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# NEW ZEALAND'S REFUGEE SECTOR: PERSPECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENTS, 1987–2010

## QUOTA REFUGEES TEN YEARS ON SERIES



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents a descriptive analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on significant changes in the refugee resettlement sector since 1987. Stakeholder views have been supplemented with information from documentary sources, which provide additional detail and context for the changes that have taken place over the last two decades.

### **Context**

This study is part of a wider Department of Labour research programme entitled *Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives on Integration, Community and Identity*, which seeks to provide a platform of knowledge and understanding about the long-term settlement experiences and outcomes of people who arrived in New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme 10 or more years ago. The purpose of the current study was to understand the changing context of refugee resettlement over the last two decades. More specifically, the interviews sought to gain key stakeholder perspectives on two areas:

- key changes in policy and service provision relating to refugees arriving through the Refugee Quota Programme
- the development of refugee communities in New Zealand.

In-depth interviews were carried out with individuals who were working, or had previously worked, in the refugee sector. This included government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and refugee-led organisations. A total of 22 interviews were conducted across the country with 39 individuals (some were group interviews).

Looking back over more than two decades to the establishment of a formal quota for the resettlement of refugees in 1987, participants in this study identified several common developments.

### **Development of the refugee voice**

First and foremost there was a strong sense that former refugees had increased their voice in the sector and had moved well beyond being passive recipients of services. Instead, former refugees themselves were now seen as agents of change, representing themselves rather than being spoken for by others.

The development towards a highly participative refugee voice in the sector was welcomed by participants in this study. Such a change was seen to have been facilitated through the changing forums for inter-agency collaboration and the development of inter-ethnic refugee coalitions, including the establishment of the New Zealand National Refugee Network.

An increased refugee voice in the sector was seen to lead to an increased sense of empowerment and control over their own lives for refugee communities and improvements in the responsiveness of services provided to former refugees.

## **Increased professionalism of non-governmental organisations**

The area of service provision and policy also witnessed considerable changes over the last two decades, including the increased professionalism and expansion of NGOs. The increasing diversity of refugee arrivals in the 1990s saw an expansion of services, particularly to cater for the mental health needs of former refugees resettling in New Zealand, including the establishment of new NGOs to respond to these needs. Over time, NGOs were seen to develop their services to be increasingly responsive to refugee needs. In relation to such changes, there was an acknowledgement of increased government support for the sector, particularly in the last decade.

## **Government agency development**

Government services were also seen to have made significant improvements in the way they work with former refugees and in the way they respond to the needs of former refugees. Significant changes were identified in the education sector, Housing New Zealand Corporation, the Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Labour, the health sector, the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the New Zealand Police, and local government.

Policy on family reunion was identified as an ongoing challenge, particularly given the distress of family separation. At a higher level, many participants noted a desire for a cohesive policy on refugee resettlement.

## **Increased collaboration and awareness**

It was noted that agencies and individuals involved in the sector have strengthened their relationships over the past two decades and were working more collaboratively. Regular and formalised inter-agency forums were seen to facilitate this process.

Advances in increased awareness and responsiveness were often linked to having former refugees involved in formalised positions, such as being employed by government agencies or NGOs or sitting on the boards of NGOs. While much progress was seen to have been made, some participants noted that more could be done to work even more collaboratively with refugee communities and to build cultural competency.

## **Development of refugee communities**

Refugee communities were seen as having extensively developed over the last decade. Of particular note was the establishment of inter-ethnic refugee coalitions, which had served to bring a more unified refugee voice to the sector. Furthermore, the 2000s were also seen to witness a proliferation of incorporated ethnic societies, as refugees become more established in New Zealand.

Training and opportunities for learning through collaboration were seen as highly beneficial for developing the capacity of refugee communities. The size of refugee communities was also seen as playing an important role in building community capacity and in former refugees having their voices heard. Participants also acknowledged the importance of effective leadership in building

strong communities. It was noted that refugee leaders often worked long hours to develop and support their communities, and some participants cautioned against overburdening a small number of individuals. Youth were seen as providing a new and emerging leadership.

Established refugee communities were seen to play an important role in supporting new arrivals, helping newcomers to navigate the New Zealand context while providing social and cultural support. Such support was often seen as complementary to services provided by other agencies in the sector.

## **Relationships with host society**

In recognition of the two-way process of integration that involves adaptation and accommodation from both the host society and the newcomers, participants were asked about how public perceptions towards accepting refugees had changed over the last decade. Participants expressed a range of views as to whether public perceptions had altered over the last decade. Many participants commented on the increasing ethnic diversity of the New Zealand population. This was seen to be associated with an increase in public awareness of cultural diversity, which was seen to make it somewhat easier for former refugees to resettle in New Zealand.

The role of the media was acknowledged as playing an important role in both shaping and reflecting public opinion. The way former refugees were portrayed was generally seen to have improved over the last decade. Many participants supported increased public education to foster understanding and awareness of refugee issues, which was seen as an avenue to build public support for refugee resettlement and to overcome friction over state resources and discrimination.

Recent initiatives to build relationships between Māori and refugee communities were often heralded as highly successful. These included partnerships to run community programmes as well as formal welcomes for new refugee arrivals.

## **Employment**

Finally, employment was identified by participants as an important facilitator to long-term settlement. Employment was seen as an opportunity at individual and community levels, but also on a broader societal level. However, while acknowledging the benefits that employment can provide, it was noted that this is an area where much progress still needs to be made to support former refugees into suitable work, which will in turn enable them to participate more fully in society.

## **Conclusion**

Stakeholder perspectives on the development of the refugee sector since 1987 reflect the breadth and depth of growth over this period. The findings from the in-depth interviews contribute a valuable context for the Quota Refugees Ten Years On research, and for a greater understanding of the historical changes in the refugee sector more generally.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Context**

This study is part of a wider Department of Labour research programme entitled Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives on Integration, Community and Identity. This multi-year research programme, which commenced in 2008, has been developed to provide information about the long-term settlement experiences and outcomes of people who arrived in New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme 10 or more years ago.

The Quota Refugees Ten Years On research programme has multiple components, including a review of the international literature on the long-term settlement of refugees (McMillan and Gray, 2009), an exploratory study on former refugees perspectives on long-term settlement (Department of Labour, 2009b), and a nationwide survey of over 500 former refugees who arrived in New Zealand between 1993 and 1999, which will provide information on former refugees' experiences of long-term settlement in New Zealand over a wide range of domains. Further elements of the research programme include in-depth interviews and focus groups to further explore some of the findings from the largely quantitative survey, as well as the current study, which provides the background and context for changes in the refugee sector over the last two decades. Together these multiple components of the Quota Refugees Ten Years On research programme will provide a comprehensive platform of knowledge and understanding about the long-term settlement outcomes and experiences of former refugees in New Zealand.

## **1.2 Purpose**

This report provides a descriptive analysis of stakeholders' perspectives on the significant changes in the refugee resettlement sector over the last two decades and is supplemented by documentary sources. The context of refugee resettlement has developed considerably over this period, and these changes are likely to have had an impact on the long-term settlement experiences and outcomes of former refugees who took part in the Quota Refugees Ten Years On survey. Therefore, the research findings from the survey can best be understood within the changing context of refugee resettlement in New Zealand.

More specifically, the purpose of this research project was to capture this context by gaining the perspectives of key stakeholders in the refugee sector on two areas:

- key changes in policy and service provision relating to refugees arriving through the Refugee Quota Programme
- the development of refugee communities in New Zealand.

## **1.3 Methods**

In-depth interviews were carried out with individuals who were working or had a long history of working for key organisations involved in the refugee sector. This included government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing services to refugees, as well as refugee-led organisations.

The research was designed primarily to gather detailed qualitative data on changes in the refugee sector and to allow respondents' perspectives on changes in the sector to be explored. Documentary sources were consulted to provide additional detail and context for the changes in the refugee sector over the last two decades. However, the findings from this research focus on the perspectives and views of the key stakeholders who took part in an in-depth interview. The interviews were conducted in accordance with the Association of Social Science Researchers Code of Ethics. This Code of Ethics provides guidelines for ethical behaviour and decision making with respect to the conduct, management, publication, and storage of research. In line with this, an informed consent process was followed with all participants in this study. (See Appendix D for a copy of the informed consent form.)

In-depth interviews were conducted from February to March 2010 across the main settlement locations of former refugees – Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch. Twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted. Some interviews were conducted with more than one representative from an organisation, resulting in 39 individuals being interviewed. This included former refugees who work for government agencies and NGOs (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** Interview and participant details

<b>Agency type</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>	<b>Number of former refugee participants</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>
Refugee-led	5	5	6
Non-governmental organisation	9	6	19
Government	8	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>39</b>

Interviews were carried out using a semi-structured interview guide. Questions asked about personal context of involvement in the sector, significant changes over the past two decades, public perceptions towards refugees, the role former refugees play in assisting new arrivals, and developments to build the capacity of refugee communities (see Appendix B).

On average, the interviews were approximately one hour long. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents and were subsequently transcribed. Copies of the transcripts were sent to respondents to provide them with the opportunity to check for accuracy and to make any necessary amendments. Furthermore, as part of the informed consent process, respondents were also given the chance to review all quotations used in this report.

A thematic analysis of the revised transcripts was undertaken using NVivo8. This allowed for an iterative process of coding transcripts according to themes that emerged from the interviews.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Historical context of refugee resettlement**

The history of refugee resettlement in New Zealand, as in the rest of the world, is largely a reflection of global political unrest, changing over the past 30 years in response to changing global circumstances and humanitarian needs. The history of receiving refugees in New Zealand began in a formal way in 1944 with the intake of 800 Polish people (734 of whom were orphaned children). At first, it was thought these refugees might return to Poland, but given the political situation after the end of World War Two they were accepted for permanent settlement in New Zealand (Beaglehole, 2009a).

The post World War Two period until the mid 1970s saw the arrival of a substantial number of refugees, most notably displaced people from Europe after the war and refugees fleeing political uprisings in Hungary, Uganda, and Czechoslovakia (Beaglehole, 2009b). From the mid 1970s refugees arrived from many parts of the world, including Chilean refugees who fled the over-throwing of the Allende Government in 1973, refugees fleeing Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, and refugees fleeing war and persecution in the Middle East. The largest group of arrivals during this period came from Southeast Asia as a result of the Vietnam War (Beaglehole, 2009c). Between 1977 and 1993 approximately 5,200 Cambodians, 4,500 Vietnamese, and 1,200 Laotians were accepted for resettlement in New Zealand as part of the international commitment of resettlement countries, the Comprehensive Plan of Action, to ease the burden on countries of first asylum in Southeast Asia (Department of Labour, 1994, p 22).

The 1990s in general was a period of more diverse arrivals, including significant numbers from Vietnam and Iraq, but also the first arrivals from Africa. Civil war, famine, and drought combined to produce an exodus of refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia (Department of Labour, 1994, p 23; Ministry of Health, 2001, p 9). The 1990s also witnessed Europe's biggest refugee crisis since World War Two with the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In 1992, New Zealand accepted the first Bosnian refugees, who were joined by family members the following year (Department of Labour, 1994, p 24). In 1998, the Serbian-led ethnic-cleansing programme forced hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians to flee. New Zealand responded to this crisis by bringing in 405 Kosovar refugees from 1999, of whom a large number returned to Kosovo after the war ended (Ministry of Health, 2001, p 19).

The last decade has seen large numbers of refugees arriving from Afghanistan as a result of civil war, the Taliban regime, and the war in Afghanistan following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States. New Zealand also accepted 131 Afghan refugees who were picked up by the freighter *MS Tampa* in 2001 after their craft capsized in the Indian Ocean (Quazi, 2009, p 8). In subsequent years family members of the Afghan Tampa refugees were resettled through the Refugee Quota Programme. Large numbers of refugees from Myanmar have also been resettled in New Zealand, particularly since the mid 2000s. The war in Iraq and continuing civil war in Somalia have contributed to the inflow of refugees from these two countries (Quazi, 2009, p 8). Most recently New Zealand has

resettled Bhutanese refugees from Nepal as well as a significant number of Colombian refugees.

Overall, more than 23,000 quota refugees have arrived from over 50 different countries from 1979 to 2010 (Immigration New Zealand, 2011) (see Appendix B for statistics on quota refugee arrivals from 1987 to 2010). While these numbers may be relatively small compared with the number of migrants, refugees nonetheless contribute significantly to the diversity of New Zealand.

## **2.2 Refugee Quota Programme**

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol, provides the internationally recognised definition of a refugee. It states that a refugee is:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, 2008)

New Zealand's refugee policy reflects the Government's commitment to fulfilling its international humanitarian obligations and responsibilities (UNHCR, 2007, p 1). While New Zealand has a long history of accepting refugees for resettlement, the development of a formal annual quota for refugees is best understood within the context of the Immigration Policy Review of 1986 and Immigration Act 1987. The review heralded a significant departure from the immigration policies of previous decades towards selecting migrants on the basis of personal merit rather than national or ethnic background (Merwood, 2008, p 4). The review created four categories of potential migrants – occupational, business, family, and humanitarian. Refugee policies clearly fall within the humanitarian category. The review endorsed New Zealand's commitment to the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand (Merwood, 2008, p 4), and was followed the next year with the introduction of an annual quota for resettling refugees in New Zealand. The annual quota was initially set at up to 800 places per year (Department of Labour, 1994, p 25), but this was reduced to 750 places in 1997 (Parliamentary Library, 2008, p 8).

