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| Speak Up- Kōrerotia  Refugee resettlement in New Zealand  19 June 2019 | |
| Sally | Nau mai, nau mai, nau mai, ki te hōtaka tika tangata “Speak Up” - “Kōrerotia”. Welcome to “Speak Up” - “Kōrerotia”, the human rights radio show. I’m your host Sally Carlton. Today we’re talking about “Refugee resettlement in New Zealand.” This is the second show we’ve done specifically looking at refugees - we did one in 2015, as well - but there have been some major changes in the refugee resettlement space since then, both nationally and globally, so it’s about time we did another one, really.  According to the UNHCR - that’s the United Nations refugee agency - we are currently witnessing the highest levels of population displacement on record. They estimate 68.5 million people are displaced, among them is something like 40 million IDPs (Internally Displaced Peoples), 25 million refugees and 3.5 asylum seekers. Now just to clarify: IDPs (Internally Displaced People), those are people displaced within the borders of their own country; refugees have crossed the border into another country; and asylum seekers are people who are still waiting to be determined as refugees - they are seeking asylum. There have been some really big flow-on effects from this mass movement of people, not least the rise of some of those right wing parties across the world, so it’s really important that we’re thinking about refugee issues at the moment.  If we’re thinking domestically, the biggest change in the recent times has been the 2018 government decision to double the refugee quota here; we were taking 750 refugees a year and that’s going to be increasing to 1500 by 2020, so next year. Currently we’re in the middle of that number; we’re taking 1000 in 2019.  Something else to consider, specifically for us here in Christchurch, is that Christchurch has - just in March - accepted its first intake of refugees since the earthquakes so it’s been a long eight years and we’re going to be thinking about how is Christchurch doing re-getting back into this settlement space. Several of the guests here on this show today are involved in that so we’ll be looking forward to hearing from them.  This show airs on the 19 June which is really good timing because the 20 June is World Refugee Day, a time to think about refugee issues.  So if we think about who we have here in the studio, maybe we’ll start with you, Jo? Jo Fishen who is Pathway to Settlement Manager at Red Cross, Christchurch. If you could tell us a wee bit about yourself. |
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| Jo | Sure, hi everyone. My name is, as Sally said, my name is Jo. I have been working at Red Cross since January when we started to take the intake again after a long break since the earthquakes. By March we were up and ready to take our first intake of around 21 people, Christchurch gets about 20 people each intake. I have been working in the refugee and migrant sector for 14 years so I am really honoured and excited to be working alongside Red Cross to bring our former refugees back to Christchurch. |
| Sally | Great and working with you is Aklilu Habteghiorghis. Did I say your surname right? I hope so. |
| Aki | Yes, my name is Aklilu Habteghiorghis. I have been in New Zealand for six years. I worked in the refugee sector for 15 years in Egypt with many refugees from different countries and when I arrived to Christchurch I worked in the mental health sector and currently I am working for the Red Cross, I am the settlement leader who looks after the settlement programme and also for the new former refugees. |
| Sally | Great, and we’re really, really thrilled to have Namrud Asrat here. You are one of the newly resettled refugees; you’ve just been in Christchurch a couple of months. |
| Namrud | Yes my name is Namrud Asrat.I came from Egypt and I have been here almost a month. |
| Sally | How are you finding Christchurch? |
| Namrud | Oh it is… First time when I arrived in New Zealand, the shocking incidents which happened, I was too frightened and I feel sorry but I believe in the one thing, this is happening everywhere because we live We are human beings so I accept that thing but Christchurch is… |
| Sally | It was a terrible, awful timing for you guys.  Joining us on the phone, hi Sarah, we have Sarah Ward who is immigration Manager at Resettlement, Immigration New Zealand. |
| Sarah | Kia ora, well I’ve just introduced myself. I moved to New Zealand seven years ago, and like Jo, clearly once you start working in refugee resettlement a lot of us tend to stay. So I worked in the UK before with refugees and migrants as well particularly focused on unaccompanied minors and young people. Then a pleasure to come to New Zealand and work in resettlement here. First with the Red Cross and now with Immigration for the last few years. So my role is, I am Immigration Manager that is working in resettlement space. I am based here at the Māngere Refugee Centre, I work really closely with a team here who support families when they first arrive into New Zealand, but also very closely with the Red Cross and the community through that transition period as families leave Māngere and move into their new cities. |
| Sally | Perhaps, Sarah, if you could just talk us through the idea behind Māngere; that might be a good place to start. |
