

ChangeMakers Refugee Forum Communities Newsletter

December 2010



Snapshot

There have been lots of things happening in communities this year. ChangeMakers has again worked to identify priorities. These include:

**Aotearoa NZ
Refugee
Research
Directory**

ChangeMakers' researchers have created a NZ refugee research directory. It's a way for researchers, community organisations, and agencies to share resources, and work together to achieve an even stronger outcome for refugee-background communities.

Visit www.crf.org.nz

Economic Independence
Refugees into Business has supported 12 people to expand existing businesses or set up new ones. We are also active in Pathways to Employment, a joint initiative with other agencies.

Young Men

Youth worker Soul Naisali-Ramese is working alongside at-risk young men from refugee backgrounds in the Wellington suburb of Newtown. They are creating two programmes to address some of the issues the young men face.

Learning Centre supports families



Students show great focus at the first Learning Centre session held at Naenae College, Lower Hutt, on 20 November. Photo: Sam Shephard.

It was with great excitement that a four-week trial of a community learning centre got underway in late November.

Twenty-four primary and secondary school students and eight parents

are part of the trial. While the young people are supported with school work, their parents are learning computer skills.

The trial will help decide the best ways to support refugee-background students and their families who are living in the Hutt Valley.

An evaluation of the trial will identify successes and challenges and assist with future planning and funding to establish the Learning Centre.

The Learning Centre project was set up by ChangeMakers

Community Development Worker Robert Byer. He worked alongside community members, volunteers and ChangeMakers' researcher Alia

"I like the idea of the learning centre...it will keep the community members bonded together beyond the academic."

Parent

Bloom.

Initial research showed the most important things for families was that they could support their children at school.

The project is to be managed by the Hutt Valley Community Learning Centre Trust which combines the skills and experience of former refugees with those of host community volunteers.

Reuniting families workshops



Amanda Calder talked about the ways the Refugee Family Reunification Trust can help with the costs of reuniting families.

Over 200 people from 14 different refugee-background communities attended three Family Reunification workshops in November.

The high turnout emphasises the importance of the issue for refugees resettling in New Zealand. The workshop was organised by ChangeMakers and Immigration New Zealand.

Immigration NZ representatives led small discussion groups where people could ask questions about immigration policy and practice.

Amanda Calder from the Refugee Family Reunification Trust received many requests for help following her presentation. ChangeMakers has received positive comments from the people who attended the

workshops about how meaningful it was for them to be able to meet Immigration staff face to face, and get the information they needed.

The experience was equally positive for Immigration NZ; there are plans to have more workshops in early 2011.

Getting together top of the list for women

Earlier this year women from different refugee-background communities met in Wellington, Upper Hutt and Porirua to share their traditional crafts. Since then they have been meeting to learn new skills such as knitting, crochet, sewing and bead making.

This was supported by ChangeMakers Community Development Worker Naomi Tocher who has helped establish a steering group in each of the three regions. "Most of all, the women want to get together on a regular basis."



Lhak Futti Sherpa weaves bamboo using traditional techniques.



Youth identify priorities for 2011

60 refugee-background youth aged 12 to 25 from eight different communities attended two workshops in November.

They worked with ChangeMakers' youth workers to prioritise issues for the Wellington Refugee Youth Action Group's (WRYAG) action plan.

They talked about a range of issues of concern to them. These included culture, identity, family, English language education, employment, safety and housing.