All refugees considered for resettlement under the New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme (except certain applicants who are nuclear or dependant family members of the principal applicant) must be recognised as refugees under the mandate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and be referred by the UNHCR to the Refugee Quota Branch of the Department of Labour for consideration. In recent years the annual resettlement quota has been maintained at 750 places, with a focus on the needs and priorities identified by the UNHCR, including 'women at risk', 'medical/disabled', and 'UNHCR Priority Protection' (UNHCR, 2007, p 1).

In addition to refugees accepted through the voluntary Refugee Quota Programme, as a signatory to the UNHCR convention New Zealand accepts refugees who arrive in the country as asylum seekers and have their status as refugees confirmed (sometimes referred to as 'convention refugees'). Also

accepted are an unknown number of people from refugee-like situations who are sponsored to come to New Zealand under family reunification policies (Quazi, 2009, p 5). The focus of this report, given the broader context of the Quota Refugees Ten Years On research programme, is on arrivals through the Refugee Quota Programme rather than on asylum seekers or those who have arrived through family reunion policies.

### **2.3 Initial support on arrival**

People who arrive in New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme spend their first six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC), based in Auckland. The MRRC, sited in adapted army barracks, is a multi-agency centre. It has been used since 1980 to provide arriving refugees with an orientation programme and prepare them for onward resettlement. The site is run and funded by the Department of Labour (Department of Labour, 2010b, pp 6–7). The facilities include accommodation blocks and general living and recreation areas.

Today the orientation programme, run by the Auckland University of Technology, assesses English skills and commences classes for English speakers of other languages (ESOL), as well as providing general information about life in New Zealand, including the relevant institutions and services integral to the successful settlement of refugees into New Zealand society. The programme makes use of an early childhood learning centre and typical New Zealand classrooms.

Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand is one of the main NGOs with a national role in supporting refugee resettlement. It provides support from refugees' arrival at the MRRC through their first 12 months of resettlement. In this way, Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand settles refugees into their first homes and communities and links them to the services of government and non-government providers supporting refugee resettlement (Department of Labour, 2009a, p 4) after the 6 week orientation programme at the MRRC. On their departure from the MRRC, refugees are resettled in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington (including the Hutt Valley and Porirua), Nelson and Christchurch.

Medical screening and dental checks are completed at the MRRC and a multidisciplinary team for mental health assessment, treatment, and resettlement planning also operates at the MRRC.

### **3 SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**

In discussing changes to service provision and policy in the refugee sector since 1987, participants reflected a sense of pride and accomplishment in the progress that has been made in a little over two decades. This period witnessed the transition from a small-scale sector that was largely grass roots in nature where former refugees were in general seen as the recipients of services to a broader sector that is much more inclusive, better resourced, and responsive to refugee needs. Furthermore, it is now a sector where former refugees are fully fledged participants, informing the decision making of government agencies and NGOs, advocating on their own behalf, and working together with other agencies.

#### **3.1 Development of the refugee voice**

When discussing the changes that had occurred in the refugee sector over the previous two decades, the resounding response from all participants was that one of the most significant developments was the increasing participation of former refugees in the sector. This was most often articulated in terms of refugees now having a 'voice' that could be clearly heard by agencies in the sector and that was taken into account in policy development and service provision.

A number of initiatives and developments were seen as key enablers of the refugee voice becoming first audible and then powerful within the sector. These included refugee communities organising themselves more effectively (eg, forming associations and incorporated societies) and inter-agency forums on refugee resettlement developing to promote greater collaboration between agencies, including greater refugee participation.

##### ***Tripartite meetings***

The first formalised refugee resettlement sector meetings that took place in New Zealand and included government and the UNHCR were the National Tripartite Consultation meetings of the late 1990s, the first of which took place in 1997. These meetings came about as a result of the UNHCR and Immigration New Zealand seeking a more cohesive and inclusive approach to discussions and deliberations about planning for refugee resettlement in New Zealand.

The tripartite meetings were the first forums for consultation between all three sector groups (which had previously met bilaterally) and allowed for discussion of priorities for resettlement. The three groups comprised representatives from UNHCR, government, and NGOs. Participants in the study commented on the absence of former refugees at these meetings:

Tripartite was NGO, UNHCR and government – there was no refugee in there.

However, some participants acknowledged that the lack of the refugee perspective is more clearly visible from where the sector stands today, and that an understanding of the need for refugee participation developed over time:

In retrospect, the refugee voice speaking for itself was weak, and gradually emerged as the diverse ethnic groups who began to arrive in

1993 consolidated their own communities, and then developed a mechanism for meeting together.

Looking back to the tripartite meetings, many participants were highly critical of the way in which the refugee voice was marginalised at these meetings. One refugee leader expressed concern that their inability to contribute at these meetings meant that agencies had been ill-equipped to understand the issues facing the resettlement of refugees:

... government departments, the UNHCR and NGOs talked a lot about refugees without any actual refugees being present! Therefore, how can they possibly know what the real issues are that affect the refugee communities.

From a former refugee perspective, if refugees were able to attend these early meetings, it was not to participate on an equal footing with the other agencies involved but to make a token appearance. One former refugee commented that in the early tripartite meetings:

... the refugee voice was not expected really to bring ideas and engage with discussions ... then that started really to shift when people from different groups at the tripartite meetings ... started to question and, you know, engage in the debate, and say, 'You are talking about refugees, you know, but there are no refugees represented here'.

The above quotation illustrates that a change toward greater refugee involvement began to emerge at these meetings. One refugee leader noted that while refugees were initially not involved in the meetings at all, this progressed to being 'involved on an ad hoc basis'. Furthermore, in looking to strengthen their input at these meetings, former refugees looked for new avenues for involvement, including becoming involved on the Tripartite Meeting Secretariat. While the involvement of former refugees at this level was on a relatively informal basis, it allowed them to work towards a more active role in the sector. Participating more actively was also initially fostered by NGOs who helped pay for former refugees' flights to attend these meetings.

Furthermore, two other structures played an important role in this time. The first of these was the Auckland Refugee Council, which was established in 1990 and provided an opportunity for former refugees to work in collaboration with other New Zealanders to have a voice on refugee issues. (Later this group developed a focus primarily on asylum seekers, which led to the establishment of the Refugee Council of New Zealand in 1998.) The second was the Refugee and Migrant Commission, which was established in 1990 when what had been the Inter-Church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement became an incorporated society. The Refugee and Migrant Commission met in Wellington twice a year at first and then annually until 2006. Representation on the commission came from the major refugee groups, who met to discuss refugee issues and advocacy and advise the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS).

### ***Refugee resettlement forums***

Many participants felt that the turning point enabling greater refugee participation in the sector came with the establishment of Refugee Resettlement

Forums, which superseded the tripartite meetings. These forums, funded by the Department of Labour, brought together officials from the UNHCR, government, NGOs, and leaders from refugee communities. One participant suggested that given that the new forums now explicitly allowed for the participation of refugee communities, these could be termed 'quadrupartite' or four-party meetings.

The first National Refugee Resettlement Forum (NRRF) was held in 2004. The move away from the tripartite nexus to a more open refugee-inclusive forum was seen as a positive development by the participants of this study. Refugee leaders saw this as a highly significant development that came as a result of refugee communities advocating for their participation in the sector:

We succeeded in breaking the ice. We went there and said – this is our forum, this is for us, this meeting is for us, listen to us. And they changed the name from 'Tripartite' to the 'Refugee Forum'. This was a huge achievement for us and a success for the refugee communities.

Government officials interviewed were also highly positive about the move to a meeting format that had a high level of refugee participation, allowing increased understanding and increased responsiveness:

... now they [refugees] definitely are included and there is a willingness to include and to listen to and to develop policies and procedures around what they are saying they need and want.

... it gradually evolved and then recently, you see the refugee voices much, much more represented there and much, much stronger – this is encouraging. Sometimes we think we are aware of all issues, but in reality we are not until we hear from the people that the services are addressed to.

NGOs also applauded the increased participation of former refugees at these forums, although a commonly held sentiment was that while the forums were a positive development there was still a way to go to enable refugees to be participating on equal footing with NGOs and government agencies. However, some participants pointed out that in a sense New Zealand has achieved something that has not yet been attained in other countries in regard to these meetings:

... we've very definitely moved and shifted to sort-of 'quadrupartite' meetings here in New Zealand, which they still haven't achieved in Geneva.

... when the UNHCR come now, they were very proud that New Zealand, though we are very small, how we are giving the opportunity. It doesn't matter if we are top of resettlement in the other resettlement countries but we are giving the refugees a forum that they can discuss their issues of their own.

From 2004 to 2008 these national meetings were held twice a year. In 2008 this format was altered to one annual national meeting plus one annual Regional Refugee Resettlement Forum in each of the main resettlement locations (Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch). The regional forums have

been developed to tackle regionally based issues, escalating only national issues to the National Refugee Resettlement Forum. The regional forums, which are also funded by the Department of Labour, are jointly organised and delivered by the local Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand office and the regional refugee community coalition. This enables refugee communities to have active participation in these meetings at every stage.

As with the regional forums, refugee community leaders are also being consulted on the agenda for national-level meetings. As one refugee leader noted:

So we are being, really, I mean considered, at that level, that we have something to say in the planning, what is really important to us and we have our input in some of those things.

Former refugee participation at the Forums has been assisted by government agencies. Since 2006 the Department of Labour's Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative (discussed in the following section) has funded the participation of three to five former refugees in the annual Forum from each of the initiatives in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch. After the Settling In programme was established in the Ministry of Social Development, Settling In also initially funded three people from each area to attend the meetings.

Overall, a large number of participants saw the development of the forums as being instrumental in changing the role the refugees played in the sector – essentially this was articulated as a move from refugees being passive recipients of services provided by NGOs and government to being active agents participating at different levels of the sector. As one refugee leader put it:

Well initially refugees were like recipients, I mean, receiving only, but at this time I could say they are participants, you may know the National Resettlement Forum, that refugee leaders are participating. The forum started like a Tripartite Forum ... at that stage it was dominated by NGOs and government representatives, but now it is just becoming more of the refugees – refugees for refugees – so now ... the refugees' voice is coming out.

### ***Other facilitators of increased refugee voice***

#### *Strengthening Refugee Voices*

As well as the refugee forums, participants in this study also identified the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative as another key enabler of the refugee voice in the sector.

Strengthening Refugee Voices, which was established in 2006, is a Department of Labour initiative. It is a community-led initiative aimed at strengthening the effective engagement of refugee communities with local settlement initiatives as well as enabling a united voice on settlement matters at regional and national levels (Department of Labour, 2007b, p 11). Funding is provided directly to refugee groups to enable them to meet and discuss their issues and to look for solutions (including funding to pay for venue hire and expenses for participation on collaborative settlement activities and discussion). The refugee groups that have been formed through this initiative are at an inter-community level,

providing a cohesive refugee voice. This initiative has been established in the four main refugee resettlement areas of Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch.

One of the key strengths of the initiative, identified by government agencies, NGOs, and refugee leaders alike, was its ability to bring together disparate communities and refugee perspectives into a unified voice:

I could say that the biggest achievement is the founding of the coalition – because that's one step ahead just like our refugee communities are getting together as one voice and strengthening that voice.

Refugee leaders saw the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative as providing a key avenue for their voices to be heard, creating a shift in the power dynamics in the sector that ensured they would be consulted by government and NGOs:

The really big change came when the initiative called 'Strengthening Refugee Voices' ... came to play. That's when we started really having a voice. That's where changes came really, that changes a lot of things, and the refugees are enough in itself and the fact that they have to take into account our voice so they have to consult with us before they have to do anything.

The desire to be heard and consulted on refugee-related matters, whether this be on policy, research, or service provision, was at times summed up as: 'nothing about us without us'. As one participant said, this challenge to other agencies involved in the sector has had an impact on the views held by others involved in refugee resettlement:

... so that's a strong, really strong message, and I think that kind of opened eyes of some people.

One of the key documents that has allowed refugee communities to put this phrase into a practical context has been the development of a set of standards for engagement for working with refugee background communities, which was published in 2008 by the Wellington refugee-led organisation ChangeMakers Refugee Forum in conjunction with government and NGOs. The *Standards for Engagement: Guidelines for central and local government, and NGOs working with refugee background communities* (ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, 2008a) was developed through collaboration of refugee communities in the Wellington region, who agreed to a number of key principles for engagement:

... to have their principles and values and the community to be acknowledged for their resource, their information, not to be treated like victims are, like substandard. To have some sort-of respect and understanding and they can be included in any sort-of planning or policies and research, all of that – right from the beginning.

This document has now been adopted by the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector as part of its Good Practice Participate guidelines.

### *National Refugee Network*

While the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative was in general seen as a positive development by the participants in this study, refugee leaders expressed their desire to take this to the next level and go from strong regional voices to one national voice. This was the impetus for setting up the New Zealand National Refugee Network, which was established in January 2009. For the first time this coalition provided a collective voice for former refugees at the national level.

Refugee leaders indicated that the need for this national coalition arose due to inconsistencies in consultation and service provision across the country and for refugee leaders across the country to have a forum to support one another. The national network is structured in such a way that it brings together the leaders of the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiatives into one body, with the aim of providing a clear point of contact for government agencies and NGOs on national issues.

Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch have come together and formed the National Network ... we don't have the National Network without those forums and those coalitions. Department of Labour came with a wonderful initiative 'Strengthening Refugee Voices', and we thought, coming together again as one nation, one refugee group, will even strengthen that ... so the National Network is bringing all those groups together in one body.

As another refugee leader noted, a national coalition of this kind is both groundbreaking in New Zealand and internationally.

... now we have a strong regional voice and national voice, and that was never really the case in New Zealand or many other countries. And that I think, that kind-of movement of community – where they are taking ownership of their own issues ... engaging with the Government and service providers.

