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RMS Refugee Resettlement News

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Issue #28-- November 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, or suggestions about what you'd like to see included, please email us. Feel free to forward this email to anyone else who might be interested in the contents.

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1. Mangere update

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The September intake departed early October and we had our first arrival for the October/November intake on October 24 with another 60+ people arriving on the 25th (mainly travelling from Thailand). A group of 24 from Malaysia and one single Afghan man from Indonesia arrived on the 26th October. Our whole intake is little more than half of the 152 that we started with on our planned intake list for November.

A number of cases were deferred on medical grounds, some did not arrive because of difficulties with exit permits and some more are still being 'processed'. We are possibly expecting another 20-30 to arrive over the next couple of weeks if the exit permit issues can be overcome and/or treatment can be completed to have people safe to travel in time to join the intake. We have been asked by NZIS about the possibility of those arriving in week three (16/17 November) to have an extra week at Mangere (and very close to Christmas when they leave).

This intake has been predominantly made up of another very gentle and non-demanding group of Burmese. The group includes a number of Chin (speaking only Chin dialects) and Karen (who only speak the Karen language) with limited or no Burmese. We have been fortunate to be able to employ another part-time Cross Cultural Worker from each of these ethnicities. This will free up the established Cross Cultural Workers to work more with the Social Workers in the community to support the previously resettled intakes.

2. Staff appointments

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Krishna Subramaniam has begun his new role in our Auckland office as a Social Worker. He has had extensive experience in cross cultural social work both in Fiji (for 17 years) and with the Child, Youth and Family service in New Zealand for the last twelve years. Krishna has a Bachelor of Science,

Diploma in Social Services, Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Work and Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work.

In his role as a Social Worker and Probation Officer, Krishna's work included care and protection of children and young persons, adoptions - local and overseas, and arranging housing. Krishna has also worked in the youth justice area and as a Community Liaison social worker. He is fluent in five languages and as part of his post graduate diploma, he researched immigrant families from Fiji settling in New Zealand.

Gail Grogan has also recently started with the Auckland office as a Social Worker. She has a Bachelor of Social Work and an Associate Diploma in Community Welfare from James Cook University in Queensland, Australia. Gail has worked at the Migrant Resource Centre in Darwin and Alice Springs, Australia. The role included counselling, community work, education and information giving as well as working on clients' behalf as an advocate with a number of different agencies including housing, interpreting services, Social Security and the legal system. She also organised a number of projects including a Multicultural Arts program. Gail has also worked with young people with special needs, the elderly, and conducted a cross-cultural seminar at the Aids Council in Darwin.

Amanda Aye is now the RMS Refugee Resettlement's Mangere Coordinator. She has a Masters of Public Health (Honours) from University of Auckland; her Masters Dissertation was on the "Identification of Mental Health Needs and Service Gaps for Small Refugee Groups in Auckland". Amanda also has a Bachelor of Science, a Certificate of Training in Social Impact Assessment and Certificate in Public Participation by The International Association for Public Participation. Amanda has previously worked for the Auckland City Council as a Community Advisor and some of her roles have included identifying, evaluating and responding appropriately to the needs of refugee and migrant communities in Auckland as well as building sustainable relationships locally, nationally and internationally. Amanda has also worked as a Public Health Project Coordinator for The Asian Network Inc, a Bilingual Support Worker at a local school and a Community Facilitator for the Burmese Refugee Community, Community Empowerment Programme for the Auckland Refugees as Survivors Centre.

Stefanie Doebel is working at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre as a Social Worker. She has a Diploma in Social Work from Germany (which is equivalent to our Bachelor), specialising in asylum and migration social work as well as practical training with teenage refugees from Kosovo-Albania, amongst others. Stefanie is also a qualified Nursery School Teacher and is currently studying for a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences. She has worked in a refugee centre in Munich, a crisis facility which offers protection for girls and young women who have suffered physical, mental and sexual abuse. Stefanie has also worked as a Social Worker for "azuro", a specialist advice centre for young people in Munich who are in their first vocational training position. She has also worked as a Social Worker for the "Kisko" project of the Archbishop's office for young people in Germany. The project was a scheme to help support young people to solve real conflicts in their classrooms.

Helen Widdowfield has recently been employed as our Hamilton Coordinator and Social Worker. Helen arrived in New Zealand from working for the UNHCR in Uganda as the Community Services/Protection Officer. In this role Helen coordinated multi sectoral programs and staff at both branch office and field level. This included liaison and coordination with concerned local authorities, UN agencies and INGO's to ensure UNHCR was fully informed of the humanitarian inputs to address the critical health situation within the

camps. Helen has also worked for IOM Cambodia as the Psychosocial Project coordinator, UNHCR Afghanistan as the Community Services Officer, Save the Children (Burundi) as the Technical Advisor as well as working on other projects in various countries around the world. Helen has a BA (Hons) European Social Work, Diploma Social Work and in Higher Education and has also been a youth leader and diving and swimming coach.

Yuzana Than is the new Burmese Cross Cultural Worker for our Palmerston North office. Yuzana has a background in medicine and care giving. Trained at the Institute of Medicine Yangon, Myanmar, Yuzana has extensive experience as a Resident House Surgeon and Physician for the Department of Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and gynaecology and Child Health. Yuzana has also worked as a Field Medical Office in the Yangon Medical Research Department and Paragu Medical Clinic. After shifting to New Zealand and settling in Palmerston North, Yuzana has spent some time in work experience as an assistant for a class of students with intellectual disabilities at UCOL (Universal College of Learning). She has also been a personal caregiver and personal assistant for people with disabilities in Melbourne and Palmerston North.

