



# **CAN THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROCESSES BE EMPOWERING?**

**Paper presented at the Pathways to Metropolis Conference –  
Futures in our Asia-Pacific neighbourhood: Megatrends and  
scenarios**

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# OVERVIEW

- Background to research
- Refugee resettlement in New Zealand
- Concept of power
- Refugees as a community
- Concept of empowerment
- Methodology
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Acknowledgements



## BACKGROUND

- Research part of study for Masters degree
- Focus on Quota refugees in New Zealand – women at risk, people with disabilities or needing medical attention, those needing protection, those with families already here and other refugees.
- Challenges of refugee resettlement- cultural shock, unemployment, underemployment, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination
- Refugees presented in literature and media as vulnerable, beneficiaries needing help.
- Refugees as survivors – high level of strength and resilience.



# REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN NZ

- Refugees since events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War
- 1944 distinction between migrants and refugees
- 1960 Signing of the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and the Protocol in 1973.
- 1987 quota set at 800
- 1997 number streamlined to 750 to cater for current intakes.
- Three main types of refugees: Quota, Asylum seekers and Refugee Family Support Category



# CONCEPT OF POWER

- Power is a social phenomenon happening between relationships.
- Power a daily occurrence
- Ability to get other people to do what they would not do in their own will.
- Other words such as influence, dominance, status, authority, submission, empowerment and disempowerment come into play.
- Power relation in funder and funded; service provider and service recipient



# CONCEPT OF POWER

- Types of power – threat power, economic power, integrative power, dominance or power over.

“Power is clearly at work in the categorisation of individuals or groups as vulnerable. Having been constructed as victims, the members of the ‘vulnerable’ group do indeed become victims, but are now under the care and concern of the experts who classified them as such” - Satterwaite (2008)



# REFUGEES AS A COMMUNITY

- Community can be in a geographical or physical space, defined by socio-cultural issues such as heritage, common experiences or common visions and values and expectations.
- Refugees qualify in various definitions of community.
- The kind of definition accorded to a community determines how service providers interact with that community and what development parameters are set out and implemented.



# REFUGEES AS A COMMUNITY

- Highest source countries of refugees to NZ 2001-2011

Iraq

Myanmar

Eritrea

Bhutan

Afghanistan

Iran

Republic of Congo

Burundi

Sudan

Somalia

Ethiopia



# CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

- Has its roots in popular education according to Paul Freire.
- Has to do with power and relationship between those with power and those without.
- Concept found within Rights Based Approaches in the contemporary world.
- Can be direct (internal or self empowerment) and indirect (external or by service organisations).



# CONCEPT OF EMPOWERMENT

## ○ 4 Main Perspectives of Empowerment

- Individual or pluralist micro-level perspective
- The institutional or elite perspective
- The structural perspective
- Post structural perspective



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative research
- Interpretive Research and Critical Theory
- Purposive sampling, stratified sampling and snowball sampling.
- Semi structured interviews and focus group discussions.



# FINDINGS

- Education
- Sometimes it's actually hard for some of them to catch up because maybe the gap is so big. When we are talking of a 15 year old refugee starting high school for the first time.....just to start schooling at that level is very hard but then it wouldn't be good idea either to ask that person to start at primary and sit there in the middle of 5-7 year old children; that might not be the best interest for the child from a social and developmental point of view.....but it's just the system that we are dealing with and we will just have to make sure it can work for the refugee students



## FINDINGS

- English language support
- I think empowerment for me is giving tools to somebody; tools that will help that person to survive. And that could have been done in terms of language; really having a good English programme



## FINDINGS

- Welfare support
- I really don't like the system (benefit) to be applied to young ones who are not doing anything



## FINDINGS

- Employment
- Jobs mean dignity, value, respect, empowerment, contribution; everything is relating to jobs. Jobs are really powerful. Before I never thought jobs are like this; now I realise jobs are really, really important to good settlement, yeah



## FINDINGS

- Career guidance support
- If you look at someone sitting on the dole for seven years in New Zealand, the difference between that and having, say a road safety and a driving licence paid for by the government so that they can get a job, is not even worth doing the sums



## FINDINGS

- Settlement planning
- We thought we suffer too much, we lost our family, loved ones, you know, people being killed, loss of our home, we had no hope, we come here and everybody knows who we are and just help us, like, make a plan for us, help us, support us, how we could help you know....nothing was in place like that.....we are not here for another challenge, we're past that, we don't have much energy, we need some help and support



## FINDINGS

- Community education
- So that's part of people not seeing refugees as pathetic, helpless, damaged people. You know, so that's part of educating host communities. I think there's a lot to be done still in the host community; a lot of work.



## FINDINGS

- Collaboration of services
- there are so many service providers – it's so fragmented around – and sometimes meeting the needs could be so fragmented as well...there are so fragmented organisation around and they have funding to do different sort of work.



## FINDINGS

- Family re-unification
- First of all its peace, peace, stability and family



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Empowerment focus
- Role of family
- Service provider collaboration
- Importance of role models
- Socialisation and culture



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