From the perspectives of refugee leaders in this study, the national network has provided refugee background communities with a clear avenue for engagement on national issues. Furthermore, the overall development of the refugee voice, the feeling of empowerment and participation, is a far cry from the limited avenues for refugee involvement in the 1990s and the earlier decades.

### *Stronger communities*

In discussing the growth of the refugee voice in the sector over the last decades, participants also talked about the development of refugee communities, seeing this as a key factor that allowed for their increased contribution. Changes that were identified included the formation of incorporated societies, leadership and skill development, increasing knowledge of host society mechanisms for engagement and advocacy, and the increasing size of some communities. A discussion of the development of refugee communities, including these changes, is in the following chapter.

## **Summary**

The in-depth interviews with participants in this study reflected that one of the most significant developments in the refugee sector over the last two decades was an increased refugee voice. As one participant stated:

I think the biggest change really has been just the independent voice of the refugee community has now got a way of getting heard.

This ability for refugees to actively participate in the sector, to be heard and consulted on the services and policies that affect their communities, was seen as having been facilitated through a number of initiatives as well as the growth of communities themselves. Two initiatives were identified as highly successful in promoting the refugee voice. The first was the move away from tripartite meetings to the refugee forum format, which explicitly welcomed the participation of former refugees. The second initiative was the development of refugee coalitions through the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative, providing a coherent refugee voice at the regional level. Former refugees also felt the need for a national inter-ethnic coalition to respond to national issues and as a means of providing support to one another. Below the level of clearly identifiable initiatives, many participants also pointed to the organic growth of relatively new communities in New Zealand, building their capacity to have their voices heard through a variety of avenues.

The impact of an increased voice in the sector was largely expressed as refugee communities having a sense of increased empowerment and control over their own destiny in the New Zealand context. Furthermore, having the ability to define their own needs was seen as leading to improvements in the responsiveness of services provided to former refugees.

### **3.2 Service provision and policy: Towards increased professionalisation and responsiveness**

The participants in this study discussed significant changes that had occurred in relation to the services provided to refugees arriving in New Zealand over the last two decades. Such changes included the increasing professionalism of NGOs, along with a broad expansion of their services. Government agencies also became increasingly responsive to refugee needs during this period, with substantive changes in a number of government agencies. While much progress was noted, certain areas of policy were identified as remaining particularly challenging to the refugee sector.

#### ***Increased professionalism of non-governmental organisations***

Participants identified the increasing professionalism of NGOs over the last two decades as one of the key developments in the sector.

##### *From church beginnings*

Participants described the period leading up to the 1990s as characterised by support for refugees coming primarily from church-based volunteers, coordinated by the small staff from the Inter-church Commission on Immigration

and Refugee Resettlement, which had formed in 1976 (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2009a).

Some participants who began their involvement in the refugee sector in the 1980s recalled the multiple avenues of support from church groups in setting up homes for new refugee arrivals. One participant from an NGO perspective noted:

We had huge resources from the ... churches ... we filled the cupboards with food, we gave them \$100 cash, we paid the bond and rent, from donations from those churches.

Churches, with their well-established structures, were able to offer valuable resources and support to newly arriving refugees. One participant commented that churches had been:

... the backbone of the establishment of [refugee] resettlement in New Zealand.

#### *Towards independent non-governmental organisations*

While the role of the churches had been pivotal in providing the initial support to early refugee arrivals in New Zealand, the 1990s saw a move away from the reliance on church-based volunteers and a move towards a strengthening NGO sector:

... the decline of churches and other sort-of more voluntary-based, community-based groups like that. And the growth of the NGO sector.

For the Inter-church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement this meant moving the agency from under the direct umbrella of the churches and becoming an officially incorporated society, the Refugee and Migrant Commission-Aotearoa New Zealand in 1990. The service of the commission was at the same time renamed the Refugee and Migrant Service, then RMS Refugee Resettlement, and subsequently Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand in 2008 (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2009a).

Other key agencies involved in the refugee sector also moved towards becoming incorporated societies. The provision of formally organised home tutoring in the English language had been developed primarily in response to the large number of non-English-speaking people coming to New Zealand in the 1970s, including Indo-Chinese refugees. The home tutor system recognised that many people, particularly women with young children, could not attend classes, so trained volunteer tutors provided new arrivals to New Zealand with English lessons in their own home (English Language Partners New Zealand, 2009). In 1992 the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes was formed, bringing together ESOL home-tutoring schemes that had until this time functioned independently across the country (English Language Partners New Zealand, 2009).

#### *Volunteer programmes*

Volunteer support has always been a key component of refugee resettlement in New Zealand, and while the nature of voluntary support has changed over the last two decades, it continues to be the basis of service provision for key

agencies involved in the sector today. According to one participant coming from an NGO perspective:

... from the earliest impetus for an organised refugee resettlement programme in [New Zealand], ordinary New Zealand individuals and families became involved in mentoring and supporting refugee individuals and families, becoming key agents of welcome and acceptance. This is a feature of the settlement programme that has been better organised and refined, but remains foundational to the success of the New Zealand refugee programme.

As is alluded to in the quotation above, programmes to train volunteers have become more organised over time. The development of volunteer training programmes run by RMS Refugee Resettlement and the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes reflect the move towards greater professionalism in the sector.

For the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes, becoming an incorporated society was followed by becoming bulk-funded by government in the mid 1990s. Rather than the association being dependent on the varying skills and capabilities across the country to train its volunteers, this funding allowed the organisation to develop the Certificate in ESOL Home Tutoring. This certificate was approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in 1997. The development of training for this certificate provided a national standard for home tutors throughout New Zealand, thereby ensuring equity of service to learners.

Volunteers all over the country were receiving the same training irrespective of where they were being trained.

RMS Refugee Resettlement, which had always been heavily reliant on volunteer support, has been the primary agency involved in providing post-arrival resettlement support for newly arrived quota refugees. Given the church-based history of the organisation, RMS Refugee Resettlement during the 1990s continued to draw most of its volunteers from church groups who were trained by coordinators in the main centres.

... resettlement was organised by RMS through its regional and local coordinators and their networks of volunteers, who were primarily in those days drawn from the churches ... volunteers were trained really, I guess, as much as the local area coordinator was capable of providing training.

However, the 1990s provided a new challenge to RMS Refugee Resettlement, with changing social patterns and economic pressures leading to a decline in volunteers:

... as the economies of the world changed – and they changed in New Zealand too – and more and more people were needing to work, both partners working, and church congregations were declining too, there were less volunteers available and we were struggling more to find sufficient volunteers.

The challenges of finding adequate numbers of volunteers, along with the desire to provide high-quality training to its volunteers, led RMS Refugee Resettlement

to follow the same path as the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes – the development of an NZQA-recognised certificate in 2000, the Certificate in Refugee Resettlement Support. The training associated with this certificate consolidated the increased training of the late 1990s, and provided recognition for volunteers and systems to ensure quality assurance. The resulting volunteer programme is now considered to be:

... very fine-tuned, very efficient, very streamlined, very well organised and has excellent systems.

Participants commented that as well as increasing the quality and consistency of volunteer training, this programme saw a marked increase in the number of volunteers, as well as an expansion of the volunteer profile. A shift in volunteers towards increasing numbers of young people and those from migrant backgrounds was noted, rather than the traditional reliance on women at home with disposable time.

Today the Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand's volunteer programme operates in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Porirua, Hutt Valley, Wellington, Nelson, and Christchurch. It aims to equip volunteers with the skills and knowledge needed to provide newly arrived refugees with practical support, advocacy, and friendship during the initial 6 months of their resettlement. This course covers a range of topics relating to refugee resettlement, including the refugee experience, the role of the volunteer support worker, refugee cultures, support services and resources for refugees and their support workers, refugee health and well-being, and education (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2009b).

The changes and formalisation to volunteer programmes run by the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes and Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand were seen by participants as improving the quality of training, which in turn resulted in a higher level of support for the refugees being resettled. However, while there was a commitment towards greater professionalism of the services being provided by these agencies, the underlying view on the positive contribution of volunteers from the host society remains strong:

Philosophically, the capacity for connectedness from people of good-will in the community who are unpaid is immense.

#### *Expansion of social work and mental health services for diverse arrivals*

While volunteers continue to play a vital role in the sector, a number of NGOs also discussed the expansion of their services or the establishment of their organisations in the 1990s to cater for the social work and mental health needs of newly arriving refugees. This need was seen partly to arise in response to a greater diversity of arrivals of the 1990s.

This shift in the composition of refugee arrivals was seen to come about largely as a result of the 1991 decision by the UNHCR to refocus its resettlement programme on the basis of the need for protection<sup>1</sup> combined with an increase in

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<sup>1</sup> This shift is documented in the 1991 UNHCR report *Resettlement as an Instrument of Protection: Traditional problems in achieving this durable solution and new directions in the 1990s*.

UNHCR processing and protection capacity. In line with this, the New Zealand Refugee Quota Programme was changed in 1992 to be based on need, enabling the Government to respond to the world's refugee crises (Department of Labour, 1994, p 25). It was noted that before this time:

... many resettlement programmes around the world, including New Zealand, had become largely focused on family reunion, in terms of the people that were coming in quotas.

The shift away from a focus on family reunion<sup>2</sup> towards selection on the basis of need for protection saw a diversification in the source countries from which refugees were coming to New Zealand, including the first arrivals from Africa. For many NGOs working in the refugee sector the diversity of ethnic groups arriving in New Zealand provided new challenges.

A number of individuals and agencies in the sector were becoming increasingly aware of the needs of these diverse ethnic groups and were looking to provide specialist staff to better respond to their needs:

... it was clear that increased resources were necessary not only for general resettlement support, but also specialist professional support for the recovery from the implications of torture and trauma. The response from civil society would be enhanced if their role was confined to their areas of strength, while specialist social workers and mental health professionals worked appropriately in their areas of training and expertise.

In the Canterbury region, the recognition of the need for specialist social work services led to the establishment of social worker positions within the Resettlement Family Support Project (which later became Christchurch Resettlement Services) in the early 1990s. At the same time, RMS Refugee Resettlement began to appoint social workers to meet the needs of former refugees in the other main resettlement cities. For RMS Refugee Resettlement the delivery of services became more secure from 2004, with another significant increase in funding at that time. Social work services continue to be funded by the Ministry of Social Development today (while the Department of Labour funds resettlement work). Such social work services were seen by participants as being highly effective in supporting refugee resettlement in New Zealand and in responding appropriately to the complex needs of the diverse refugee arrivals.

The increased understanding of the backgrounds of refugees coming to New Zealand, coupled with more diverse arrivals with complex needs that mainstream mental health agencies struggled to cope with, led to the formation of two new NGOs in 1997 – Auckland Refugees as Survivors (which was renamed Refugees as Survivors New Zealand in 2006) and Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust. Both these NGOs focus exclusively on refugee mental health and well-being and continue to provide specialist support to victims of trauma and

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<sup>2</sup> The earlier focus on family reunion can be understood within the context of the large-scale Indo-Chinese refugee resettlement, where the UNHCR had given assurances to countries of first asylum, particularly in Asia, that these refugees would be resettled elsewhere through the established Refugee Quota Programmes (Department of Labour 1994, p 22).

torture. In Canterbury, former refugees have been able to access mental health services through Christchurch Resettlement Services. These services were seen as making a crucial contribution to refugee resettlement by the participants in this study.

Both Refugees as Survivors New Zealand and Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust have worked to expand and develop their services since their establishment. Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust has run community-based mental health services to meet the needs of clients in the Wellington region since its establishment. More recently, one of the major developments for Refugees as Survivors New Zealand has been the introduction of a similar model with the establishment of its multidisciplinary Mobile Team in 2007, which services the Auckland region by travelling to refugee communities to give them greater accessibility to mental health services (Refugees as Survivors New Zealand Trust, no date).

Several participants in this study commented on the increase in recent years of refugee arrivals with high and complex needs, both in terms of mental and physical health needs. It was noted that people with such needs required additional resourcing and coordinated care, which was not always adequate. This was seen to be particularly challenging in the current economic climate, where funding is more limited.

#### *Resourcing and ongoing non-governmental organisations' development*

As discussed earlier, NGOs involved in refugee support had generally started as small grass-roots organisations, often initially reliant on funding contributions from church groups or other charities. In the 1980s and early 1990s this was typically characterised as '...very, very slight staffing based on very slight funding'.

While the 1990s saw a significant increase in funding from government for the provision of refugee support, a number of the NGOs in this study commented on continuing to be under-resourced during this decade. In the interviews NGOs commented on the funding pressures they experienced during this time, and the work involved in fundraising and trying to locate funding from outside of government, including securing donations from off-shore. Furthermore, the pressures of limited NGO resources were seen to be exacerbated by the increased ethnic diversity of refugee arrivals during this period.

It was noted that in the 2000s there was a significant increase in government funding of refugee resettlement services. RMS Refugee Resettlement received significant increases to the level of funding from the Department of Labour for resettlement support and from the Ministry of Social Development for social work services in the mid 2000s, which one participant said:

... helped enormously in the development of more equitable and more professional services.

With the increases in funding for refugee resettlement support, NGOs continued to expand and develop their services, including a greater involvement of former refugees in a number of NGOs. The renaming of the National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes in 2009 to English Language Partners was indicative of

such a shift within the organisation, including greater consideration of the 'learner voice':

As an organisation, there has been a change to the way we deliver services, based on learner feedback, so there is a growing awareness of the importance of it, and an intention to develop opportunities to gather and use learner feedback more.