| Sarah | Sure, Māngere is unique in the world of resettlement. I think we’re the only country that still has a centre like Māngere, and what it is, is it’s a reception centre for new refugees or new New Zealanders when they come to the country and essentially it’s like a small village which is how we kind of describe it. So we’ve got essential services on site like education, Work and Income, Immigration, but families come and they live here for six weeks. They go to class and learn about life in New Zealand, children are in school and starting their English education and orientation as to what a New Zealand classroom looks like, there are health services here on site. The idea is it gives people a kind of foundation before they go into the community and a bit of adjustment time, and it’s unique I think. There’s a lot of benefits to having it. |
| Sally | It certainly sounds it. Now just to think about the refugees that New Zealand does accept; Sarah, again you might be a good person to start this conversation off, the different categories of refugee that New Zealand accepts. |
| Sarah | Ok. So I mean I think we’re specifically today talking around Quota refugees - we’re all involved in the Quota programme primarily and that’s the one we hear most about - but New Zealand, I guess… You will ask me more detail if you want to know more about what the Quota is, do you want to hear that now? |
| Sally | Sure, that would be great. |
| Sarah | OK. So the Quota programme is New Zealand government humanitarian commitment around refugee resettlement. So they’ve made, as you said earlier, a commitment to take 1500 people internationally from 2020. So people that come through the Quota have been referred to New Zealand from the United Nations and people are referred on need, so essentially those most in need. I know you gave numbers at the beginning and I think 25 million refugees worldwide. So UNHCR has the really difficult task of identifying those most in need, out of that 25 million, for resettlement and they refer them on to New Zealand. So people that come through the Quota would stay at Māngere, they’d be referred onto the Red Cross and community and the ones we hear most about.  New Zealand also takes… also has a programme that assesses people’s asylum status, so people obviously have a right to claim asylum in New Zealand and some of those will go on to become Convention Refugees. So if you talk about refugee categories and you hear ‘Convention Refugees,’ it just means refugees who came through that process instead and will be in New Zealand. You talked about family support categories which also… You have quite a big community in Christchurch in particular. So people that come through a refugee family support category haven’t come through the Quota but have been able to come because of their connection with a family member who has come through the Quota. I’ll stop there before it becomes too complicated about policy. |
| Sally | That sounds good. When New Zealand is deciding which of these Quota refugees to take - you mentioned they are determined by the UNHCR but New Zealand then has a degree of flexibility, I suppose, in determining which refugees to take, often for example based on nationality or I know there is a certain number of places set aside for people with health needs for example. |
| Sarah | Yeah so, if you start just kind of one layer up: Cabinet every three years decides what the Quota composition will look like, so Cabinet outlines which regions that Immigration go to, to interview refugees. So for example, 50 per cent of the Quota is from the Asia Pacific so that means that 50 per cent of our families will come from the Asia Pacific region which would include Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia. So that’s the first layer. So Cabinet, Government sets that out for us.  Underneath that, then, the UNHCR would refer people to New Zealand that they think are most in need of settlement and we, Immigration, will go face-to-face and meet people and a kind of a two-step meeting. Namrud, you could probably talk about this as well since you’ve just recently gone through it. But the first part of that meeting is around do they meet eligibility requirements, and risk and validation of the refugee story. But then there’s also a settlement interview and it’s much more informal meeting about what life is like going to be in New Zealand, what they can expect and a time to answer questions because a lot of people may not have even heard of New Zealand before or know what that little box is on the bottom of the map. |
| Sally | That’s a question for you Namrud, had you heard of New Zealand? |
| Namrud | Yes I had heard about New Zealand before because I studied in [*inaudible*] so I am searching and reading more about the social societies and especially the various… I know the place of the Solomon Islands, I saw on the map New Zealand and I am able to know about New Zealand in terms of searching out these societies and the lifestyle of New Zealanders. So it is now for me the name of New Zealand, I know before I came here, before I arrived here. |
| Sally | What did you feel like when you had your meeting with the UNHCR? |
| Namrud | Oh I have no words to explain that because you know, I feel surprised. I read so many things about New Zealand and when I heard that… Because when I was in Ethiopia, I had no hope due to the situation we suffer more in Ethiopia because in Ethiopia it is not allowed everything, not allowed. It is not allowed to work or to get license or something. We live only in remittance. If no one will help us just you know… Then when I heard about New Zealand: “Is that true?” I am asking for myself. I feel… I don’t know… I can’t explain the word, the feeling of that day. But I also happy, yeah. |
| Sally | I think that’s why you guys all work in this space, isn’t it? |
| Jo | It’s an amazing place to work and to see the journeys of the former refugees and the richness they bring to New Zealand. |
| Sally | Well that might take us to our first break then and we’ll talk more about what’s required to settle in New Zealand. |
|  | **MUSIC Refugee song ‘My scream’** |