3. RMS Refugee Resettlement Vacancies  
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RMS Refugee Resettlement Auckland is looking for a Social Worker, (full time, parental leave) and a Senior Cross Cultural Worker (Part-time, 20 hours a week) If you would like further information about these two roles, please either call 09-629 6421 or email [marguerite.ntawe@rms.org.nz](mailto:marguerite.ntawe@rms.org.nz) for position description or visit our website [www.rms.org.nz](http://www.rms.org.nz)  
Applications close November 17.

4. Burmese team at Cultural Kicks event in Wellington  
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Some young and fit Burmese teenagers and some slightly older and maybe just as fit adults, were keen to enter the 6-a-side football festival at Labour Weekend organized by the Wellington City Council. Ever hopeful that the weather would play its part, it wasn't to be. On a particularly wet and cold spring day "Burma United", with two players short, went on to win two out of the five games. Warm spirits and good humour helped all teams I'm sure. Ka & Lo, two local Burmese said they were very happy to get the chance to play soccer and to be with many other nationalities. They said there wasn't a lot of time to train but will be back next year with a bigger team and will definitely practice more beforehand.

5. "Dear New Zealand"  
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Is a great project aimed at people aged 15 to 30 to Get Thinking, Get Writing and Get Heard. The team behind "Dear New Zealand" want you to write letters addressed to whoever you want, or whatever you want. To friends, parents, authorities, or to subjects such as Social Justice, International Relations, the future, music or Cultural Identity and Cultural Understanding. For further information check out [www.dearnewzealand.org](http://www.dearnewzealand.org) You must submit your letter by November 30, selected letters will be published in a book, entitled "Dear New Zealand", to be launched next year. A project about empowerment, challenging the reader's thinking and celebrating New Zealand's society and cultural diversity.

6. Evolve - Wellington Youth Service  
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Evolve is a dynamic Wellington Youth Service (5 Eva Street, off Dixon St) which provides free and confidential health care and social services to young people aged 10-25. The service includes a hangout space with free pool

table, internet and tea and coffee facilities. A range of recreational activities are offered which currently include a Maori cultural group, African Youth nights, hip hop introductions, kick boxing and a drama project.

Evolve is a youth-owned and youth-led service with a strong focus on youth participation. They currently have a vacancy for a part-time Youth Support Worker. email [evolveoneva@extra.co.nz](mailto:evolveoneva@extra.co.nz) for more information. Applications close November 14.

And another youth project in Wellington - the Wellington Ethnic Youth Workshop, Saturday 11 November, 10.30am - 2.30pm, Wellington Community Arts Centre, for more information please email [Bessie.fepuleai@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:Bessie.fepuleai@wcc.govt.nz)  
Or phone (04) 801 3178

7. "Walk With Me: the Refugee Experience in New Zealand"

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The above exhibition opened in June at the Petone Settlers Museum and has presented many visitors and school groups the opportunity to learn about local refugees' stories of survival, from the beginning of the journey from their home countries, to their resettlement in New Zealand. High numbers of primary and secondary school classes have further explored the refugee experience through museum programmes Here's how one year 9 student reflected on his exhibition experience: "Being a refugee would be extremely challenging emotionally, physically and mentally. Because you could be separated from your family as well as your culture. You wouldn't know where you belonged and you might have to learn a new language. It would be frightening!"

Other events have also been held including a cultural dance and music festival, a national writing competition encouraging students to tell the story of a refugee or their own experiences as refugees, special visits for groups of former refugee adults and students and a refugee awareness forum for secondary school leaders. The museum feels the exhibition has been successful in raising awareness and understanding of the experiences and issues that refugees face, as well as encouraging visitors to play their part in welcoming former refugees into their community. The exhibition closes in Petone on November 19th and will next be exhibited at Te Manawa Museum, Palmerston North, May 5 to August 12, 2007.

8. Proposed Changes to Tax Rebate Regime for Charities

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Inland Revenue Minister Peter Dunne says the proposed changes to the tax rebate regime for charities are aimed at encouraging philanthropic giving and Tangata Whenua and community and voluntary organisations are urging New Zealanders to participate in the debate. A discussion document called "Tax Incentives for giving to charities and other non-profit organisations" has been released by the Inland Revenue Department with submissions being sought on the proposed changes by 28 November 2006 (COMVOICES). Information about taxation issues for charities is available via following links:

[www.nzfvwo.org.nz/comvoices](http://www.nzfvwo.org.nz/comvoices)

[www.philanthropy.org.nz](http://www.philanthropy.org.nz)

[www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz](http://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz)

9. Recommended Reading

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"From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey" by Pascal Khoo Thew.

ISBN: 00071116829 Published by Harper Collins

Recommended by our National Training Coordinator, Fiona McKinney:

"I couldn't put it down, a very easy read which gives an amazing insight into the culture and history of an isolated hill tribe in Burma (Myanmar) and the refugee journey of the author. Recommend to anyone with an interest in Burma or working with the newly arrived refugees from Burma.

We welcome your recommended reading, or perhaps a recommended documentary or movie around the refugee experience or related issues.

"Live and Become" an amazing movie that begins in Sudan in 1984 when Israel airlifts the Ethiopian Jews "home". A desperate Christian mother passes off her son as a Jew to escape, to 'go, see and become'. Recommend to 'go and see' if this movie is still on in your area.

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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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Jude Walcott  
Communications Coordinator  
RMS Refugee Resettlement  
National Office  
PO Box 11-236, Manners Street  
Level 3, 4 Bond Street  
WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND  
Tel: 04 471 1932 Fax: 04 471 1938  
E-mail: [Jude.Walcott@rms.org.nz](mailto:Jude.Walcott@rms.org.nz)  
Internet: [www.rms.org.nz](http://www.rms.org.nz)  
Donation Line: 0900 444 22

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