As an example of the expansion of services, Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand has now developed a 'three-strand approach' to resettlement support – the volunteers, social workers, as well as cross-cultural workers. From a refugee leader's perspective, the work undertaken by cross-cultural workers was seen to be especially beneficial:

... solving ... people's problems through the cross-cultural workers, that's a great thing.

Today Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand continues to provide initial support for refugees from their arrival at the MRRC, and through their first 12 months of resettlement in the community. Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand manages the process of decision making about where refugees are resettled throughout New Zealand, with input from other specialist providers and the approval of the Department of Labour and provides trained volunteers to support refugee background families in the local community. It also monitors the progress of quota refugees, supporting them with home visits by trained social workers and cross-cultural workers. Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand continues to be funded for its resettlement work by the Department of Labour and for its social work and counselling support by the Ministry of Social Development (Department of Labour, 2009a, p 4).

#### *Pathways: Comprehensive resettlement plans*

One of Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand's most recent pieces of work has been the development Pathways, a new Comprehensive Resettlement Plan, which is being undertaken in collaboration with the Department of Labour. Pathways underpins resettlement for all newly arriving quota refugees and is composed of two components – a family Pathway to Settlement plan and, for all individuals over the age of 18, an individual Pathway to Employment plan (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010a).

This outcomes-focused model provides an avenue for improved tracking of resettlement progress using periodic assessments and progress reporting through a planning document owned by the former refugee. The model also allows for all supporting agencies to contribute to their client's resettlement progress (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010b). The primary goal of the plans is to provide a strong foundation for each adult quota refugee and for refugee families that underpins their path to self-sufficiency (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010b).

The Pathways plans are being piloted for 12 months with all new quota refugee arrivals (Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, 2010b). The process commences with the development of the Pathways plans at the MRRC, led by Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand in collaboration with other agencies.

Initial assessments of refugee capabilities for key resettlement markers (such as employment, English language, housing, social support, and health support) set a pathway for quota refugees towards future self-sufficiency (Department of Labour, 2010a). One participant noted that in this way:

... every refugee family that leaves here [the MRRRC] will have an information pack prepared by the agencies in Mangere. It will contain information on services that will require follow-up so that the social workers assisting them in the resettlement process in the next 6–12 months will know exactly what services have been provided and what needs to be followed up.

The development of such comprehensive resettlement plans was seen as giving former refugees a greater sense of control over their own future in New Zealand, and according to one participant it will:

... enable quota refugees individually ... to be in charge of what needs to happen.

### ***Government services***

As well as increasing the funding to a number of NGOs providing services to refugees, government has also expanded its responsiveness to refugees over the last two decades, both in terms of services for refugees and policy development.

### *Education*

The development of the education sector's responsiveness to the needs of refugee children and parents was one of the key areas highlighted by many of the participants of this study. In particular, the establishment of specialist refugee education coordinators in the Ministry of Education was the advance most commonly commented on by participants. Four regional positions of refugee education coordinator were established in 2000, with an additional national refugee education coordinator position added in 2002. A crucial aspect of these positions was that members of the refugee community filled them:

The next 10 years was completely different because it was shaped by people from the refugee communities themselves employed in the Ministry [of Education].

As well as the positions being filled by former refugees, which was 'considered to be fairly ground-breaking', the Ministry of Education's commitment was seen as having led to other initiatives to support refugee education, including homework programmes, information about schooling in multiple languages, bilingual tutors in schools, and an increase in funding for English language support for up to 5 years. As one refugee leader noted:

... there is a part called 'Refugee Education' in the Ministry of Education and then within that, there is bilingual tutors, adult education, early childhood, homework centres you name it, yeah. So that is quite a lot of initiatives taken by the Government to improve the refugee education.

Having former refugees in the refugee education coordinator positions was also seen as crucial in empowering refugee communities to be involved in the

education of their children and in making the education sector more responsive to refugee needs.

For example, now we've got teachers and principals who are very experienced at in dealing with refugees and they feel confident to call upon parents and engage with them.

However, some participants noted dissatisfaction with recent cutbacks in funding in the education sector that affected former refugees, particularly the disestablishment of tertiary education Refugee Study Grants in the 2009 Budget.

### *Housing*

Several participants also commented on the changes that had occurred in relation to the housing sector in better supporting refugee arrivals in New Zealand. Before the early 2000s RMS volunteers had been tasked with securing rental properties for newly arriving refugees, but changes in Housing New Zealand Corporation policy resulted in the majority of newly arriving refugees moving into state housing.

According to participants, the two significant developments that enabled this shift were the introduction of income-related rents, which capped state house rents at a maximum of 25 percent of income; and the social allocation system under which all state housing applicants undertook a needs assessment. According to the needs assessment, refugees were considered to be in the highest category of need because they would be homeless on their departure from the MRRC.

This represented a major shift in how settlement was organised, because Housing New Zealand became a significant player for the first time.

It was agreed in 2000 by the Ministers of Housing and Immigration that Housing New Zealand Corporation would house or facilitate access to housing for newly arriving quota refugees. Furthermore, the appointment of a national refugee coordinator at Housing New Zealand was seen as moving the organisation towards greater engagement with and understanding of the refugee sector.

### *Ministry of Social Development*

The Ministry of Social Development provides a number of avenues of support to those from refugee backgrounds in New Zealand. As refugees to New Zealand usually arrive with no income or assets, one of the first avenues of support for most newly arrived refugees is a social welfare benefit. While other permanent residents must have lived continuously in New Zealand for 2 years before qualifying for an unemployment benefit, no stand-down period applies to people who arrive through the Refugee Quota Programme (Ministry of Social Development, no date (a)).

The Ministry of Social Development's Settling In initiative was identified by several participants as providing an important avenue for support. Settling In was established in 2003 to identify social issues, work collaboratively to address those issues, build capacity and capability within communities, help build

relationships between refugee, migrant and host communities, and ensure that government policy affecting those communities is developed collaboratively (Ministry of Social Development, no date (b)). The support of Settling In was seen as particularly beneficial in building the capacity of refugee communities, which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

As discussed earlier, the Ministry of Social Development also provides the funding for social work services provided to refugees through Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand.

One Ministry of Social Development initiative commented on by participants in this study was the introduction of the re-establishment grant in 1992. This special needs grant, administered by Work and Income, is available to people in specific circumstances to re-establish themselves in the community (including prisoners, people who have been in hospital for over 6 months, and refugees not entitled to other forms of government assistance).<sup>3</sup> This grant, which has maintained a value of \$1,200 since its introduction, is used to set up households for new refugee families, including purchasing furniture and clothing. The introduction of this non-refugee-specific grant was seen to be helpful when setting up households for newly arriving refugees. However, a number of participants commented that the monetary value of the grant had remained unchanged since 1992, which had led to the ongoing reliance on donations from the host community to cover the shortfall between the grant and the required outlay. One respondent commented that this results in inequity in the standard of furnishings and challenges for the coordination and storage of donated items for Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand, which is responsible for setting up homes for newly arriving refugees.

#### *Department of Labour*

The role of the Department of Labour in the refugee sector was acknowledged by all participants. Given that the Department of Labour has responsibility for the Refugee Quota Programme, including the selection of refugees, manages the MRRC, and provides funding for resettlement support, this is unsurprising.

In terms of supporting quota refugees once they have arrived and are resettled in the community, the Department of Labour's Settlement Division, which was established in 2005, was recognised as playing a key role. Areas that were identified have already been discussed above, but can be summarised as funding Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand to provide resettlement support services for all quota refugees for their first 12 months in New Zealand, providing funding for the Regional Refugee Resettlement Forums and running the National Refugee Resettlement Forums, and establishing and funding the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative.

#### *Health*

The 1990s also saw an increased awareness concerning refugee health and well-being in the major centres of Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. With this,

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<sup>3</sup> For further details on eligibility, see the Work and Income website [www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/re-establishment-grant.html#Whocangetit1](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/individuals/a-z-benefits/re-establishment-grant.html#Whocangetit1)

additional funding became available for initiatives, such as HIV-prevention programmes.

More recent developments in the health sector were commented on by participants in this study. As mentioned above, the establishment of specialist mental health services for former refugees through Refugees as Survivors New Zealand in Auckland, Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust, and Christchurch Resettlement Services were seen as making a significant contribution to refugee health and well-being. The Government's recognition of these services is attested to in the funding they receive from the health sector.

One participant identified the Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy (2006) as providing an impetus for change in health services in the Auckland region, resulting in additional funding, including for interpreting services in primary health care and cultural competency training for primary and secondary health workers, as well as the mental health and disability workforces (Department of Labour and Auckland Sustainable Cities Programme, 2006). Similarly, the Wellington Regional Settlement Strategy (2008) and the Wellington Regional Action Plan for Refugee Health and Wellbeing (2006) were seen to effect significant developments in the health sector at a regional level (Department of Labour, 2008; Refugee Health and Well-being Action Plan Inter-sectoral Working Group, 2006).

Cultural competency training has been a recent initiative to come out of the Auckland region. A training programme for working with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations was developed jointly by Refugees as Survivors New Zealand and the Waitemata District Health Board. Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust and Christchurch Resettlement Services have been involved in the delivery of CALD training in Wellington and Christchurch respectively. This programme, aimed at health professionals, trains practitioners how to work effectively with people arriving as refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds. The training programme includes components on how to work with and through interpreters, how to assess and assist in more culturally responsive and effective ways, and how to apply new knowledge in practical settings. Between August 2008 and March 2009, 120 frontline staff were trained, and all training days were over-subscribed (Te Pou, 2010).

Such cultural competency training for medical professionals was seen to be met with a positive response,

... there's a huge demand for cultural competency training. And you know, you cannot provide enough cultural competency training ... so there's a huge willingness, in terms of practitioners wanting to know about communities.

CALD training is now being offered in a number of locations, including an online e-learning tool (Waitemata District Health Board, 2010) and a quick reference guide for health practitioners, entitled *Cross-Cultural Resource for Health Practitioners working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Clients* (Camplin-Welch, 2007), which includes information on 14 different cultures.

While such cross-cultural training was seen as making significant progress in the health sector, several participants noted that there was still a general shortage

of face-to-face interpreters, especially for certain languages. From a service provision perspective this was seen to be a risk, particularly in terms of providing adequate care in the health sector. One participant commented that therefore new refugee intakes needed to be strategically planned to ensure adequate interpreting services, particularly for those with high and complex needs.

#### *Office of Ethnic Affairs*

While not refugee-specific, another significant change identified by some participants was the establishment of the Office of Ethnic Affairs, which was launched in 2001 within the Department of Internal Affairs (Office of Ethnic Affairs, no date (c)). The Office of Ethnic Affairs has ethnic affairs advisors in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch. The ethnic affairs advisors in each of these centres aim to provide advice on diversity issues, lead best practice in ethnic sector development, and act as a catalyst for ethnic responsiveness across central and local government (Office of Ethnic Affairs, no date (a)). These advisors were seen as playing a useful role in helping to bring together groups of former refugees, as well as in their work with local government.

Another initiative run by the Office of Ethnic Affairs is Language Line. This telephone interpreting service, which offers clients of the participating agencies (predominantly central and local government) free interpreting in 40 different languages, was launched in 2003 (Office of Ethnic Affairs, no date (b)). It has retained a particular focus on ensuring the languages of small ethnic minorities, including those spoken by former refugees, are catered for.

#### *New Zealand Police*

The New Zealand Police was also seen as improving its responsiveness to refugee needs, including increased ethnic diversity within the police force and by putting in place *Working Together with Ethnic Communities Strategy: Police ethnic strategy towards 2010*, which was released in 2004. One participant noted that the police are becoming more involved on a strategic level and are more open to engagement on a number of levels rather than simply responding to problems. This participant noted that today police in the area:

... saw their role as that [of] safely bringing families in, so they're also now building trust with the community because they're not just responding at a crime, they're actually involved in the sector.

The New Zealand Police's ethnic liaison officers and community constables were also seen as being connected to refugee youth in particular, 'in a less frightening and a more kind-of open information giving'.

#### *Local government*

A number of city councils were seen as contributing to the sector by employing people to liaise with ethnic communities. Councils were also seen to be making a positive contribution to refugee resettlement by running events and programmes for ethnic minorities and holding celebrations of ethnic diversity. Such work was seen to make councils more inclusive and responsive to former refugees living in their cities.

### ***Policy development: Family reunion and cross-government approach***

In discussing the significant changes in the refugee sector over the last two decades, participants discussed two key areas of policy development – firstly, the challenges and changes to family reunion policy; and secondly, the desire for a coherent cross-government policy on refugee resettlement.

#### *Family reunion policies*

A number of policy developments have occurred over the last two decades in relation to refugee family reunion. In 1991 the Humanitarian Category was created, where applicants could be granted residence if they, or a New Zealand party, was suffering serious physical or emotional harm. Applicants had to be supported by a close relative who was a New Zealand citizen or resident, and applicants had to show that their situation could be resolved only by their being granted residence in New Zealand (Merwood, 2008, p 5).

Given the scope of this policy, the Humanitarian Category became the key avenue for bringing extended family members to New Zealand (nuclear family members could be brought in through the Refugee Quota). While some participants commented on the challenges of the Humanitarian Category, many were concerned that the closure of the category in October 2001 negatively affected the ability of former refugees in New Zealand to be reunited with their family members.

As a way of addressing family reunion needs, the Refugee Family Sponsored Policy was introduced in 2002. This category was for family members of former refugees in New Zealand who were unable to gain entry through any other category. Three hundred places for eligibility to apply were made available per year (Merwood, 2008, p 8) and places were drawn through a ballot. One participant described the impact of a ballot system in the following way:

... a lucky-dip of 300 a year was just so challenging for them and soul-destroying ... we had people who have tried about five years in a row ... they needed counselling after they got their results each time.

