

MEDIA RELEASE



Refugee communities launch Standards for Engagement

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Refugee communities want to be active participants in policy development and service delivery. That's the key message in a new publication to be launched by ChangeMakers Refugee Forum on Monday, 31 March.

The *Standards for Engagement: Guidelines for Central and Local Government, and NGOs Working with Refugee Background Communities* is based on nine standards developed by ChangeMakers in conjunction with government and non-government agencies. ChangeMakers works in the Wellington region.

ChangeMakers' Executive Chair Adam Awad says the *Standards for Engagement* reflect a change in the way refugee background communities wish to work with government and other organisations.

"Communities don't want to be treated as the passive subjects and receivers of policies and services. We want to be actively and meaningfully involved in new initiatives that affect us.

"More often than not, a number of barriers get in the way of real participation by refugee background communities. It can be language, the timing of meetings, who is included or excluded, or the attitude and approach of those wanting to engage with us.

"We decided to put our experiences to good use by writing the *Standards for Engagement*. We are the users of the services and we are the people who the policies impact on most. When we are included in a real and meaningful way from the beginning, the best outcomes are achieved for everyone."

Adam says the guidelines provide the ingredients for successful engagement with communities and evolved out of many months of consultation with communities, government agencies and NGOs.

"They are a very practical solution to a longstanding problem. They include phrases such as meaningful participation, partnerships, planning together, information sharing, feedback, and monitoring and evaluating the 'engagement' throughout the process.

"We think the *Standards for Engagement* are commonsense and we look forward to their wide implementation throughout central and local government, and by non-government organisations."

Thanks to the generosity of Moxie Design and Securacopy, copies of the *Standards for Engagement* are available at no charge. Please contact ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, phone 801-5812 or email changemakers@crf.org.nz to request a copy.

For further information phone Adam Awad on 0274125758 or Sue Driver 0274472001.