
RMS News

Issue #27 -- September 2006

Akam Bul ta, Bite-Kinyarwanda, Gaw Ler a Gay, Hello, Kia ora, Nabad, Nihau, Mhoroi, Min ga la ba, Salaam, Salibonani, Shalom, Talofa lava, Vanakkam, Zdravo!

RMS News is a monthly electronic newsletter updating you about RMS Refugee Resettlement activities and refugee issues in NZ. If you've any comments about this newsletter, suggestions about what you'd like to see included, or have some refugee related issues you would like included from your community, please email us. Feel free to forward this email to anyone else who might be interested in the contents.

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In this issue:

1. Mangere update
2. RMS staffing changes
3. RMS New Appointments
4. ChangeMakers Refugee Forum (Inc)
5. The Ethnic Youth Homework Club
6. State Services Commission Research Project
7. Cultural Portal
8. Research Project

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1. Mangere update

Our September intake arrived enmass on 31 August. Nearly everyone arrived except two Chinese cases (late additions), two Congolese emergency cases still waiting for exit permits and available travel from their country of refuge and some last minute non-arrivals who may yet arrive in time to be part of the intake. To date we have a total of 114 refugees here from the 132 on our current list which is somewhat reduced from the 150 we were originally expecting.

The majority of the intake (99 people) have travelled from Thailand or Malaysia and are originally from Myanmar. This includes a number of Karen, Karen/Muslim and Chin plus a small number of Burman and Rakhine. The remaining three cases are Family Reunion cases (Afghan, Iraqi and Iranian-Kurdish). The Afghan and Iranian Kurdish families will join family members already resettled in Christchurch. The Iraqi Mother and son are reuniting with one of the Iraqi men settled in Wellington from the May 2002 intake, a long wait for both sides of the family.

There is a small number from the Myanmar group (spouse/dependent children) who are reuniting with family who have settled in Nelson from the March intake. Again we will be resettling cases from the Myanmar group in Nelson, Wellington Central, Hutt Valley, Porirua and Auckland and are hoping to have a small group of families resettling in Palmerston North.

The Myanmar group includes a number of Chin who speak only Chin dialects plus Karen who speak only Karen with limited or no Burmese. Our very valuable Cross Cultural workers of both those ethnicities will be faced with some challenges in their role, working across agencies on site as well as being available to work in the community with the recently resettled intakes.

2. RMS staffing changes

This has been a year of some significant retirements for RMS, having bid farewell to Pete Pritchard (Accountant, National Office) and Penny Fisher (Lower Hutt Coordinator), Barbara Redfern (Hamilton Coordinator) after very careful consideration, has decided that it is the right time to retire. Barbara has had a very long and committed relationship to the refugee sector, her service is now measured in decades! She has worked tirelessly in assisting refugees restart their lives in the Hamilton area and am sure will continue in some capacity. A farewell will be held in Hamilton on Friday September 29 and we look forward to her attending the Staff Conference in November, her last official work engagement, which will provide an opportunity to say thank you from all of us.

We've also farwelled Barnabas Medra who has made a great contribution to RMS in the Wellington office as their Administrator. He has been working on a temporary part-time basis for the past year.

3. RMS New Appointments

Hassan Adam - begins his new role as the Lower Hutt Coordinator this week. Hassan is an experienced teacher and coordinator of education programmes, has networked far and wide with people of many cultures and backgrounds. He has a Bachelor Degree in Islamic Law and a Masters of Teaching Arabic as a Second Language. He has been very active in the community as an ESOL teacher and bilingual assistant, working closely with schools and communities. He has also been the Chairperson of the Hutt Valley Somali Community Association and a Member of the Wellington Refugee as Survivors Board of Trustees.

Annika Lindorsson, starts this week as the full time Wellington Administrator for the Central Region. Annika has worked extensively for NGO and not-for-profit organisations here and overseas. Annika has a Bachelor of Environmental Studies combined with Political Science and a Master's of Developmental Studies.

Doris Niyonsaba - is our new Accountant based at the National Office in Wellington. Doris is a graduate of the Bachelor of Business Studies at Massey, currently completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Professional Accounting. Doris has participated in Cultural Festivals and World Refugee Day as a representative of refugee communities, presenting a brief paper acknowledging the socio-economic contributions made by immigrants in New Zealand. Doris has been the Treasurer for the Burundian Community and was responsible for youth activities.

Zerai Mewos - is our newly appointed Senior Cross Cultural for the Central Region based in our Wellington office. Prior to arriving from Sudan in 2000, Zerai spent 16 years working for the Red Cross as Logistics Officer, Administrator and then supervisor of the Accounting Department. He has worked previously with RMS as a Part Time Cross Cultural Worker and also with Refugees as Survivors as a Community Development Coordinator. Zerai recently graduated from Victoria University with a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration degree. Zerai is a member of the Eritrean Community.

Julie Clifton is our new Wellington Coordinator, starting her new role on Oct 9. Julie comes with a wealth of experience in the community as a coordinator, trainer and volunteer working with people from a broad social and ethnic mix. Julie has worked as the Office and Volunteer Manager with Wellington Prisoners Aid and Rehabilitation Service, has worked as the coordinator of the Aro Valley Community Centre, acting manager of YWCA, coordinator of the Wellington Women's Refuge Annual Appeal and managed a team of volunteers who organised the Wellington Human Rights Film Festival. Julie has a Diploma in Primary Teaching, Certificate in Journalism and a Bachelor of Agricultural Science.