In 2007 there was a move away from the ballot system with the introduction of the Refugee Family Support Category, which has a two-tiered registration system. Sponsors who meet tier one criteria have first access to places and are queued. If places are not filled by those in tier one, registrations are called from those who meet tier two criteria. There remain 300 places available under this category per year (Merwood, 2008, p 13). The change to a queued system rather than a ballot was mentioned by a number of participants as a positive development, giving former refugees a greater sense of certainty of their ability to be reunited with family. However, many participants acknowledged that the issue of family reunion continues to present many challenges for refugee communities in New Zealand. While solutions to this issue were not a focus of discussion, the distress of separation was acknowledged:

... most refugees feel an enormous sense of obligation and often feel guilty that they survived and they're here, and they have close family who are still in desperate situations.

Furthermore, it was noted that separation from family often led to service providers' involvement in supporting distressed family members or helping with application processes rather than focusing on settlement support per se. One participant noted that:

Refugees expressed that they could not settle successfully while anxiety about relatives in unsafe or even dangerous conditions off-shore was paramount.

In general, some participants commented on dissatisfaction with Immigration New Zealand in relation to family reunion. There was a sense that policy might not be well understood by community members and that Immigration New Zealand could do more to communicate sponsorship criteria and processes.

On the other hand, some participants in the Wellington region discussed the Refugee Family Reunification Trust as having been very helpful for refugees in the region. This charitable trust, established in 2001, provides grants to former refugees towards expenses directly related to bringing their family members to New Zealand.<sup>4</sup> A similar trust, the Auckland Refugee Family Trust, was set up in the Auckland region in 2010 (Human Rights Commission, 2010).

#### *Cross-government policy*

Many of the participants in this study discussed the need for a unified cross-government policy on the resettlement of refugees in New Zealand. Some participants discussed certain developments as having progressed work in this direction, including the launch of the New Zealand Settlement Strategy in 2004, and the establishment of the Department of Labour's Settlement Division the following year.

The settlement strategy was developed to proactively support newcomers to New Zealand, including refugees, to become fully integrated (Department of Labour, 2007a). The settlement strategy's seven goals are that migrants, refugees and their families:

- are accepted and respected by host communities for their diverse cultural backgrounds and their community interactions are positive
- obtain employment appropriate to their qualifications and skills and are valued for their contribution to economic transformation and innovation
- become confident using English in a New Zealand setting or are able to access appropriate language support
- access appropriate information and responsive services that are available in the wider community
- form supportive social networks and establish a sustainable community identity
- feel safe within the wider community in which they live

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<sup>4</sup> For further information see the Refugee Family Reunification Trust website, <http://refugeefamilyreunificationtrust.org.nz>

- accept and respect the New Zealand way of life and contribute to civic, community and social activities (Department of Labour, 2007a, p 11)

As well as specifying the above goals for refugees and migrants, the settlement strategy also places considerable emphasis on the two-way commitment required of the New Zealand host community. Therefore, while refugees and migrants need to adapt to a new country, '[i]t is up to New Zealanders to ensure that migrants and refugees feel welcome and safe in their new home' (Department of Labour, 2007a, p 13)

The introduction of the settlement strategy was seen as a turning point by some participants in terms of facilitating greater coordination and collaboration across the wide range of government agencies and NGOs involved in the sector. However, many participants voiced the opinion that even with the introduction of the settlement strategy, there continues to be a level of inconsistency in the approaches of the government agencies involved:

I think there's still a lack of overall leadership and it's still quite a fragmented space.

Sometimes they [government departments] will come to us and consult us. However, there is no overall comprehensive policy which relates to the needs and issues of refugees. Each government department operates in its own way.

Other participants voiced their desire for a single cohesive government policy on refugee resettlement, with clear leadership and accountability:

I think what is missing is a national refugee policy ... there's not a lot of consistency across the country.

There has to be leadership from government and it would be better if one department actually had a leadership role in bringing everyone else together to achieve certain things.

... we want a one national plan – no matter how difficult. One national refugee resettlement plan, across the country.

The introduction of a single, coherent government policy on refugee support was seen by many as having the potential to streamline services, avoiding duplication and making the best possible use of available funds.

Refugee leaders also expressed frustration at the mixed messages they received from different government agencies and the perceived tension between some agencies. It was noted that these problems could be largely overcome with a single government policy on refugee support and a clear mandate for leadership.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the Department of Labour is leading a piece of work on the development of an end-to-end refugee resettlement strategy.

### **Summary**

In looking back over more than two decades, the participants in this study noted a great deal of progress in the refugee sector in relation to service provision and policy.

In relation to NGOs, the period from the late 1980s to the present witnessed the move away from grass-roots beginnings to highly professional and independent NGOs. The move towards greater professionalism within the NGOs was commented on explicitly by several participants, such as one who said:

I think that there is a far more professional approach now on everything we do.

For two of the leading NGOs in the sector, extensive work was also undertaken to develop NZQA-recognised volunteer programmes, providing a higher quality and more equitable support to their clients. The 1990s also saw an expansion of services, partially in response to the increased ethnic diversity of arrivals. New services included an emphasis on mental health and social work that had been absent in previous decades.

Government agencies also undertook considerable work over the last two decades to improve their responsiveness to former refugees who have resettled in New Zealand. This included considerable changes in the education and housing sector, Ministry of Social Development, Department of Labour, as well as in the health sector, Office of Ethnic Affairs, New Zealand Police, and local government.

Policy on family reunion was identified as an ongoing challenge by participants in this study given the distress of family separation on resettling refugees. At a higher policy level, many participants noted the desire for a cohesive policy on refugee resettlement, which was seen as having the potential to provide greater consistency and the best use of resources.

### **3.3 Increased collaboration and awareness**

As outlined in the previous two sections, the refugee sector underwent significant changes over the past two decades. This change was reflected in the growth of the refugee voice and was evidenced in the increased responsiveness to refugee needs of NGOs and government agencies. These two inter-related developments can be seen to come together in the increasing collaboration between the different organisations and individuals involved in the sector and the increased understanding and awareness of refugee issues over the last two decades.

#### ***Consultation and collaboration***

Many participants in this study identified formalised mechanisms for interaction as integral to increased collaboration within the sector.

##### *Forums for interaction*

One of the first inter-agency forums in New Zealand was initiated by the UNCHR, which had an office in New Zealand in the late 1990s, as part of its international Partnership in Action initiative (often referred to as PARinAC) for NGO–UNHCR collaboration (ICVA. 1999). Under this system, one person working in an NGO was identified as a 'focal point' and tasked with bringing together resettlement issues raised by NGOs as an integrated point of advocacy. The first appointment was in 1995. The desire to use this new role to 'unite the various voices and

effect change and progress' led to a proposal being put to the NGO groups in 1998 that they would develop a combined proposal for a more integrated approach towards refugee resettlement that would be taken to government. Different NGOs took responsibilities for different chapters to match up with the government departments that could take responsibility for policy development. However, with a change of government in 1999, this report evolved into a briefing to the incoming Government, *Refugee resettlement policy in New Zealand: An integrated approach – A report for the 1999 incoming Coalition Government from the NGO Sector* (Broom, 2000), which was presented to the new Minister of Immigration in January 2000. Putting together this document was seen to bring together a number of NGOs for the first time, and thereby to build relationships and connections:

... the biggest cohesive move for NGOs, in terms of bringing them together to jointly consider their resettlement, was the preparation of the briefing for the incoming government in 1999.

Furthermore, one participant noted that bringing together information on refugee resettlement and service provision in this way led to greater government awareness and a new level of commitment to supporting refugee resettlement.

The tripartite meetings of the 1990s and the subsequent development of the Refugee Forums in the 2000s were seen as key avenues for fostering the growth of inter-agency relationships in the sector, providing regular and formalised mechanisms for discussing refugee resettlement issues, policy, and service provision. In line with this, participants also commented on government agencies working together more closely rather than working in separate silos.

#### *Co-location*

The co-location of service providers in multi-service centres was also seen as facilitating increased collaboration between services. Housing a number of agencies together was also seen as simultaneously improving the ease of access to services for former refugees.

#### *Working together*

The development of strengthening relationships in the sector was reflected by participants from government officials, NGOs, and refugee leaders. The growth of the refugee voice discussed in a previous section can be seen as significantly changing the dynamics for interaction and a number of refugee leaders acknowledged that government agencies had worked to take refugee perspectives into account:

... today, they've changed, they come to us and they contact us, and they actually consult us, which is actually a good sign.

This sentiment was also echoed from the government sector, which had a willingness to engage former refugees on policy and service provision:

... there is a willingness to include and to listen to and to develop policies and procedures around what they are saying they need and want.

From an NGO perspective, there was often an acknowledgement of the increased investment in time required to work collaboratively and to develop increased understanding about the needs of refugees, but that doing so resulted in making services more effective.

... there's also a lot more willingness to learn more ... to make their services more effective, so they can perform better.

However, while progress was seen to have occurred in this area, some participants recognised that service delivery and relationships with former refugees was a journey of development. Instead one participant conceived this as a process of ongoing reflection and evaluation leading to change:

... it's like a snap-shot of today, you know, 2010 is that people are more willing to think, reflect. 'OK, how can we do this better, what are we doing.' You know, and each person comes and brings a different perspective too, so it's really important that that continues, that process continues ... we're still moving along that journey, really.

Participants around the country often spoke of the success of local initiatives and relationships on the ground that enabled real improvements in the delivery of services, working in partnership with refugee communities. As one participant noted:

... there's a willingness now to participate at another level, to 'work with' and not 'do to' so much. To build relationships with people within the communities – that's not true in every case, but in 5 years I think there's been amazing movement around this stuff across the country, actually, which is ... something that New Zealand should be really proud of.

While there was an acknowledgement that advances had been made, often at the local level, some participants also noted that additional progress still needed to be made before equal partnership could be achieved between NGOs and refugee-led organisations. Furthermore, some participants commented that NGOs may at times be protecting funding streams and may feel threatened by the growth of refugee-led organisations taking an interest in delivering services to their own communities. One commented that:

... established NGOs have to learn to let go as well, and so I think it's a developmental process that isn't fully developed yet. I think we've got a bit of growing up to do.

On the other hand, some refugee leaders were careful to allay the concerns of these established NGOs that they were not looking to take over the roles of existing NGOs. However, there was a sense that communities did have an interest in sourcing their own funding and running their own programmes, such as parenting and health promotion programmes.

### ***Formalised involvement of former refugees***

Increased awareness and responsiveness to refugee needs was often tied to the employment of refugee background staff and former refugees taking on formal positions on the boards of NGOs. While before the 2000s former refugees were

seen to be primarily called on for skills such as interpreting skills or cultural advice, the last decade heralded a change in recognising former refugees for their other skills, which in turn was seen to increase the quality of services delivered:

... doors were open so that strength or that knowledge could be capitalised by also these people having real jobs within this organisation – not just because they are refugees, but really because of the knowledge and the skills that they've got. And I think that developed capabilities in the sector, and the NGO ... service delivery.

I think the impact of having a number of former refugees employed in government agencies and NGOs has been a big shift and recognises that refugees are themselves capable of contributing to resettlement work beyond simply providing advice and interpreting.

From the perspectives of refugee leaders, being on the boards of NGOs also provided an avenue for improving the services provided by these organisations:

...we put our refugee people on their board to advocate for us because our needs are changing and the services need to change to reflect these changes.

Similarly, some NGOs commented on the benefits of having a refugee voice on their board in terms of tailoring services to needs rather than assumed priorities:

... it's probably meant that we've done things that we wouldn't have thought that we would do ... we consult differently, we make decisions differently, we don't assume that we work by ourselves any longer, which is a huge relief for us.

Furthermore, former refugees employed by government agencies or NGOs were seen as playing an important role, not only in improving service provision for refugees, but also in building knowledge and understanding in refugee communities:

... they know the realities of the department that they are serving and they know the reality of the communities as well. So they are even in-between to educate their department and educate the refugees about the realities as well. That's very important role.

As such, the employment of former refugees in government or NGO positions was seen to have a significant impact on refugee communities by giving them a sense of empowerment. One participant recounted listening to a former refugee talking about this development:

... somebody said, 'The most significant thing that's happened is that ... we've got people in government – that is what has been a significant change for us' ... They thought that was the single most empowering thing.

While a great deal of progress was seen to have been made in this area, some participants noted the desire for a greater number of people from refugee backgrounds to be employed by government agencies.

## **Summary**

Participants noted a shift in how agencies in the sector, including government agencies, NGOs, and refugee communities, have strengthened their relationships over the past two decades. There was a strong sense that as a result refugee support had grown and developed significantly over this period, with much improved awareness and responsiveness. Having regular and formalised inter-agency forums was seen to facilitate this process, as was the co-location of NGOs in multi-service centres.

It was acknowledged that working more collaboratively often took more time, but that this was rewarded with improvements in the quality of services provided, which were more responsive to what former refugees needed, rather than what was assumed they needed. Such advances were also often linked to having former refugees involved in formalised roles, such as being employed by NGOs or government agencies, or taking up positions on the boards of NGOs.

Overall, while much progress had been made over the last two decades, some participants also identified the need to work still more collaboratively with refugee communities and to increase cultural competency and awareness of refugee issues and needs.

## **4 GROWTH OF REFUGEE COMMUNITIES**

As well as being asked to consider changes to service provision and policy in the refugee sector since 1987, participants in this study were also asked to reflect on the ways in which refugee communities have strengthened and grown over the last decade.