| Sally | That song you just heard was to celebrate World Refugee Day.  Now we are talking about what is required to enable ‘good’ resettlement. The reason that is in inverted commas is because it is never a refugee’s first choice to come to a new place but it’s also a chance for a new beginning - so making the best of what you have got, I suppose. Aki, maybe you want to kick us off here? |
| Aki | Thank you, Sally. As you say, there is no good to leave your home country or to live in other country. Usually it is good to live in your own home country and live with your extended family but many refugees are forced to leave their home country and they get resettled to new country. I think the most important thing is the international society should be aware of refugees. I can tell you from my experience when I was working in Egypt, the majority of people in Egypt are not aware of what is refugee, they treat people in the same way because I am going to say it but when they see any dark coloured person they think it is Sudanese so it is like generalising all the stuff. Here in New Zealand what we need to do is to raise awareness of the mainstream what is refugee and why they are coming here. Other countries, also they think that refugees when they come they are only taking stuff… They are not only taking stuff, they are adding to our culture and we are very grateful to have more than 185 cultures and this is like the adding up of migration and refugee and all to our society. This is the richness of all New Zealand so the good is like… Refugees are here to add something to the entire society. So the good resettlement process, we can start with the simple stuff like raising awareness of people who are refugees and why they are coming here especially on days like 20 June, it is World Refugee Day which is a good day. Usually we celebrate as small but it has never been outside.  I remember in other countries we celebrated with different people who are not even refugees so that they know who is refugee and doing a lot of awareness raising so that is the most important… And then later on we can start, the resettlement locations - we are lucky that, as Sarah says, that this is unique in New Zealand to have a Māngere. Other people when they go to other countries, they suffer but we are lucky we have the Māngere system which is good. Refugees before, former refugees before they go to the resettlement location, they already are aware of where they are going and what they are going to do but this is a good start I think. |
| Sally | So without Māngere, if our refugees resettled in another country, they basically arrive and get placed in a house and there you go? |
| Aki | Yes it is usually like that and they suffer. As I told you, I work as social worker in Egypt for a while and I’ve been working with mainly people like victim of trafficking and unaccompanied minors and all this stuff and whenever they go to other countries they suffer in this country because it is just putting them in a society and they don’t know what’s going on there. Everyone treats them the same. They are the same but when they come they are new to that area so they need a lot of support so the Māngere system gives a lot of good support for the former refugees when they arrive but in other countries there is nothing and it is very hard. Probably might be better because sometimes they are forced to integrate very fast but for new people when they arrive it is good to have that system. |
| Sally | Sarah, do you want to jump in there? |
| Sarah | I think clearly there are some very good points and I think in other countries, you’re right, they often are just put into short-term housing initially and go right into the community. Often it is linked to employment - so people are placed where the jobs are - with less consideration maybe around existing communities and support. I think New Zealand does a really fantastic job of bringing the community and the stakeholders together and there’s a real sense of cooperation around supporting resettlement. |
| Sally | Sarah, from your point of view, what factors are required to enable settlement? |
| Sarah | Oh I think… I mean you could look big picture and we can talk about the need for language so that people can navigate and communicate and connect with their community, it’s really important. Likewise, employment or volunteering so there’s a sense of purpose and ability for people to contribute. Getting kids in school and having access to education is also very key and what we see - and Jo can probably talk about how it looks in Christchurch - is that we know that once kids are in school it’s a great way to connect families to that wider community and how we connect in New Zealand through parents.  All those factors are part of a much bigger piece but it is an individual journey, I guess I would say, and one of the things we really try to do consciously is treat each individual as an individual and understand what their hopes and dreams and aspirations are and what their vision for a life in New Zealand will be. We work really closely from offshore, from Māngere and through to the community to support individual on that path. |
| Jo | Yeah definitely. When the former refugees arrive in the settlement city like Christchurch, they come with a plan and that’s what they go through in Māngere, looking at their hopes and dreams and their goals. And in Christchurch, the Red Cross supports them to put those in place and that might mean working alongside a key worker and volunteers - volunteers are a vital part of what we do and we wrap volunteers around a household, whether that be one or a larger family. We support them to achieve those [hopes and dreams] and sometimes that’s really small steps. First it’s about English language and getting children to school and preschool, orientating them to their surroundings. It’s just about taking small steps to reach the larger goal but definitely an individual plan because everyone is different. We can’t just clump everyone together; everyone has their own journey, really. |