These new roles and appointments are very significant to the development of RMS Refugee Resettlement in the Central Region. We are very fortunate to have been able to recruit five people of such high quality, each bringing unique skills and experience to their respective roles. It is also very significant that three of these new staff members come from a refugee background, as one of the strategic goals of the agency is to recruit former refugees into senior staff positions at RMS.

4. ChangeMakers Refugee Forum (Inc) - Wellington - Empowering new New Zealanders -

Changemakers was established to promote a city in which New Zealanders from refugee backgrounds are able to live their lives like every other New Zealand citizen; able to enjoy the same rights, perform the same duties, access the same services and make the most of the opportunities and challenges they encounter, in order to live happy, independent lives. The membership is determined not by ethnicity, but by a shared desire for a better quality of life for all new settlers from refugee backgrounds. Anyone is welcome who shares Changemakers action-focused approach to fulfilling their vision. The first executive Committee Meeting was held on Monday 11 September which co-incided with the Ethiopian New Year.

A new office for Changemakers will be opening soon in the Multicultural Services Centre. To find out more about Changemakers contact: changemakersforum@gmail.com or phone (04) 801 5812

5. The Ethnic Youth Homework Club - Wellington

The Club was set up by the Wellington Somali Council with the help of Wellington High School, to provide free one-on-one homework help and support for young people from all different refugee backgrounds. Refugee Students may face many challenges in reaching their potential in New Zealand. They have to learn a new language, figure out a whole new system of schooling and catch up on years of cultural and general knowledge that their peers have been absorbing all their lives. All this as well as keeping in touch with their own roots and cultural background. If you would like to volunteer as a tutor or find out more about the club and its activities, please contact Penny Bond, pennybond@extra.co.nz or phone (04) 380 1212.

Also, another opportunity developed by the Wellington Somali Council and skylight is "Travellers", a new group based programme to help young people between the ages of 12-14 years, who come from refugee like backgrounds, learn to cope with the changes and challenges in their lives. Right now they're looking for youth leaders to become trained facilitators in the Travellers programme. Training will be run on Monday 16 October and Tuesday 17 October. Please contact Rachel Ward for more information. Phone: (04) 383 9809, 0274 276 935 or wellingtonsomali@extra.co.nz

6. State Services Commission Research Project

David Hume, a consulting researcher for the State Services Commission, is seeking volunteers from the Wellington region to be part of a research project looking at how government agencies might more effectively seek your ideas to improve what they do. Some of the questions under investigation are:

- * In what ways do New Zealanders participate in improving the world around them?
- * Can we get better public services by tapping the 'wisdom of the crowd'?
- * Is the internet sparking a new age of democratic participation?

The project is designed to be interesting and fun, though it will need some of your time to make it a success. David would like to do a one-on-one interview, ask you to complete some short 'homework' assignments designed to get ideas and discussion flowing, have you attend a half-day group meeting, and complete an evaluation survey once all is said and done. If you are interested, please contact him as soon as possible.

Phone (04) 495 6727 or David.Hume@ssc.govt.nz and he will forward some materials and explain the details of the project. Please forward to anyone you think might be interested.

7. Cultural Portal - nzlive.com

NZlive.com is an online cultural portal being developed by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. A website that will provide coordinated access to New Zealand cultural content that is online now and in the future. It will provide an up-to-date guide to cultural activities and links to cultural websites of New Zealand. The definition of culture is deliberately broad and the guide will include a wide range of activities and events, such as museum and gallery exhibitions, performances of theatre, ballet, musicals and kapa haka, varying kinds of festivals, sporting events and events of regional and national significance. www.nzlive.com

8. World Journalists meet to discuss consequences of Danish cartoons

"The role of media in the cartoon dispute has placed a responsibility on journalists to improve levels of awareness within the profession on the background, traditions, views and values of different groups in society."

Jim Tucker, Executive Director of the NZ Journalists Training Organisation (JTO), travelled to Bali recently along with 80 journalists from 42 other countries to attend a forum organised in the aftermath of the Danish cartoon controversy.

The forum, entitled Freedom of Expression and Diversity: the media in a multicultural world, was an initiative of the governments of Indonesia and Norway. Outcomes of the forum may not have been what organisers expected - a global code of conduct was rejected - but in his report on the forum Jim Tucker describes it as 'an important first step in encouraging dialogue.'

Jim Tucker's full report on the Bali forum can be viewed on the JTO website:

www.journalismtraining.co.nz You can also find an article by Sir Paul Reeves "My take on media ethics and Maori."

9. Research Project - University of Waikato

A new research project needs skilled migrants/new settlers to take part in online discussions on how they use personal and virtual networks to help them find jobs and to establish business and social contacts.

The project is being led by researchers from the University of Waikato and supported by the Asia New Zealand Foundation. Participants are being invited to contribute to online discussions on the Innovators Online Network (ION) community forum which can be found at www.ion.net.nz

The research is intended to pilot and track a three way 'virtual engagement' between potential migrants, new settlers and New Zealand business. Project results will inform policy makers and future programmes designed to help migrants settle.

He aha te mea nui? He aha te mea nui o te ao?
Maku e ki atu. He tangata he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing? What is the most important thing in the world?
I will say to you. It is people, it is people, it is people.

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