

WELLINGTON REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR REFUGEE HEALTH & WELLBEING

ENEWS AUGUST 2012

This is the third E-News update on the 2011-12 Wellington Regional Action Plan for Refugee Health and Wellbeing.

In this issue:

[Success of the 2011-12 Action Plan](#)

[Highlights from 2011-12 Action Plan](#)

[Input for 2012-13 from refugee-background communities](#)

[Strand leaders: role and responsibilities](#)

[Next steps forward: 2012-13 Action Plan](#)

Success of the 2011-12 Action Plan

Organisations involved in the ongoing work of the Action Plan met to review the 2011-12 goals and achievements on 6 August at the Multicultural Services Centre. Strand facilitators gave final reports on the eight priority areas of the 2011-12 Action Plan.

Over 90% of the 65 actions in the Action Plan were achieved, despite changes in staffing in some agencies and an increasingly challenging outcomes-based funding environment.

The successes and accomplishments were achieved thanks to the ongoing collaborations between agencies. The interactive nature of the Action Plan also resulted in new partnerships emerging between non-government and government agencies, strengthening the commitment across the board to ensure the rights of refugee-background communities can be realised.

Highlights from 2011-12 Action Plan

In the education strand there have been a number of important achievements. These include:

The campaign launch of **An equitable education**, calling for refugee-background students to be recognised as an equity group both in government policy and in tertiary institutions. More than 70 people attended, including members of Parliament, and representatives from government and non-government agencies. The campaign is a collaboration between ChangeMakers, National Refugee Network, academics from Victoria University, and MCLaSS, and resulted in:

- University of Auckland's Council approved a revised Equity Policy that included refugee-background students and staff.
- The publication of a 62-page booklet *Opening Doors: Support and Services for Refugee-Background Students at Victoria University*. The resource collates information about services available to refugee-background students at VUW to support their studies.

The Hutt Valley Learning Centre opened in February at Avalon Primary School. This initiative was identified by refugee-background communities as a priority, as many believed that their children were not achieving in schools at a level they were capable of. The Learning Centre Trust Board appointed three staff, including Robert Byer from the Sudanese community, as the Learning Centre's Manager, and over 20 children are currently enrolled.

MCLaSS launched **a new programme of ESOL courses** designed to prepare students with limited English proficiency for the demands of specific workplaces. There are classes in Porirua, the Hutt, and in Wellington. Classes focus on teaching workplace language for a range of low-skilled jobs.

Refugee Services' Pathways to Employment programme was established as a pilot in March 2011 to support people from refugee backgrounds achieve their long-term employment goals. The programme successfully secured either part-time or full-time jobs to over 40 refugee-background Work and Income clients.

The action to deliver **workshops on employment, education, and industry training options**, was achieved by ChangeMakers and MCLaSS, with more than 150 people from refugee backgrounds attending. Workshops included a session in Porirua on addressing barriers to employment for refugee-background women.

MCLaSS added value to its **one-on-one employment coaching service** for job seekers through delivery of 4-session modules in Wellington and Porirua. More than 70 participants attended these.

In order to build a stronger relationship between refugee-background communities with Police, ChangeMakers held a **Community Forum** with representatives from Wellington Police. More than 60 refugee-background community members attended the forum, where they had the opportunity to discuss issues such as domestic violence, people's rights, and self-defense.

The voices of women from refugee backgrounds were heard with a **driver's licence programme** developed. Led and organised by ChangeMakers, seventy women attended compulsory information workshops on the project, held in Porirua, the Hutt and Wellington, to prepare for professional driving lessons. Twenty women are now being matched with trained volunteers to practice their newly acquired driving skills before sitting their restricted and full licences.

Following the success of **Families in Cultural Transition (FiCT) programme** with the Burmese community, a 10-module programme was completed in Porirua for the Colombian community. The initiative is a partnership by Wellington Refugees as Survivors Trust and Refugee Services. Training sessions were held in Auckland in April to a group of Refugee Services cross-cultural workers to deliver the programme there.

Housing New Zealand Corporation's (HNZC) policy and operations underwent significant changes throughout 2011-12. Action Plan partners responded in a number of ways, including:

- ChangeMakers ran **two workshops** with HNZC staff on the changes and how these would impact refugee-background communities.
- Refugee Services held three **seminars on Renting in New Zealand**, with Shayne Landall from Department of Building and Housing – one each in Lower Hutt, Wellington and Porirua. Attendees reported a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities, and how to approach their landlords regarding problems or issues of concern.
- Refugee Services **developed guidelines and information sheets of key messages** for new arrivals about living in a New Zealand, including tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, as well as how to keep warm during the winter months.

Refugee Services, RAS, Wellington Community Law Centre, Refugee Family Reunification Trust, and ChangeMakers continued to make progress in improving family reunification processes. This included:

- **Policy changes** to reduce the difficulties of providing housing for families who have been sponsored by refugees to join them in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- Developing a **housing information package** that identifies potential housing solutions to sponsors.
- Developing a **proposal on the provision of trained volunteers** to support Refugee Family Support Category arrivals. Refugee Services agreed to run a pilot and assess whether they could provide volunteers support on an on-going basis.

In the youth strand, new relationships have developed among agencies, resulting in the formation of the **Refugee Youth Action Group**. The group meets quarterly to address issues of within the youth refugee-background community.

RAS and ChangeMakers **facilitated a twenty-week Refugee Youth Media programme** from November 2011 to March 2012 in the Hutt. Eight young people from refugee backgrounds completed the programme, which used journalism to build their skills and confidence. Another aim of the project is to raise awareness of refugee issues among the wider community.

The Capoeira Angola programme, organised by RAS, established to increase young people's confidence and self-esteem through group interaction using music and movement, is now running in Wellington. Twenty refugee-background youth living in the Hutt attended the first *Capoeira Angola* programme.

As a direct response to a 'knowledge gap' on how to keep healthy, Regional Public Health produced **a catalogue of regional and national refugee-health resources**. It has been distributed to refugee health providers, and is now being distributed to refugee-background communities.

Input for 2012-13 from refugee-background communities

Prior to the 2011-12 Action Plan review meeting, refugee-background communities were invited by ChangeMakers to start the development of the 2012-13 Action Plan. People from six refugee-background communities attended the Forum, and worked in groups to identify the issues they would like addressed.

The key areas they focussed on were:

- Economic wellbeing
- Education

- Strengthening communities
- Safety and security
- Family reunification
- Housing
- Health
- Youth

The issues and concerns were presented to the organisations and agencies at the 6th August meeting.

Strand leaders: role and responsibilities

Strand leaders are responsible for facilitating 3 meetings with strand members during an Action Plan year. They collate information about the progress made on each action. Updates are reported in the E-News.

At the end of each Action Plan year, the agencies hold a review meeting at which the strand leaders give their colleagues an overview of the actions achieved and any issues and challenges their strand groups have identified.

Next step forward: 2012-13 Action Plan

The agencies will meet again to finalise the 2012-13 Action Plan that will be circulated to refugee-background communities. The Plan will then be updated and distributed again to the agencies for endorsement before being presented to the Leaders Council for final sign off.

Further information

Further information on the 2011-12 Action Plan, including a downloadable copy, is available through the ChangeMakers website. [Click here](#).

If you know someone who should be added to the mailing list for Action Plan updates, or if you do not want to receive future updates, please let us know. Email tim@crf.org.nz