| Sally | Sarah, I heard you talk a while ago about this plan that refugees put together at Māngere and you mentioned that even the children write their own plan and how it might be something as simple as join a football club but I thought that was lovely, getting the children to participate as well. What might their vision look like? |
| Sarah | Yes I think that’s a real conscious choice we’ve made because, like Jo said, it’s quite easy to lump communities together as one cohort. So for children, I tell you what, we just watch them bloom while they’re here at Māngere and I know it goes on, it extends itself once they get into the community but it tends to be things like join the sports club or pick up a hobby that maybe they did before they were displaced but they want to reconnect with. Often they are really strong ambitions around future career so it’s about getting into the right education. And some of the work we do is about managing expectations as well, especially around helping them see, as Jo said… It’s a step-by-step process. But it’s very heartening. It can be joining an art club but often sports is a great connector and Red Cross are great at getting people connected to those teams and volunteers so they can start building those connections, those social community connections. |
| Aki | So just to add to what Jo said also, we have an integrated orientation programme for them, so four or five days integrated service. So what we do is we bring all the stakeholders, like all the service providers, to tell former refugee about their service so they have the right to choose what service they need because sometimes when there is not any choice, you push someone to go somewhere but for them there are many options. They can go and work with whoever so we usually do the orientation programme and bring all the stakeholders to talk about their services and this is one of the best thing I saw on this programme because the former refugees, they have a chance to see what is going on and then they can do their own choice.  Our first intake, we did that orientation and people when they saw all the service providers, especially with ESOL, they chose where they wanted to go or which is the class they want to go to. |
| Sally | ESOL being English for Second Language. |
| Male | Yes. |
| Sally | Namrud, you’ve just gone through this process, having just arrived. How have you found it? |
| Namrid | Well it is good especially the volunteers, we worked with the Red Cross. I really appreciate them because they treat us as their family and they show us everything but inside… The community orientation, we will join by next month because we are the second intake but everything is gone, it is good until now. |
| Sally | So you have written your own plan and you have been able to discuss that with people? |
| Namrud | Actually no. |
| Jo | In Māngere you went through a plan with your case worker and you talked about your goals and dreams and you talked about what you aspire to do and what you’d like assistance with here? |
| Namrid | Ah yes with case worker there, just plan for future. |
| Aki | And I think the unique thing, usually in other areas, refugees they don’t take part in their plan. They just resettle them, go work and do that and that but this is unique. Usually when we receive other across the settlement line we feel very help… Even we as key workers, social workers, when they talk with the former refugees about their plan and still they want to implement that plan. That is their plan, it’s not like Immigration or Red Cross plan, it is their plan, the former refugee’s, so we are eager to help them to implement it. |
| Sally | Sarah, you mentioned the importance of employment or volunteering as giving people a sense of purpose. How much of the Red Cross’s role is around employment and how does that then tie in with English language as a potential barrier to employment here? |
| Sarah | I think, again Jo could probably speak more about employment from a settlement perspective. I mean contractually there’s two components so we contract Red Cross to do the settlement support and employment is a separate piece that is delivered and funded by MSD. They very closely are integrated I would say, so we talk about employment with families even offshore about what they’d like to do. That carries through, as Jo and Aki have said, through that settlement plan. Red Cross have mechanisms to refer on to specific employment programmes and pathways to support that as it goes through. |
| Jo | Yes. So when someone is up in Māngere they do an English language assessment through AUT and when they come to Christchurch or any other settlement city, in their plan they will talk about their English language level. If they are a certain level they get referred to Pathways to Employment and they will support them to look at getting job readiness. Everyone will have some aspect of working with Pathways to Employment; some will just about around orientation and what you need to get ready for employment, others will be around supporting them to get there. So Pathways to Employment and Pathways to Settlement are both Red Cross programmes at the moment but they work side-by-side to support the former refugees. |
| Sally | One of the big questions is: Refugees are supported through the Red Cross for their first year, what happens after that year? |
