
RMS Refugee Resettlement News

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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!

This monthly electronic newsletter is to update you about RMS Refugee Resettlement activities and refugee issues in NZ and overseas. 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. Visit from the Commissioner General of UNWRA

On Tuesday October 9th, RMS Refugee Resettlement was honoured by an official visit from Karen Koning AbuZayd. Karen is the Commissioner General of UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) which currently works with more than 4.4 million Palestinian refugees. UNWRA provides a wide range of health, education, relief, employment and development services for Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With its staff of some 28,000 employees (mainly locally recruited teachers and health workers), UNWRA has the largest staff of any UN agency. UNWRA has an annual budget of US \$506 million.

After being introduced to the National Office Team, the Commissioner General spent an hour with several members of the team. She listened with interest as the work of the agency was described and answered questions about the sometimes intersecting roles of UNWRA and UNHCR. Karen provided a very helpful overview of the challenges and political realities faced by the various parties in UNWRA's regions of operation. A former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, Karen also worked in senior positions within UNHCR for 19 years. Her postings included Sudan, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Sarajevo and Geneva.

2. Myanmar/Burma

Recent attention on the protests and demonstrations in Burma/Myanmar has ignited much activity around the world both at government and community level. Over the past few weeks we have seen marches take place in Auckland, Nelson, Palmerston North, Wellington and a peaceful demonstration on the grounds of Parliament which brought together

Burmese communities from Nelson, Wellington region, Palmerston North and Auckland.

Not only have the Burmese refugees suffered from the consequences of living under a brutal military dictatorship in their homeland, they now watch from afar as their fellow countrymen, families and friends continue to face violence and hardship.

This, of course, is the case for all refugees who are forced to flee their homeland due to the tyranny of others, and it's timely to raise awareness of the ongoing and unacceptable situations in many countries ruled by war and violence. Through working with refugee communities we can make a world of difference.

For more information about the Burmese situation

<http://newsfeedresearcher.com/related>

or <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=asia&c=burma>

If you or your friends or colleagues would like to know more about becoming a Volunteer Support Worker, please visit www.rms.org.nz and contact your nearest office.

3. Excerpts from the magazine "Refugees" from the UNHCR

In the current edition of the "Refugees" magazine, the focus is on the strange, hidden world of the stateless. Here are some excerpts...

From the Editor's Desk:

There are strong fears that some small island states will soon start disappearing altogether as a result of climate change. Among those considered particularly vulnerable are Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, the Maldives and the Bahamas. High tides are already destroying homes, gardens and fresh water supplies on Papua New Guinea's Carteret Islands, which may vanish completely beneath the waves as early as 2015. An evacuation of the Carterets' 2,000 inhabitants to another part of Papua New Guinea has already begun.

...A 2005 working paper submitted to the UN Commission on Human Rights framed the dilemma succinctly: "Whilst States(...)are used to addressing issues of State succession, it would appear that the extinction of a State, without there being a successor, is unprecedented..."

The paper then outlined a long list of awkward questions that would arise in such a scenario, most of them concerning the rights of the affected population, and who would be responsible for ensuring those rights were observed.

It will be scant consolation - but in the event of a state sinking, its inhabitants will not be alone. UNHCR (which has a mandate for stateless people as well as for refugees) currently has an official figure of 5.8 million stateless people spread across 49 countries. However, the agency believes the true total may be closer to 15 million.

...millions have become stateless because the state in which they or their ancestors were born has changed shape in some abstract way; been created or divided or dissolved, decolonized, conquered or freed.

Here is a link to a pdf format of the quarterly magazine
<http://www.unhcr.org/doclist/publ/3e50becf4.html>

If you would like more information about subscriptions to the quarterly magazine and other available material, please contact:
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4. News from Christchurch

The Christchurch office has faced great unsettlement in the past three months as we waited for the new offices on the ground floor to be remodelled and refurbished. The staff faced months of noise, dust and disruption to phone and computer connections but were finally rewarded when they were able to shift last month. Christchurch Resettlement Service, PEETO Employment Liaison worker and ESOL Assessment and Access Specialist Service have also moved into the new premises. It is now business as usual.

RMS Refugee Resettlement Christchurch has just assisted PEETO with their latest Computer in Homes Programme. The graduation ceremony for the 9 Afghan families and one Kurdish family was held late last month.

The first six months of the year have been full of challenges as we welcomed Afghan refugees from India in four consecutive intakes. This group was referred to for resettlement because India stated that their temporary permits allowing them to reside in India would not be renewed, despite the fact that some of them had lived there for more than 20 years.

"Nelson Refugee Assistance" has formerly joined RMS Refugee Resettlement and will be part of the Southern region. We have been working with Denise Hutterd for a number of years and we are fortunate that Denise will continue her work as the local co-ordinator, along with Dawn Speakman as the Volunteer Training Co-ordinator, Barb Whitaker as the Social Worker and Hrang Cem Khenniar (Pacem) as the Cross Cultural Worker.

5. Hutt Valley

Another successful Multi Ethnic Soccer Tournament has taken place in Upper Hutt over a five week period. The tournament was initiated for all ethnic communities and groups in the greater Wellington Region with the aim of integrating and creating a network and friendship avenue through sport (soccer). There was a total of 16 teams participating including the defending champion (Sudan). A number of families have been participating in the "Computers in Homes" project in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Naenae College. The aim of the

programme is to provide refugee children and their families with access to online educational resources from home and empower families with the necessary computing tools and skills to become active participants in the online world. The Ministry have contracted a Myanmarese man who has an IT background to work with the families.

6. Auckland

Collaborative work with a Refugee Work Broker at Work and Income has gone from strength to strength with the Broker working closely with our Social Workers to find good matches of work related study leading to employment opportunities. Two clients from a recent intake are ready to make the move from ESOL to employment and have taken advantage of these opportunities to enrol in courses and are looking forward to the guaranteed work at the end in the trades and hospitality industries. Finding a good employment match that coincides with the point when clients are ready to make the move to employment, is not always easy but we are lucky to be working with a Refugee Work Broker who understands refugee needs and actively works with us to get results that have clients needs at the forefront.

Volunteer Harry Zarrabi shares his experiences of a social gathering

"It was a fantastic opportunity for all the families to meet after they'd been housed and a few weeks into their new life venture here in Auckland. They had a chance to exchange notes, their new addresses and telephone numbers with those families and friends they met in those important first few weeks in New Zealand at the Mangere Refugee Reception Centre.

It was also good to see families enjoying themselves, away from the challenges they face on a daily basis, and getting an insight to other unique cultures on show that night. The quiz got everybody involved with good team spirit. Questions were based on both refugee's knowledge of New Zealand land marks and cultural values and volunteer's knowledge of other cultures.

From a volunteer's point of view, it was great to exchange positive stories on the progress of families with other volunteers. It highlighted the fresh perspective that volunteers gain from comparing their own everyday life's challenges to that of refugees, who have to start from the very beginning."

7. Hamilton

Three families from Afghanistan have been here for over four months and thanks to the great support from their volunteers, our staff, tutors, local community and other support networks they are all doing very well. We have been lucky to have been donated 500 pieces of polypro thermals which are being passed out amongst those most feeling the cold. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Buddhist Compassion Relief TzuChi Foundation for the new goods they have donated as well as the amazing welcome they have been giving each new arrival.

Please visit www.rms.org.nz to find out when the next volunteer training course is happening in your area.

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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