### **4.1 Development of communities**

Participants discussed major shifts in the area of community development, including refugee communities becoming more cohesive and forming incorporated societies, resourcing for communities, the size and composition of communities, training and collaboration as well as leadership, and the way in which existing communities are supporting new arrivals.

#### ***Structures and resourcing***

Several refugee leaders spoke of the challenges that had to be overcome in the process of developing cohesion amongst refugee communities. This included surmounting divisions within and between communities, often stemming from ethnic, tribal, or religious conflicts in their countries of origin. Bringing together former refugees from a wide variety of backgrounds often began in a fairly informal way, and was seen as an exercise of building trust and relationships. Refugee leaders described the early meetings as very difficult:

... we came from different backgrounds, different languages, different cultures. So it was really, really hard sometimes to sit at a round table and discuss common issues.

Refugee leaders discussed how they had worked to move beyond these divisions to focus on the common issues facing former refugees in New Zealand, by setting up meetings for leaders from various refugee communities to come together. Several participants noted that for some communities to begin to unite and identify with each other was often a long and ongoing process. As one refugee leader pointed out this process required community members to overcome the context of conflict in their countries of origin to focus instead on their commonalities in New Zealand:

... to move on or move away from the back-home politics and just focus here. Simply to say, 'Here's our country, here's our home – how can we be part of this?'

Refugee leaders reflected that initially there was very limited support from NGOs and government agencies for this work, which often consisted simply of getting access to a venue free of charge to enable members of refugee communities to come together. However, over time support for creating pan-refugee coalitions was seen to increase, stemming from two key sources. The first source of support was the Ministry of Social Development's Settling In programme, which included providing support with venue hire, helping to run meetings, and providing people to work alongside refugee coalitions to develop their capabilities. The second source of support was seen as coming from the Department of Labour in the form of the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative

discussed in the previous chapter. This initiative provides funding to enable pan-refugee groups that have formed incorporated societies to meet and discuss their issues. Although there was not a consensus of opinion, many participants, including former refugees, NGOs, and some representatives from government agencies, perceived the support from both of these sources as being constructive for the development of refugee communities.

Some participants saw ChangeMakers Refugee Forum in Wellington, which had formed in 2003 (ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, 2008b), as having led the way in setting up pan-refugee coalitions. The movement towards establishing such inter-ethnic refugee coalitions in the 2000s led to the four regional coalitions becoming incorporated societies in 2006 – the Auckland Refugee Community Coalition, Waikato Refugee Forum in Hamilton, ChangeMakers Refugee Forum in Wellington, and Canterbury Refugee Council. Many participants spoke of the establishment of these coalitions as signifying a large achievement in terms of overcoming intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts to provide a coherent voice on refugee related issues:

It doesn't mean that the war [in the country of origin] is over ... but at least these people are able to really identify common issues, resettlement issues, and work with the sector really to progress that.

And refugee leaders commented on the way in which inter-ethnic refugee coalitions had facilitated the process by which communities could work together and put their differences aside:

... it's very helpful because when some communities who are so divided, they come under that umbrella ... to say that the difference of the community should remain by the door when you come in.

Below the level of inter-ethnic refugee groups, participants also commented on refugee background communities becoming stronger in their own right:

I think refugee communities in many places have become a lot stronger, they're a lot more participative in New Zealand society more generally, as well as within their own ethnic communities in some cases, and within the refugee community in others.

Several participants commented on the growth of community capacity as being a process that occurs over time as communities become established. For those who have recently arrived, it is often a matter of people initially 'finding their feet'. On the other hand, as refugee groups have been in New Zealand for a longer period, they have worked to become more coordinated. While some participants felt that not enough money had been put into community development initiatives, others saw the growth of refugee communities as an organic process resulting from being settled for a number of years and having learnt about New Zealand institutions and systems. This increasing strength of refugee background communities was often seen as evidenced by the proliferation of incorporated ethnic societies during the 2000s.

It was also acknowledged that the drive towards becoming incorporated societies was often linked to refugee communities' ability to access funding (which they could do only if they were incorporated societies). In general, participants noted

that refugee communities were increasing their understanding of how to apply for funding and the availability of a variety of funding streams. Furthermore, refugee leaders acknowledged that using funding appropriately in the New Zealand context was a learning process that is facilitated by training and support.

### ***Training and collaboration***

Training was seen as an important facilitator for refugee communities to operate effectively in the New Zealand context. Participants recognised that resources had been put into community capacity building training from a range of agencies, including from central government, local government, and NGOs:

A whole range of agencies have been offering various types of training.

Support in the form of training was seen by many participants as an essential component of helping refugee communities to help themselves and run their own initiatives:

... my experience is that former refugees are much more interested in getting involved in organising themselves. Quite often it's just not sure how to do that, and there's just some fundamental issues around getting familiar with democratic processes and things like that to be able to do that. Yeah, so that's where the sort of capacity building support needs to go.

From a refugee perspective, training to provide community members with new skills was welcomed and seen as highly beneficial:

... there has been a lot of training ... that has made a lot of difference in many communities.

However, there was a sense from some participants that while certain communities had benefited from training, more could be done to provide additional training and support to refugee communities. It was also noted that refugee communities need to be provided with additional information about training opportunities that exist to ensure they can be fully taken advantage of:

... even if opportunities are available, the communities must be made aware of what opportunities are available, and I don't know if all of them know, if all of the communities know.

Participants also noted that while training occurred in structured sessions, there was also a lot of informal capacity building taking place. This included support and collaboration with NGOs and other ethnic organisations as well as participation in initiatives and consultation processes. One participant reflected on the way in which a number of ethnic organisations were able to help each other informally when brought together:

... there's a real cross-pollination of ideas, resources. They'll share policy manuals, I discover, they do all sorts of things, they help each other with constitutions, or tell them where to go for help.

Furthermore, some participants noted that as the inter-ethnic refugee coalitions build up their skills and knowledge, they are able to pass this on to new ethnic communities, helping them to set up their own structures, and so on.

### ***Size and composition of communities***

The majority of participants in this study voiced the opinion that the size of the resettled community plays an important part in terms of building their capacity in New Zealand and in terms of having their voices heard. This was often framed as communities needing to have a 'critical mass', and was reflected in the sentiment that:

... in general, bigger communities are better.

A 'critical mass' was seen to have occurred first with the consolidation of the Indo-Chinese communities of the 1980s and early 1990s, which allowed these communities to develop a sense of their own ethnic identity and form their own incorporated societies. It was also noted that the larger the size of the community, the greater the resource to draw on and build from:

... the size of the community means, I suppose, diversity within that community, different skills, different experiences, and it does seem to make a major difference.

These larger communities were often seen as having a greater capacity to support each other as well as newly arriving refugees. However, participants also stressed that size was only one component of building strong communities, noting that the composition of the group, including leadership, shared ethnicity, and family groupings, could be just as important in creating a viable community.

A number of participants noted that New Zealand has accepted refugees from a very wide variety of countries (see Appendix B), and that even those from the same country are often of many different ethnicities. Many participants stressed that the smaller communities were at a disadvantage on multiple levels. Very small ethnic minority groups were often too small to support one another and were seen to suffer distress as a result. Furthermore, participants voiced concern that small groups were overlooked both in terms of services not being tailored to their needs and in terms of funding. One refugee leader noted that most resources and support were going to the large established refugee communities, while smaller communities were lacking a profile, and consequently, support:

... the same communities have been getting all advantages while other communities have been just left off, in limbo where nobody knows about them, and whatever they are going through nobody cares about them because of the size of them ... we're saying it's about time for those small communities to be looked after as well.

However, some other refugee leaders noted that the smaller communities might have the advantage of being more cohesive than the larger and more diverse groups:

I've found that the smaller they are, the stronger sometimes, because they interact very well – small group interact very well – whereas the big group, not really.

The general recognition of the benefits of larger communities, and strong advocacy from some small African refugee communities, resulted in an exercise to increase the size of five African communities in the mid 2000s. This initiative, referred to as the Africa Project, was aimed at strengthening the Sudanese, Congolese, Rwandese, Burundi, and Djibouti communities, who at that time each had less than 150 individuals in New Zealand who had come as quota refugees. As part of this project the quota programme was used to bring in additional people from these five countries over a one year period, resulting in a large increase in numbers for these communities. According to one participant, 'it was a pretty successful operation ... all communities increased.'

### **Leadership**

Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of leadership in relation to building strong communities, and many commented on the dedication and energy of the leaders involved with their communities. Many participants also noted that leaders themselves face settlement challenges, including those of generally settling in a new country, acquiring language skills, and becoming familiar with a new context.

It was noted that for leadership to effectively further the aspirations of the community, it required the right people to be involved, as well as training and support. Furthermore, developing leadership required opportunities to put leadership skills into practice. Such opportunities were seen to be fostered by having forums in which leaders could engage with other agencies. Some participants voiced the opinion that the leadership in the sector was strengthening and improving:

I think in that sense leadership, the willingness to take responsibility, the willingness to share ideas and to work together is generally there now far more than it was a few years ago.

Refugee community leaders were often recognised as working very long hours and putting large amounts of energy into developing and supporting their communities in an unpaid capacity. The interviews reflected a diversity of opinion around whether these people should be paid for this work. For some, there was a strong sense that refugee leaders should be paid for the work they are undertaking in support of their communities. Conversely other participants argued that community advocacy is something that people could choose to do for the good of their community, and that it is the processes for engagement and interaction that should be funded rather than the individual positions.

Many participants noted that leadership roles tended to fall on a small number of people who were expected to respond to community issues and liaise with other agencies:

... you've got refugee community leaders who are just so stretched ... They're ... working all hours for their community. There's often huge

pressure on them from the community, then there's huge pressure on them to be the contact person for all government, all NGOs.

Sharing leadership roles more broadly and supporting those in leadership roles were often seen as important mechanisms to avoid overburdening these individuals:

It is important ... that leadership is shared because there have been many instances of key people in communities just burning out or becoming sort of swamped.

It was noted that cultural expectations could also put additional pressure on refugee leaders, providing them with a strong sense of responsibility to work for their ethnic community:

I grew up in a collective culture, there is an obligation to serve our community collectively, it is not a choice ...

Given such challenges, some refugee leaders commented on the importance of supporting one another:

...we are there to give support to each other, and whenever something is happening we will be doing our best to be there, ready to bring all of us close together.

While some participants noted that leadership could come in many different forms, such as from community elders or professional leaders, many discussed the importance of expanding leadership to include more women, and particularly, more young people.

Several participants noted the trend towards young refugee leaders starting to come to the fore. These young leaders had often arrived in New Zealand as children and had been through the New Zealand education system. These highly competent and skilled young people were seen to be playing an important role in:

... leading their communities and leading development in their communities.

These new and emerging leaders were also seen to act as role models within their communities. The recently released *Somali Graduate Journal* was often seen as evidence of both role-modelling and leadership by participants in this study. The first edition of the journal was produced in 2008 and highlighted the academic success of Somali people in the Waikato region, while the 2009 journal (Abdi, 2010) celebrated the wider achievements of Somali people in New Zealand at a national level.

The increase of refugee youth involvement in communities was seen by some participants as part of the natural development of long-term settlement of ethnic communities, while a number of NGOs commented on the work they were doing to actively foster young leaders in refugee communities.

### ***Existing refugee communities supporting new arrivals***

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that established communities play a vital role in the settlement of new refugee arrivals and this has been occurring for many years. This support tended to come from communities who were themselves already somewhat established and who had the capacity to help others. Most often the types of support included social and cultural support, informal help with English, as well as providing information on day-to-day living in New Zealand. However, it was noted that such support was at times largely invisible:

... you were very aware that there was that huge kind of under the radar settlement that's happening within communities.

Several participants commented on the ways in which established communities provide a first layer of support for new arrivals:

... refugee communities themselves ... have always been involved in providing almost the first tier of support for arriving refugees of the same ethnicity. So people will generally find support from their own community on arrival.

Such support was identified as often beginning when new refugee intakes arrived at the MRRC. This provided an opportunity for existing communities to welcome new members of their ethnic community and provide them with information about living in New Zealand. Once out in the community, such established members of the community continued to be seen as an important resource for the new arrivals:

... as refugee groups become more coordinated and have been here for longer ... when new people arrive, it's a lot easier for them because there's established communities to be involved in.

A number of participants commented that ethnic communities often worked together to support each other with cultural and linguistic maintenance, sometimes through formalised classes for children.

The ongoing role of refugee communities supporting new arrivals was often seen as complementary to work undertaken by government and NGOs in the sector. While established communities were seen to provide strong emotional and community support, NGOs and government continued to provide the 'nuts and bolts of settlement'. Again, as in participants' discussion around leadership, several people noted the need to ensure that refugee communities were not overburdened:

What we need to ensure, in looking to the future, is that the role of the ethnic community is safeguarded, and that they are protected from being burnt out.

Some participants, including refugee leaders, noted the need for additional training and support for community members to, in turn, best support new arrivals:

... for communities to provide a bit more support and to be self-sufficient, as a community they need help and support - how to function and what is expected in the New Zealand context. They need to be supported to make the most of their skills and knowledge in this new context.

It was noted by some participants that the work undertaken by existing communities could be understood as being part of host community support provided by members of New Zealand ethnic groups helping new arrivals from the same culture, rather than as being related to their refugee background.

Conversely, one refugee leader spoke of the depth and enduring nature of support one refugee organisation had received from other long-established refugee groups, most notably the Jewish community. Support received from the Jewish community included donations of funding as well as extensive skills and experience that have helped to build the capacity of the refugee organisation:

... it is huge what they have given us ... They're giving enormous resources. Their time, their energy - we cannot afford to buy all of those kinds of skills.