| Jo | So we are contracted to work with them for the first year, that doesn’t mean we drop them on the date that they’ve arrived in Christchurch. It means we help them to support them to see… Some families are well and ready and are flying and don’t need our support anymore. Other families need a bit more support so we will put that in or we will have referral pathways for them to have other agencies and support in place for them. It’s about, like we said before, it’s an individual programme, it’s about what they need and how we can support them along the way. |
| Aki | To also add, within this year we work towards independency, they need to be. So that is what you push usually so after a year, they are not going to be abandoned but there are other service providers. I can see that from our first intake and second intake there are people who are capable of doing everything, even they don’t need us, we are there only as a… You know, whenever they need some help but they are doing a lot of stuff on their own. They have a good education and have good English skill and all stuff and they are navigating on their own. They just ask… We call them to ask how they are doing only. So I think I can see a few of them can be discharged after six months, it’s not like a year but still we will be there for a year. |
| Jo | As we did mention before about volunteers, we have volunteers in Christchurch and they work with them for six months but as a volunteer you become part of the family so for some it’s a lifelong journey with Red Cross because they first of all volunteered and then they’ve integrated into their families. I know families that I worked with 15 years ago that are still… Every time I go and visit the family, their volunteers are still there, they are part of the furniture now. |
| Aki | Yes often they call them mum and dad. I was with the first intake when I saw one of the former refugees, he call his volunteers mum and dad and I said that’s awesome. When you come you don’t have anyone and they find a mum and dad in another country which is awesome. |
| Sally | Really cool. I guess what I was getting at, as well, is that refugees when they arrive in New Zealand are Permanent Residents so they are entitled to all the services that any other Permanent Resident is. |
| Sarah | That’s right, correct. |
| Jo | Yup they are entitled to everything that everyone else is entitled to. |
| Sally | Just quickly then, before I have our next break, asylum seekers and people who come under the family reunification programme, how does that differ? |
| Sarah | Yes so if someone comes as an asylum seeker and receives Convention Refugee status, there’s a process there to get them residence once they have their decision. We currently have… There’s a Convention Refugee… We call it the Navigator Programme but the idea is very similar to settlement but kind of less hands on, once someone has a positive decision and has Convention Refugee status, they link up with someone from the settlement team here and they have a very similar conversation and a settlement planning session as we do with Quota refugees. So it’s about, again, how can we help. Often people who have come through the Convention have been here for a number of years while they’ve gone through their asylum determination process so their needs are slightly different but it’s still about helping people navigate the systems, understanding their rights and responsibilities obviously. So that programme is in place to support Convention Refugees.  Family reunification - so it’s a bit confusing with the categories - but essentially we have family reunification that comes through the Quota and so we would call that Refugee Quota Family Reunification policy. Essentially they come through the Quota and they have all the same support services that anyone else has through the Quota so they’d be linked with the Red Cross services. I’m wondering… Refugee Family Support category is confusing but it’s a separate category and they would be accessing mainstream services rather than specific settlement support in that category, if that helps? |
| Sally | If anyone is interested in finding out more about these various different categories, I guess there’s something on the Immigration website they could check out? |
| Sarah | Absolutely, look online so you can see more details around the policy. Community Law always has really good links and fact sheets around the categories, as well. |
| Sally | OK that’s great. We’ll have our second song and we’ll choose something Eritrean. |
|  | MUSIC - Andit Okbay, ‘Bdihriu da’a’ |
| Sally | This is “Speak Up” - “Kōrerotia” on Plains FM 96.9. We’re talking with Jo Fasheun and Aklilu Habteghiorghis of the Red Cross, and Sarah Ward from Immigration New Zealand, and Namrud Asrat who is one of the recently resettled former refugees in Christchurch and just in this final segment we’re going to think about Christchurch specifically as a settlement location and also as New Zealand is moving forward and looking to resettle another 500 refugees next year, what other locations we’re going to be using and why Immigration has chosen the locations it has done.  So just to start off, Christchurch has resettled now two intakes of refugees, the first ones after an eight year absence. What is it like for Christchurch - the refugee resettlement sector which has been active that whole eight years but in a different capacity - what is it like for you guys now that there are new refugees coming through? |
