

■ Health & Social Services

This think piece is a summary of findings from a recent report commissioned by ASB Community Trust and the Tindall Foundation.



*Contributing towards a better life
for all New Zealanders*



ASB Community Trust

Te Kaitiaki Putea o Tamaki o Tai Tokerau

supported by **ASB**



Supporting Refugees and Migrants

Refugees and migrants from ethnic minorities are among the most marginalised groups in New Zealand. Yet ASB Community Trust and the Tindall Foundation receive fewer applications from programmes supporting refugees and migrants. It is for this reason that ASB Community Trust and the Tindall Foundation commissioned a scoping report to help them take a more strategic approach to grant-making and donations. The aim is to ensure that funding focuses on programmes which improve social outcomes and make our communities better places for everyone.

The changing face of New Zealand

New Zealand's population has become increasingly diverse over the past 50 years as immigration patterns have changed and different groups of refugees and migrants have arrived. They have come from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Pacific, from Russia and the former Soviet States as well as many European countries, and now live in all parts of NZ.

They come as skilled and business migrants, as part of family unification programmes, under specific Pacific quota schemes and a Zimbabwean residence programme. In addition, 750 refugees arrive each year, making up New Zealand's annual quota, along with a number of asylum seekers requesting refugee status.

Almost a quarter of people now living in NZ were born overseas. Numbers increased by more than 5%, from 17.5% in 1996 to 22.9% in 2006.

While Britain remains the most common overseas birth place of migrants, the People's Republic of China moved from fourth in 2001 to second in 2006. Asian ethnic groups increased by almost 50% in this period. They now make up 9.2% of the NZ population and 22% of Auckland's population. Pacific ethnic groups have had the second largest increase since the 2001 census – up 14.7%. They now comprise 6.9% of our population. Refugees and migrants from



Tiny Tutus, by Marce McNerny.
Auckland Festival of Photography

The economic contribution of migrants and refugees needs to be acknowledged. Migrants contributed \$8.1 billion in income tax, GST and excise duties in the year to June 30, 2006.

Africa and the Middle East make up 1%. (While newly-arrived Pacific migrants often share the same settlement issues faced by other migrant groups, the main focus of this research was on migrants and refugees from outside the Pacific).

Auckland, the main location of refugee and migrant settlement, is now a city of super diversity. The Auckland region is the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse in the country.

Why support is so important

Refugee and migrant issues cut across all aspects of society – employment, education, health, housing, politics, the arts, sport and recreation.

Ensuring newcomers are able to settle and be accepted as residents and citizens as quickly as possible is critical, so that they can fully participate in our economic, social and cultural life. Socially cohesive societies are productive and harmonious.

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the so-called 'war on terror', immigrant issues have mobilised people with widely divergent points of view. One response has been increasing tension due to misunderstanding and prejudice. A contrasting response has been the support for greater understanding of migrants and refugees, a focus on improving civil rights and campaigns for the release of asylum seekers.

Group relations are an issue that many communities will need to address for years to come. An increased focus on settlement, integration and diversity will continue to be important as migrants and refugees keep on arriving.

There are different settlement phases. In the initial phase, migrants and refugees need to have somewhere to live, find a job, gain confidence in English and access education and health services. In the post-settlement phase, energies and resources are likely to be directed towards forming supportive social networks and participating in civic, community and cultural activities.

Settlement is an open-ended process. It varies in rate from individual to individual. For those dealing with the effects of loss, trauma, war, refugee camp living and other aspects of forced migration, or with few English language skills, the process may be longer.

To fully participate and contribute economically and socially, migrants, refugees and their families must be recognised and respected as equal and valued New Zealanders. All too often both new groups and more established groups continue to face ignorance, discrimination and, in some cases, violence.

■ **Auckland, the main location of refugee and migrant settlement, is now a city of super diversity. The Auckland region is the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse in the country.**

The economic contribution of migrants and refugees needs to be acknowledged. Migrants contributed \$8.1 billion in income tax, GST and excise duties in the year to June 30 2006, far outweighing the \$4.8 billion spent on education, health and welfare for new Kiwis.

New Zealand Settlement Strategies

Strategies at a national, regional and local authority level – the New Zealand Settlement Strategy, the Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy, the Auckland City Settlement Strategy and others – aim to improve settlement outcomes for migrants, refugees and their families. The goals of regional and local authority strategies are derived from and/or support the goals of the New Zealand Settlement Strategy. The goals of the national strategy are to ensure newcomers to New Zealand can:

1. feel welcomed, accepted, and respected
2. obtain employment appropriate to their skills
3. be supported to confidently communicate in English
4. access information and responsive services
5. maintain their cultural identities
6. feel safe
7. accept, respect, and contribute to the New Zealand way of life.

Alongside these settlement strategies and plans is a concern to improve host community acceptance of migrants and refugees from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

A number of government agencies have developed ethnic responsiveness plans. The Human Rights Commission, for instance, facilitates a Diversity Action Programme through the office of the Race Relations Commissioner to connect organisations which value cultural diversity and promote positive race relations.

Role for funders

Central and local government are unlikely to provide all services required. The constructive input of voluntary and community organisations is needed to fill gaps and build on the resilience and strength of refugee and migrant communities.

There is clearly a role for grant-makers and donors in supporting these organisations to meet the settlement goals outlined above, to

build on such strengths and to contribute positively to race relations. The best possible outcomes require a collaborative approach from all concerned – central and local government, NGOs, community agencies and refugee and migrant groups.

