting culture) are useful for long-term integration.
- The ability to access wider community activities independently of others facilitates the integration process.
- The most common additional action sought by refugees is family reunification highlighting its importance in the long-term integration process.
- The additional actions sought by less integrated older refugees are inwardly focused on improving personal levels of integration into the community. This is particularly the case for Assyrian and Somali refugees who have a shorter resettlement period compared to Cambodian refugees.
- More integrated older refugees such as those from Cambodia have a tendency to seek outward-focused activities and services that help others and promote culture. While the older refugees receive personal satisfaction from participating in these outward-focused activities and services, their contributions have direct benefits for the wider community.
- Main barriers to the integration of older refugees include inadequate access to information, family reunification and social welfare policies, inadequate language provisions and poor employment provisions.
- All of the barriers raised by older refugees suggest policies, programmes and support networks are not suitably tailored to meet their special needs.
- It is acknowledged financial and human resources must be prioritised against the number of people benefiting from such targeted programmes, however there is a

need for service providers and community organisations to review current systems that directly affect the integration of older refugees.

- Attention is also drawn to the role of families, ethnic groups, religious bodies and the wider community in assisting with the integration of older refugees.

Conclusion

This research presents a snapshot of the integration experiences by older Assyrian, Cambodian and Somali refugees in Wellington. It identifies a quantitative list of activities and services these older refugees consider helpful for integrating into their community. It also highlights a number of barriers to successful integration and provides suggestions for improving integration services at both local and national levels. A number of key points are also noted paving the way for further research into the resettlement and integration of older refugees. An obvious area is assessing the integration of older refugees from other ethnic communities. Do other ethnic communities share the same levels of successful integration as the Cambodian group? How have they achieved this? In addition, is the capacity of “tiny ethnic minorities” resettled during the 1990s sufficient for assisting the integration of older members?

All refugees undergo traumatic experiences during their plight as displaced people and this dramatically affects their ability to resettle in New Zealand. However, the failure of communities, resettlement organisations and government agencies to deliver co-ordinated support to vulnerable groups such as older refugees may mean their trauma never subsides. New Zealand has an obligation to provide adequate services to older refugees and these services must go beyond the initial resettlement stage. This research has shown well-integrated refugees have the potential to provide many benefits to their families and the community and therefore it is important for older refugees to be given the integration support they need. Only when older refugees regain a sense of well being and purpose in their lives are they able to help others.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Quota Refugees granted residence in New Zealand (1979/80 – 1989/90)

Nationality	1979/80	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	Country Total
Afghanistani	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Cambodian	280	379	375	525	428	500	413	192	333	644	177	4246
Czechoslovakian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	16	19
Hungarian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Iranian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	100	101
Iraqi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48	104	152
Laotian	6	152	67	20	63	79	139	174	155	118	105	1078
Polish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45	59	104
Romanian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Vietnamese	622	852	256	131	68	141	124	164	157	200	247	2962
Year Total	908	1383	698	676	559	720	676	530	645	1061	810	8666

Source: New Zealand Refugee Law, RefNZ Statistics (2003)

Quota Refugees granted residence in New Zealand (1979/80 – 2001/02)

Nationality	1979/80 1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	Country Total
Afghanistani	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	41	26	46	258	373
Bosnian	-	-	-	31	83	21	4	4	3	-	-	-	-	146
Burmese	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	310	30	344
Burundian	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	-	17	-	20	1	2	53
Cambodian	4,246	70	295	50	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	4,666
Chinese	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	5
Congolese	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	26	2	1	33
Czech.	19	28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Djiboutian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	9	8	22
El Salvadorian	-	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
Eritrean	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	1	10	47	26	15	-	120
Ethiopian	-	-	--	-	45	50	130	72	151	199	131	54	134	966
Guatemalan	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Hungarian	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Indonesian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	3
Iranian	101	40	20	2	13	6	-	24	70	39	2	87	42	446
Iraqi	152	203	97	7	215	318	136	266	241	130	52	82	116	2,015
Kuwaiti	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Laotian	1,078	20	59	-	3	-	5	62	-	-	36	5	-	1,268
Liberian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
Libyan	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	7
Nigerian	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Pakistani	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Palestinian	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Polish	104	50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	154
Romanian	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rwandan	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	6	14	2	1	-	37
Saudi Arabian	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	9
Somali	-	-	-	94	309	39	299	21	137	212	207	119	159	1,596
Sri Lankan	-	-	1	8	13	21	25	12	3	-	7	2	-	92
Sudanese	-	-	-	-	-	8	1	14	10	33	70	4	-	140
Syrian	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	13	4	-	17	-	-	41
Tanzanian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Tunisian	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	9
Turkish	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	7	1	12
Ugandan	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Vietnamese	2,962	245	146	219	42	341	116	23	8	-	60	-	-	4,162
Yemeni	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
Yugoslav	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	27	-	-	31
Year Total	-	682	619	412	737	822	780	527	677	726	715	746	750	16,860

Source: New Zealand Refugee Law, RefNZ Statistics (2003)

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR OLDER REFUGEES

Identifying questions:

1. What country are you from? What is your ethnic group?
2. How long have you lived in New Zealand?
3. How long have you lived in Wellington?
4. Describe your resettlement process from [country of origin] to New Zealand.
Probes: How long did it take?
Where were you taken first?
What resettlement agencies were involved?
What services were made available to you?
Were any other family members involved?
5. Describe a typical day in your household.
Probes: Do you live with immediate family? If not, where are they?
Does anyone go to school or work? Who?
6. Describe your employment situation and aspirations?
Probes: Are you currently employed? If so, what is your occupation?
What skills and qualifications do you have?
What was your previous employment?
Where would you like to work?
7. What languages do you speak?

Objectives 1-3:

8. Do you want Wellington to be your home? Why or why not?
9. Does Wellington feel like home yet? Why or why not?
Probes: How settled do you feel in Wellington? Why?
Are you happy living in Wellington? Why or why not?

10. What services do you use or activities do you participate in that make Wellington feel like home (or not feel like home)? Describe what happens.
Probes: Do you work? What do you do?
Do you do things with neighbours? What?
Do you attend social functions? Describe them. Who is involved?
11. How often are you involved with these services/activities?
12. How easy or difficult is it to access these services/activities? What makes it easy/difficult?
Probes: How do you get to these services/activities? Do you require transport?
Do you need to rely on other people to access these services/activities?
What equipment or other things are required to access these services/activities?
13. Are there any things that would make it easier to access these services/activities?
If so, what?
14. Are there any (other) services or activities that you would like to be involved with to make Wellington feel more like home? If so, what?
15. Why do you want to do them?
16. What prevents you from being involved with these services/activities?
17. How could these services/activities be delivered?

Identifying question:

18. What is your age?

General:

19. Are there any other comments you would like to add about your experience settling in Wellington?

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