| Jo | Thanks Sally, Christchurch has such a rich background in settling former refugees, I mean we’ve been going for a long time and there’s real key agencies out there that have been working in this sector for a long time. There’s amazing community groups that have been settled for a long time and are so integrated into Christchurch now and the wider New Zealand and beyond. It’s really exciting to start working for Red Cross and to start settling former refugees again. We are so lucky in that way that there’s such a grounding of the refugee sector here and we work very well and collaborate very well with all the other agencies and we couldn’t do our work as fully as we do without them. Also the former refugees, I mean I’ve got an amazing team and most of them are former refugees themselves, they’ve settled here along the time and have really grown in Christchurch and it’s so amazing to have that richness in our team.  As a settling city in Christchurch at the moment, we take former refugees from Eritrea and Afghanistan at the moment and we’re getting some from Syria as well. That’s the allotted ethnicities that we have at the moment and, like Sarah says, that might change in the future depending on what’s allotted but that’s what we’ve got and it’s really exciting to see, especially Eritrean community. It was starting before the earthquakes and so after the earthquakes, when the former settlement stopped, the community stayed small so it’s so wonderful to see this community grow again and they are such a supportive amazing community. And to have more people come and join the Afghani community is amazing. |
| Aki | Also you can see it, like if you in the community, like I can talk with two hats: One of my hats is like the Red Cross - I am here with the Red Cross - but my second is as Eritrean living in Christchurch and we have a very small community and when the first community they are going to be… If former refugees are going to be settled here, in Christchurch you can see how happy they were. Even the first day they arrive, they arrive on Friday and Saturday they organise a big welcome party so that’s like you can see how the community was very happy to see that their community is growing which is good. I am sure there are other communities, the Afghani community the same, so it is about the community and also it is like for us, the Red Cross also working with the community leaders so we can encourage them and how they can support the former refugees because the help, the former refugee doesn’t come only from us the Red Cross or any other service providers, it’s usually after… We work from 8-5 but after 5 there are community members who dedicate their time and life to support these people and that is the successful of their resettlement process is also because of these community members. So I can see how happy they are when they see we are growing. |
| Sally | Have you found it really helpful having other Eritreans here? |
| Namrud | Yes sure, the community has helped for us and now they look after and they ask everything and they are so helpful for us. |
| Sally | Sarah, one of the things that Immigration presumably looked for when deciding to resettle Eritrean and Afghani refugees here was the existence of these existing communities. How will that change when you’re looking to resettle groups in new locations that don’t have any refugee populations at all? |
| Sarah | I think… Yeah you’re right, we’re going to have to look at it a little bit different. Over the last couple of years we’ve opened Dunedin and Invercargill as new resettlement areas as well and they were also communities that had very small, if any, existing refugee populations. The learnings from that is that actually resettlement can be much bigger than just former refugee communities and what we look at is opportunities to leverage off where we know refugee communities are because it’s important that new arrivals have that connection, that cultural connection and cultural support but other neighbouring towns and cities that also have a community that we can leverage off of. |
| Sally | Jo, you mentioned the various services in Christchurch supporting refugees - and Sarah, you probably have something to add to this too - What are things that are needed if you’re going to be resettling refugees in a location? |
| Jo | I guess the first thing I would say is an open heart and an acceptance. Also be willing to learn from them and be enriched. I guess that’s what is needed but in a practical sense it’s about support around housing, English language, a medical practice that is open and willing to walk along that journey with them. Most cities in New Zealand would have that, we are wanting to support people to be integrated and be a community so I think the settlement cities that have been chosen will have that, it’s just about putting infrastructure in for them that will support them along the way. Putting agencies and wrapping things around them that will support and understand their journey. |
| Sally | Do you want to add anything, Sarah? |
| Sarah | I agree, I think if we talk a bit about the assessment process if that’s helpful, about how those new locations were chosen but I guess just in relation to community, it is, in the new locations it will be about broadening out what that looks like and thinking about how we can give people, new arrivals, a sense of community. Maybe a little bit different than in the bigger cities, so through employment and through employee networks, how you build a community there. Iwi partnerships that can build a community around new arrivals, I think there’s a lot of opportunity in the new regions. Beyond that initial infrastructure thing that absolutely needs to happen, I think it’s a really good opportunity. |
| Sally | One comment that comes up a fair bit in relation to refugee resettlement is the idea of rural and urban resettlement. A lot of refugees have some background in agriculture but resettlement tends to take place in the cities and that’s in a large part because of these practical and logistical needs. Any comment to that would be great? |