A lack of funding and support makes it difficult for organisations to run ongoing programmes which can really improve settlement outcomes for refugees and migrants. What is needed is sustainable funding which allows organisations to plan for and carry out long-term and effective projects.

This is where community and private funders can play an important role. In order to fill gaps and areas of high need, funders need to enter into dialogue and partnerships with refugee and migrant groups to understand their requirements and ensure best possible outcomes.

They also need to develop relationships with one another to avoid duplication and better understand particular issues. Higher levels of funding need to be provided in a sustainable manner over a number of years. Because work with migrants and refugees is cross sectoral, it is also important for NZ-based grant makers to ensure refugee and migrant issues are integrated into all aspects of their work.

Some suggested areas of funding

Employment

- providing training and bridging programmes (including young people and women – with provision of childcare)
- partnerships between migrant and refugee-assisting organisations and employers
- work experience
- matching job opportunities, skills and experience
- mentoring programmes
- support to help overcome restrictive gate-keeping practices

Overt discrimination leads to increasing unemployment, under-employment, and lower rates of pay.

Access to services

- school-community partnerships
- childcare to enable mothers to attend ESOL classes or other programmes

- bilingual early childhood programmes
- health promotion, including mental health initiatives
- facilitating access to mainstream services, especially for the elderly, children and young people (with interpreting and translation provision)

Capacity building

Resourcing and empowering refugees and migrants so that they can advocate, plan and provide services for themselves and participate fully in the public arena and in public debates. At the same time there is a need to strengthen the ability of mainstream services in the voluntary sector to work with migrant and refugee clients.

Support for asylum seekers and human rights

Asylum-seeking support groups and human rights groups frequently provide the only voice on the issues involved and are often the only services available to asylum seekers.

Initiatives increasing understanding and acceptance of refugees and migrants in society

- research and forums adding to the general understanding of refugees and migrant experiences in New Zealand
- programmes which highlight for New Zealanders the positive contribution of migrants and refugees
- initiatives which improve relationships between different groups at a local level
- opportunities which allow everyday New Zealanders to learn more of migrant and refugee cultures
- support for media involvement in developing understanding in the host community

Collaboration is essential as migrant, refugee and ethnic diversity issues cut across all areas of society. Funders need to work together and in partnership with migrant and refugee groups.

Whatever areas funders become involved in, identifying specific migrant and refugee requirements and developing appropriate programmes needs to be done in collaboration with the relevant migrant and refugee groups. Funders need to:

- develop their knowledge of migrant and refugee groups
- enter into dialogue to understand their requirements
- ensure application processes are clear and accessible
- develop relationships with key organisations working on particular issues
- work closely with other funders to avoid duplication

The most effective programmes will build on – and increase – the resources and strengths of migrant and refugee groups.

■ Case studies ■

Support with employment, language and education opportunities and health issues is critical to facilitate integration. The practical role of funders can make all the difference in the successful settlement of migrants and refugees.

Employment

OMEGA (Opportunities for Migrant Employment in Greater Auckland) is a new initiative funded by The Tindal Foundation to increase the employment of qualified migrants in Auckland in jobs that are appropriate to their skills and experience. Based on a successful Canadian model, OMEGA is catalyzing business leadership on this critical issue, with programming that includes mentoring opportunities for skilled migrants, paid internships as well as an inter-government relations group to address specific policy issues. A pilot “Skills for Auckland” mentoring programme has already proven itself, successfully running a series of workshops around CV improvement and kiwi workplace culture that has landed half its participants into full-time employment in their respective fields. Committee for Auckland, which is hosting OMEGA during its emergent phase, has received multi-year funding to deliver the programme and is working with close to 30 founding employers towards a programme launch in March 2008.

Health

The Refugees As Survivors Auckland Regional Refugee Mobile Team, collaboratively funded by three Auckland District Health Boards and ASB Community Trust, is ensuring vital community follow-up for recently arrived refugees. Coming from trouble spots like the Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq, most arrive severely traumatised. The new Mobile Team of health specialists and refugee link workers began outreach with five hybrid eco-cars in October, 2007. Before this new pilot initiative, there was little aftercare for refugees once they completed the initial six-week orientation programme at Mangere. The Somali, Sudanese, Afghan, Iraqi, Burundian and Burmese link workers are all trained in mental health counselling and community work. They are supported by a pool of 90 RASNZ interpreters in 27 languages.

■ www.rasnz.co.nz

Websites

ASB Community Trust	www.ASBCommunityTrust.org.nz
Auckland City Settlement Strategy	www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/citysettlement
Auckland Regional Public Health Service, Refugee Health	www.refugeehealth.co.nz
Office of Ethnic Affairs	www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz
NZ Diversity Action Programme – Human Rights Commission	www.hrc.co.nz
NZ Settlement Strategy Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy	www.immigration.govt.nz/community/stream/support/nzsettlementstrategy
Refugees as Survivors	www.rasnz.co.nz
Tindall Foundation	www.tindall.org.nz

This think piece, completed by Penelope Carroll, is a summary of a scoping report undertaken by Sue Elliott for ASB Community Trust and the Tindall Foundation. For a copy of the full report please contact Chloe Harwood: (09) 360 0291 or Chloe@ASBCommunityTrust.org.nz

Shalini Pillai is the ASB Community Trust Grants Advisor working with refugee and migrant communities. Phone (09) 360 0291 or email Shalini@ASBCommunityTrust.org.nz