### **Summary**

Participants in this study noted the changes that had taken place over the last 10 years that reflected the growth and development of refugee communities in New Zealand. Participants in general acknowledged that given the diversity of refugee arrivals in New Zealand, there could be no single approach to community capacity development that would suit everyone, and that this approach would vary from one community to another.

While no 'one size fits all' approach was identified, many participants commented on the important role of the inter-ethnic refugee coalitions that were formed in the mid 2000s. These coalitions were seen as reflecting the way in which inter- and intra-ethnic conflict could be overcome to focus on common issues in the New Zealand context. The formation of the coalitions was seen to have been largely facilitated by the Department of Labour's Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative. The role and standing of the coalitions was further reinforced through their role in the annual Refugee Resettlement Forums. Support from the Ministry of Social Development's Settling In programme was also seen as developing the capacity of the coalitions through training and at times by providing people to work alongside refugee leaders.

The size of refugee communities was also seen to play an important part in terms of building community capacity and being heard. While many participants commented on the greater resources a larger community is able to build from and draw on, some refugee leaders noted that it might be easier for smaller communities to be more cohesive.

Participants in this study acknowledged the importance of effective leadership in building strong communities. This was seen as requiring the right kind of people being given the appropriate training and support, as well as having avenues for putting skills into practice, such as inter-agencies engagement. Refugee leaders were often recognised as working long hours to develop and support their communities, and some participants cautioned that leadership needed to be

more broadly shared to avoid overburdening a small number of individuals. Youth was seen as providing new and emerging leaders, many of whom had the advantage of having grown up between cultures.

More broadly, existing refugee communities were seen to play a highly important role in supporting new refugee arrivals. This often included social and cultural support, and providing invaluable information on living in New Zealand. Such support was often seen as complementary to the services provided by NGOs and government.

## **4.2 Relationships with host society**

Integration is often conceptualised as a two-way process of adaptation and accommodation from both the host society and the newcomers (eg, Atfield et al, 2007) and as such participants were asked about how public perceptions towards accepting refugees had changed over the last decade. This elicited a wide range of responses, from a view that there had been a decline in public support to a sense that there was now a more open attitude towards refugees in New Zealand.

Many of the participants who discussed a positive movement in the attitudes of the New Zealand public towards refugees talked about the context of increased ethnic diversity in the New Zealand population that has occurred over the last two decades. This increasing ethnic diversity was seen to be associated with an increase in public awareness and greater acceptance of people from a range of cultures.

### ***Role of the media***

The media was also seen to play an important part in increasing understanding of refugee issues. This included covering national issues, as well as providing information on the international conflicts that forced people to seek refuge outside their country of origin. Furthermore, the portrayal of certain political events was seen to play a powerful role in making refugee issues more visible in New Zealand. The event most commonly noted in this regard was the plight of Afghan refugees onboard the *MS Tampa*, and the response of the New Zealand government in resettling 131 of these refugees in 2001.

The *Tampa* incident helped to produce a huge change in public perception.

At national and regional levels, several participants commented on the positive response of the media in covering refugee issues in recent years, particularly in newspapers:

You see far more stories that are positive about refugees' achievement than you would have 10 years ago.

Such positive news stories were also seen to be reinforced by a shift in television to be more somewhat more ethnically inclusive. The *Minority Voices* series produced by Television New Zealand was positively commented on by several participants, although it was lamented that this programme was not screened at in a prime-time slot, so would have gone unnoticed by many.

However, while it was acknowledged that the media often portrayed former refugees and refugee issues in a more positive way than they had in the past, a number of participants also noted that this was not always the case. The media's labelling of a person who had committed a crime as a 'refugee' was seen to be unnecessary and problematic as it could lead the New Zealand public to generalise such behaviour to refugee communities as a whole.

### **Public education**

Public education was seen to play an important role in increasing awareness and understanding of refugee issues and thereby lead to increased public support, which would in turn facilitate successful resettlement:

Because, you know, it doesn't matter how much you want to belong, if the people you're amongst won't let you, then you're never going to develop that sense of belonging.

Several participants also noted that there was also a growing awareness of the refugee programme in New Zealand. This was seen to have occurred as a result of promotional work carried out by NGOs, and public events and celebrations such as World Refugee Day. Events like these were seen as highly beneficial in creating opportunities for interaction and learning.

While acknowledging the value and role of public education on refugee issues, several participants felt that this was an area where more could be done:

... there is a need to raise awareness about refugee issues within New Zealand ... particularly to challenge some of the misconceptions and wariness that the public has about refugees ... New Zealanders are warm, compassionate and welcoming, and more needs to be done to extend this welcome to those who seek a new life in this country. When we do so, we will significantly improve the lives of refugees, and of all New Zealanders.

Measures of public support identified by participants included the number of volunteers stepping up to work with former refugees and donations from the public towards setting up new homes for refugee intakes. Areas where increased education was seen to be occurring was in schools, churches, museums, and public libraries, where there was often a focus on marking culturally significant days.

One of the areas of friction with the host community identified by participants was where there was tension over state resources, particularly housing. This tension over resources was seen to be exacerbated by lack of education, as one government participant stated:

... with regards to housing – we ask the most needy in our society to give up their place to refugees ... Now because of that, it's really, really important, that they should be educated as to why that's happening, and somehow be involved and agree to it happening.

Furthermore, given the needs of many members of the host population, some participants noted the need to balance the resources going specifically to refugees and those going to New Zealanders in need more generally.

### ***Engagement with Māori***

One recent positive development commented on by some participants was an increase in engagement between refugee communities and iwi. Ngai Tahu was seen as playing an important role in the Christchurch area, running joint programmes for the community (eg, around family violence) and supporting the refugee community in the region. One refugee leader commented on how this engagement had led to a greater understanding of Māori culture and initiated a sense of commonality and connection for refugee communities:

... we have a lot of similarities to Māori society.

It was also noted that in Hamilton local Māori were actively involved in welcoming new refugee arrivals through a pōwhiri. One participant noted that for Māori to hold a pōwhiri to welcome refugee arrivals was also significant in that:

Tangata whenua are actually ... being acknowledged in terms of the right to welcome and that ... refugee communities, when they're stepping on Hamilton soil, that there's clear value that they're wanted here, that this is a special cultural celebration for you, and through that cultural engagement, that first cultural engagement is positive.

While a formal welcome in itself was seen to be significant for both newly arriving refugees and local Māori, this had expanded further 'just naturally over time [and] built relationships between communities'. Such engagement was seen as providing important avenues to increase cultural understanding on both sides.

### ***Discrimination***

It was noted by some participants that former refugees still face discrimination from the host community. Several participants noted that the 1990s was a particularly challenging period, with the first intakes of African refugees resettled in New Zealand facing discrimination and lack of knowledge from the host community. While host attitudes were seen to have improved, there was an acknowledgement that racism and discrimination were still ongoing challenges faced by refugees resettling in New Zealand. As one refugee leader noted:

... some people say, 'Oh they don't fit in our culture, they don't look like us', you know, all those things can happen as personal views.

Host attitudes towards former refugees were seen to be related to economic cycles in New Zealand as well as international events. Some participants noted that the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States had negatively affected the perception of former refugees in New Zealand, particularly those from the Muslim faith.

Some participants also commented on the institutional racism that exists, with agencies not having the knowledge and skills to work with former refugees in culturally appropriate ways.

## **Summary**

There was no consensus among the participants in this study about whether public perception towards former refugees in New Zealand was significantly different from in the past. However, participants often commented on the population changes in New Zealand over the last two decades, with increased ethnic diversity making it easier for former refugees to blend in and feel more accepted.

The media, as an important avenue for shaping public opinion, was generally seen to have improved the way in which it portrays former refugees. Furthermore, the media coverage of international conflicts was also seen as creating a better understanding of what leads people to flee their country and resettle elsewhere.

Many participants advocated for increased public education around refugee issues, as this was seen to build public support for refugee resettlement. This was seen as a way to potentially overcome issues such as friction over state resources, and the discrimination still faced by many former refugees. Discrimination related to economic cycles in New Zealand as well as the broader international context, such as the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Recent engagements between refugee communities and iwi were noted as a positive development by a number of participants. This included partnerships on community programmes and the involvement of Māori in formally welcoming newly arriving refugees in certain centres.

## **4.3 Employment**

It was not a focus of this research to specifically explore historical and existing employment projects, so employment was not one of the topics explicitly covered in the interviews. However, employment was an area that several participants raised as of great importance in understanding the facilitators and challenges to the long-term settlement for former refugees.

While people who come to New Zealand through Refugee Quota Programme are selected for humanitarian reasons rather than for their ability to contribute economically, some participants in this study identified employment as an important facilitator of long-term settlement and of the development of refugee communities. At the broadest level, having work was seen as a key facilitator to integration:

... what we find is, once somebody has got a job, they're on their way towards becoming integrated and they start to participate in civic life.

Some participants identified employment as an important mechanism for building relationships with other New Zealanders:

... as peoples from refugee backgrounds start to work with mainstream services, as an Afghan, as a Somali, as an Ethiopian, once you get to know people, you know about people's lives, people's families, the barriers are so broken down really.

In this sense, some participants recognised the value of having work, not just at an individual or community level, but also on a broader societal level:

... it's again the employment of people with refugee ... backgrounds that can really be beneficial, first of all for refugees, and secondly for the New Zealand society.

While acknowledging the opportunities and benefits that employment can provide, several participants discussed employment as still being one of the key challenges faced by former refugees living in New Zealand. A number of barriers were identified to finding suitable employment, including being marginalised into certain types of jobs (eg, taxi driving), much of the work being part time and casual, and difficulties obtaining highly skilled professional jobs.

Overall, there was a general sense that in terms of employment a lot more progress needed to be made to support former refugees into suitable work:

I think employment is a huge answer, but we're not doing that well.

... it's still got quite a long way to go in terms of employment – I think that's one place that we haven't got very far with.

Some participants expressed frustration about the lack of progress around employment, with one refugee leader commenting on the need to invest in supporting former refugees to be able to participate fully in society, including having work:

... not allowing them to work, not allowing them to fit in the system, then what is that? Just like a retirement? ... But if we invest them, see the young people coming out and being great, and working in different fields, that's what we are getting in return ... that's the fruit. If we're not working on it we don't get the fruit.

Another refugee leader was very eager to overcome stereotypes of benefit dependency amongst refugee communities:

... [with] refugees being perceived like people who are there, they come, they will remain on the dole, they're just people to live on hand-outs. That is what we want to combat, what we need to fight against. Refugees are hard-working people – given the opportunity they will contribute to the economy of their new country.

Dependency on state support, including income support as well as housing, was seen to be best overcome with the guidance and assistance of other agencies in the refugee sector working with former refugees to assess their skills and strengths and working with them to achieve their long-term goals.

Some participants noted the dangers of alienation and disaffection for former refugees who felt marginalised in the New Zealand context. One refugee leader discussed the need to foster a sense of belonging for refugee communities by listening to their needs and working to support them. He noted the aspiration of the community was for:

... people to become a part of society because that's our goal as a good citizen of this country – we want our people to live their life like anyone else and to move forward.

In this case, to become active members of society meant having the support of the host community and the agencies involved in the refugee sector.

### **Summary**

Employment was recognised as a key mechanism of integration and an important component of long-term settlement. While acknowledging the advantages that employment brings, it was noted that this continues to be an area of considerable challenge. Barriers to employment identified by participants included marginalisation into low or unskilled work and work often being of a part-time and casual nature.

Many participants expressed the view that additional support needs to be directed into helping former refugees into suitable work, which will in turn enable them to participate fully in society.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In looking back at the development of the refugee sector since the introduction of a formal annual quota in 1987, participants in this study reflected the breadth and depth of growth during this period. There was recognition that many of the people working in the sector were hugely committed, hardworking, and often freely giving their own time and other resources. Such dedicated individuals included members of the New Zealand-born host community as well as members of established refugee communities living in New Zealand. It is the hard work of these individuals that is attested to in the developments that have taken place in the refugee sector over the last two decades.

The development of the refugee sector can be understood as part of the integration process. While the concept of integration itself is complex and contested (McMillan and Gray, 2009, p 18) Atfield et al (2007) usefully conceive of integration as a:

- two-way process: it involves adjustment and participation on the part of the host society as well as the newcomer
- non-linear process: integration may be fractured and integration experiences in one area can sit alongside continued exclusion in other areas
- subjective process: perceptions are central to the process of integration, and therefore it is important to explore refugees' own experiences of the integration process.

Thus, on one side of the two-way process of integration the interviews with participants attested to the development of diverse refugee communities over the last two decades. This was seen as one of the paramount changes that took place over this period and resulted in former refugees having their voices heard by other agencies in the sector and moving beyond being simply the recipients of services. In fact, the interviews with participants from refugee backgrounds reflected a strong desire for participation and self-reliance. While former refugees required the support of other agencies in the sector to succeed in this regard, the sense of agency and empowerment were strongly motivating factors.

The establishment of inter-ethnic refugee coalitions was seen as a great achievement in overcoming cultural, political, and religious differences for a common goal. These inter-ethnic refugee coalitions were also seen as developing the capacity of refugee communities in general and in mentoring processes of leadership and consultation. Engagement with government and NGOs was seen as developing the capacity of refugee communities, as were partnerships with NGOs when they were running programmes in the community.

While such inter-ethnic coalitions were seen to be highly effective in advocating for former refugees in New Zealand, some participants raised the question of what 'community' means in the refugee context, and the problematic nature of grouping widely disparate peoples together due to their shared background of having had to flee their country of origin. Furthermore, it was noted that even the commonly held assumption that people who come from the same country will form a 'community' and want to work together needs to be challenged.

On the other side of the two-way process of integration, the wider sector also matured significantly over the past two decades. From government agencies that had only a limited understanding of refugee resettlement and small grass-roots NGOs developed agencies that were well informed and highly responsive to refugee needs. Within the NGO sector, increases in funding and new structures saw the professionalisation of services, including the development of high-quality and accredited volunteer training programmes. Simultaneously, government agencies also became increasingly responsive to refugee needs, partially in response to the broader increase in ethnic diversity in New Zealand and as awareness of refugee resettlement needs grew. This maturing of the sector along with the development of refugee communities has in turn led to greater collaboration between agencies and refugee communities, as well as increasing opportunities for inter-agency interaction and partnerships. While some participants noted that this is an area for ongoing development, this is likely to continue to be the case as the sector continues to mature and change over time. Thus, it may be more important to ensure strong systems and processes for inter-agency interaction and collaboration are in place to support such changes rather than aiming for a goal that it may never be possible to reach.

At a broader level, the two-way process of integration was also reflected in the interactions with the New Zealand host society. New Zealand has a long history of involvement in refugee resettlement through the volunteers who support newly arriving refugees to settle in the community and provide them with English language tuition. In the past, as now, these volunteers were seen as providing the basis for refugee resettlement in this country. Beyond the volunteers, host community interactions were seen to be challenging at times, but increased public understanding of refugee issues and the role of the media were often seen to play a role in improved interactions. Furthermore, the recent engagements with Māori in some centres were seen as a real opportunity for increased cross-cultural understanding and integration by some participants.

While the New Zealand-born host population clearly has an important role to play in the successful integration of former refugees, established refugee communities were also seen as playing a vital role in assisting new refugee arrivals and providing practical advice and support about living in New Zealand. In this sense, rather than conceiving of integration as a simple two-way process between newcomers and the established host majority, a more nuanced understanding of integration could be usefully expanded to understand such established former refugees as part of the host society. In this sense these established 'new New Zealanders' can be seen as being a very important part of the complex and ongoing process of integration.

However, as noted in the definition of integration above, integration is not a simple linear process, and integration in certain areas can sit alongside ongoing exclusion in other areas. Employment was identified as an area of ongoing exclusion or marginalisation for former refugees in New Zealand. International literature recognises employment as a key component of integration, providing access to income, the possibility of access to credit, a social context, and identity (McMillan and Gray, 2009, p 32). However, it was noted by a number of participants in this study that while former refugees are often highly motivated to find suitable employment, this is an area where little progress has been made

over the last two decades. Agencies in the sector were seen as having the potential to do much more to work with former refugees to identify their skills and strengths and to facilitate the process of finding suitable work.

Other challenges were also identified. One challenge was the lack of a unified policy on refugee resettlement, which was seen to result in duplication, a lack of coordination between agencies, and no clear leadership or vision as to what refugee resettlement is trying to achieve. Many participants discussed the need for one national refugee resettlement strategy, which was seen as having the potential to overcome such problems and to provide greater coherence to the sector, while making the best use of the available resources. In respect of this challenge, it is worth noting that the Department of Labour is leading work across stakeholders on the development of a New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy.

Another challenge identified by participants was meeting the needs of the diverse refugee arrivals from the mid 1990s onwards. The diversity of ethnicities among refugees coming to New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme from this time was seen to present a number of challenges, including the isolation of small ethnic populations who were unable to develop viable communities. The diversity of refugee arrivals was also seen to pose challenges in relation to service provision. This was seen to be particularly pertinent in terms of meeting the high and complex needs of some former refugees.

Finally, several participants raised the ongoing challenges of family reunion. Some participants indicated that Immigration New Zealand could do more to communicate sponsorship criteria and processes to refugee communities.

While recognising the challenges, it is important to note the opportunities that can be built on for success. From the interviews two key areas stand out as working well. The first is the ongoing development of refugee communities, which have developed their capacity with the support of the sector. And, more broadly, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of the relationships in the sector to improving policy and service provision. In this sense participants discussed the importance of forums for interaction and consultation, such as the Regional and National Refugee Resettlement Forums. Such events were seen to provide important opportunities for collaboration, increased awareness, and ongoing responsiveness to refugee needs.

Finally, as Atfield et al (2007) identify, integration is also a subjective process, where it is important to explore former refugees' experiences of the integration process. It has been the aim of this study to capture the experiences and perspectives of the stakeholders who were interviewed, many of whom came from refugee backgrounds. According to these voices there was a strong sense of pride in the developments of the sector that have opened the door for former refugees in New Zealand to shift from recipient to participant. As one refugee leader commented:

... refugees are participating, they are participating, yeah. ... And their voice is heard.

## **APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS**

- 1976 Inter-church Commission on Immigration and Refugee Resettlement (ICCI) is formed
- 1986 Christian Conference of Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ) takes on governance of ICCI
- 1987 Annual quota of 800 places for refugee resettlement in New Zealand is established
- 1990 Auckland Refugee Council is registered as an incorporated society
- 1990 ICCI becomes an officially incorporated society and changes its name to the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), overseen by the Refugee and Migrant Commission-Aotearoa New Zealand
- 1991 Humanitarian Category is introduced as an immigration policy
- 1992 Ministry of Social Development introduces the Re-Establishment Grant
- 1992 National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes is formed
- 1994 Resettlement Family Support Project (Christchurch) becomes an incorporated society
- 1995 First Partnership in Action (PARinAC) focal point is appointed in New Zealand
- 1997 Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust is established
- 1997 Auckland Refugees as Survivors is established
- 1997 Annual quota of refugees is reduced from 800 to 750 places per year
- 1997 The National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes' Certificate in ESOL Home Tutoring becomes New Zealand Qualifications Authority accredited
- 1997 First National Tripartite Consultation
- 1998 New Zealand Refugee Council is established
- 2000 Ministry of Education establishes refugee education coordinator roles
- 2000 Refugee and Migrant Service changes its name to RMS Refugee Resettlement
- 2000 RMS Refugee Resettlement establishes the Certificate in Refugee Resettlement Support
- 2001 Office of Ethnic Affairs is launched in the Department of Internal Affairs
- 2001 Refugee Family Reunification Trust is established
- 2001 Humanitarian Category (immigration policy) is closed
- 2002 Refugee Family Sponsored immigration policy is introduced (also known as the Refugee Family Quota)

- 2003 Ministry of Social Development establishes the Settling In initiative
- 2004 New Zealand Settlement Strategy is launched
- 2004 First National Refugee Resettlement Forum
- 2005 Department of Labour establishes the Settlement Division
- 2006 Wellington Regional Action Plan for Refugee Health and Well-Being is launched
- 2006 ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, Auckland Refugee Community Coalition, Waikato Refugee Forum, and Canterbury Refugee Council register as incorporated societies
- 2006 Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy is launched
- 2006 Housing New Zealand employs a national refugee coordinator
- 2006 Department of Labour establishes the Strengthening Refugee Voices initiative
- 2006 Resettlement Family Support Project (Christchurch) is renamed Christchurch Resettlement Services
- 2006 Auckland Refugees as Survivors is renamed Refugees as Survivors New Zealand
- 2007 Refugee Family Quota policy is reviewed, resulting in a new immigration policy, the Refugee Family Support Category, with a two-tiered registration system
- 2008 First Regional Refugee Resettlement Forums are held
- 2008 Wellington Regional Settlement Strategy is launched
- 2008 RMS Refugee Resettlement is renamed Refugee Services Aotearoa New Zealand
- 2009 National Association of ESOL Home Tutor Schemes is renamed as English Language Partners
- 2009 New Zealand National Refugee Network is established
- 2010 Auckland Refugee Family Trust is established



Nationality	Apr 87	Apr 88	Jul 89	Jul 90	Jul 91	Jul 92	Jul 93	Jul 94	Jul 95	Jul 96	Jul 97	Jul 98	Jul 99	Jul 2000	Jul 2001	Jul 2002	Jul 2003	Jul 2004	Jul 2005	Jul 2006	Jul 2007	Jul 2008	Jul 2009	Jul 2010	Total
	Mar 88	Jun 89	Jun 90	Jun 91	Jun 92	Jun 93	Jun 94	Jun 95	Jun 96	Jun 97	Jun 98	Jun 99	Jun 2000	Jun 2001	Jun 2002	Jun 2003	Jun 2004	Jun 2005	Jun 2006	Jun 2007	Jun 2008	Jun 2009	Jun 2010		
Libyan									2	5									1						<b>8</b>
Mauritania																						10			<b>10</b>
Nepal																					6	5	1	6	<b>18</b>
Nigerian								2	1	1															<b>4</b>
Pakistani												1		1			2	2							<b>7</b>
Palestinian										6							13	15		23	3	5	29	16	<b>110</b>
Polish		45	59	50																					<b>154</b>
Romanian		1																							<b>1</b>
Rwandan										14		6	14	2	1		5	3	6	2		25	4	8	<b>90</b>
Saudi Arabian									1			8													<b>9</b>
Somali							94	309	39	299	21	137	212	207	119	159	25	38	69	13		18		5	<b>1,764</b>
Soviet Union																				2					<b>2</b>
Sri Lankan					1	8	13	21	25	12	3			7	2		21	5	2	5	3	4	2	13	<b>147</b>
Sudanese									8	1	14	10	33	70	4		11	74	76	54	11	30	2	21	<b>419</b>
Syrian							7				13	4		17			3	7							<b>51</b>
Tanzania																									<b>4</b>
Thai																		2							<b>2</b>
Tunisian							3					6													<b>9</b>
Turkish									4					7	1	2	6		7	1					<b>28</b>
Ugandan									1								2			6					<b>9</b>
Vietnamese	157	200	247	245	146	219	42	341	116	23	8		60										7		<b>1,811</b>
Yemenese											1			1					6						<b>8</b>
Yugoslavian									1	3				27											<b>31</b>
Zimbabwean																				5					<b>5</b>
Stateless																	5			2					<b>7</b>
Total	645	1,061	810	682	619	412	737	822	780	527	677	775	1,072	746	750	604	812	761	743	697	750	700	709		16,891

Source: Immigration New Zealand. (15 February 2011). *Immigration New Zealand Statistics: Refugee Quota All Years*. Retrieved from [www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/statistics/](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/statistics/) (23 February 2011).

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Historical context**

1. When did you first become involved in the refugee sector? (in what capacity, for which organisation etc)
  - Who were the key players at that time?
    - What role did Government play in the sector?
    - What role did NGOs play in the sector?
    - What role did refugees themselves play in the sector?
  - How were settlement support services for refugee quota organised at that time?

*Prompt - Funding structures*

2. What was the most significant change in the sector during the 1990s?

*Prompt – Positive and negative changes*

- What was the most significant change in terms of key players and the roles they had in the sectors?
  - What was the most significant change in the way settlement support for quota refugees was organised?
3. What has been the most significant change in the sector during the last decade?
    - What has been the most significant change in terms of key players and the roles they have in the sectors?
    - What has been the most significant change in the way settlement support for quota refugees is organised?
  4. What have been other significant changes in the sector?
  5. What has been the impact of these changes?
    - For refugees themselves?
    - For the way services are delivered?
    - For relationships amongst key players?
  6. How have public perceptions towards former refugees changed in the last decade?
    - Towards accepting refugees for re-settlement
    - Support for refugee resettlement

### **Capacity building**

7. What role do established refugee groups currently play in assisting new refugee arrivals?
  - How has this changed over the last decade?
  - What factors have played a part in these changes?

8. What developments have taken place in the last decade to build stronger refugee communities? We would like to particularly ask you to consider the following areas:

- Size of communities
- Leadership and skill development
- Organisational development
  - What has worked well (and for which communities)?
  - What has not worked so well?

## **APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

### **Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives on Integration, Community and Identity – Key Stakeholder Interviews**

'Quota Refugees Ten Years On' is a research project being carried out by the Department of Labour to find out about the long-term settlement experiences of people who arrived to New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Category ten or more years ago. The main way we are gathering information is through a face-to-face survey of 500 to 750 former refugees.

As well as exploring the long-term settlement experiences of people who arrived in New Zealand through the Refugee Quota Programme, the research team is also gathering information on the context of refugee resettlement in New Zealand since 1987. We aim to explore changes in policy and service provision as well as developing a greater understanding of how refugee communities in New Zealand have developed over time.

As part of this process we are seeking input from a number of key organisations and individuals who have been involved in the refugee sector over a long period of time. The interview will take about an hour but before you agree to an interview you need to be aware that:

- ❖ The research is voluntary – you don't have to take part if you don't want to.
- ❖ You don't have to answer any question you don't want to, and you can stop the interview at any time.
- ❖ The information you give us will be stored in a safe and secure place. After the study has been completed your information will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to it.
- ❖ We will be publishing a report next year which will include information gathered in these interviews. Your information will be combined with those of other key stakeholders and every attempt will be made to ensure that you are not identified. However, there may be cases where you can be recognised due to the unique position you hold. Where this is the case we will give you the opportunity to review the report before it is published.
- ❖ To avoid talking lots of notes during the interview, we would like to record it. If you don't want us to record the interview that is fine.
- ❖ You will be provided with a copy of the transcript of your interview for your review.
- ❖ It is helpful when we write up a research report if we can include some quotes from the interview. It is your choice to allow us to use quotes from this interview.

Tick the boxes you agree with below:

I agree to taking part in the interview for the Quota Refugees Ten Years On study.

I agree for the interview to be recorded.

I agree for my quotes to be used in the report.

My name:

My signature:

The date:

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