| Sarah | I think you’re right. Traditionally in New Zealand it has been in the larger cities and absolutely, I think, it is grounded in resources and where services are. But you will see from the new six locations, more towns than cities I suppose: Timaru, Whanganui, Levin, Masterton, Ashburton and Blenheim. They are all smaller and have more rural employment opportunities and some rural settings. I think we are still looking to match people with the best fit for them, again thinking as individuals. A lot of the Syrian refugees have come from a city, a real urban setting, so putting some families in a smaller place like Ashburton or Levin might feel really uncomfortable. So I think we’ll just have to again… There’s benefits to both environments and we have to find the right match for the individuals. |
| Aki | And I was thinking when you come to the refugee… So most refugees are, like, now urbanised, there are many towns but the majority of those who come, even from areas like Eritrea or Ethiopia or from Afghan family, they come from an urban situation so it’s all like urbanisation and all stuff. Even most refugees, they are looking toward an urban city so they can integrate easily in many countries. |
| Sarah | We have a family through the community sponsorship programme that is currently living in Timaru and I met with the people supporting that family recently and I was laughing because they’d just been to Christchurch to visit friends and they came back to Timaru and apparently they just called Timaru, it’s my town, my home and they were saying how big and bustling Christchurch was and how glad they were to get back to Timaru. So sometimes it’s challenging our own perceptions about what fits for people and asking them and I felt really heartened by that because you get anxious thinking, “Oh is it going to be too quiet in Timaru for you” but they love it. There’s a lot of benefits for the smaller town. |
| Aki | Yes and they will get a lot of job opportunities in a small town, there is no competition. If you go to big city like Auckland or Wellington, many former refugees will find it very hard to get a job but when you go to a small town, there are job opportunities. |
| Sarah | That network and connection can be sometimes easier in small towns to navigate. |
| Sally | Would you like to add anything, Namrud? |
| Namrid | I actually haven’t experienced in New Zealand to get a job, I have been here only for one month only. |
| Sally | Oh yes but are you finding Christchurch too big? Too small? A good size? |
| Aki | I think he came from a big town, the biggest city. |
| Sally | Oh wow, Christchurch will be tiny! |
| Namrud | It is the same Asmara. |
| Male | That is why for most people, they come to Christchurch and when they see it they say, “Oh it looks like Asmara” which is the capital city of Eritrea but for others who come from Addis Ababa - I have been there in September - it is a very big city so when you compare it with Christchurch… You can’t. |
| Sally | Jo, would you like to talk a little bit about how people are faring in the aftermath of 15 March? |
| Jo | Sure. It’s going to take a long time to heal. I mean Christchurch is an amazing resilient city and I mean we’ve been through the earthquakes and we’ve been through a lot. We’re all bound together and we’re supporting each other, it definitely impacted when we just started taking the intakes a few weeks before they came so that first intake, it was really hard for them after this happened. To think they had come to what they expected was a safe city and they’d left… Their belief was they had left all that behind so it was a big shock and we’re still working with some people to support them, some are a bit slower to go back to English classes and stuff like that because of what that has brought up for them, it’s triggered their journey as well. So it’s just about support and working together, being a community, wrapping ourselves around each other and having an understanding about each other. I think World Refugee Day has come at a good time, we are united together and we’re about educating people and showing people what an amazing community we have and what amazing richness different communities bring to us. |
| Aki | I like the word ‘resilience’ usually but when that incident happened, it was a shock for all of us, not only for the new former refugees but for the entire city. That day I was with two former refugees and when we heard that I could see their face, they thought, “Oh we thought this was a safe haven and we came but not.” I told them, like, me too but still it is a safe haven because this has never happened in New Zealand.  Whenever you go, like, New Zealand is one of the safety in all stuff but what you saw after that is like… When we getting talking with them and asking and myself and Jo was out in the field with other team members to look after them, like we go check door to door, knock and see how they were doing because they had been only two weeks here. They get to the door and go, “Oh if you guys are coming to check on us that means it is safe, there is no problem, it happens everywhere and it happened here” and that’s what I saw on their face and usually you can see… Because some of them have been through many stuff and when I was talking to them they say we have been through many stuff, this is nothing to what we saw but they just get shocked because it happened in the place where they say that is the safe haven for them and no-one expects that to happen in Christchurch. But I can see that, their resilience and coping mechanism and all that stuff. Even at that time, the second intake was still in Māngere and I think there was a security system in Māngere and some of them called and I was like, “Guys, it’s OK, Christchurch is safe, New Zealand is safe. There might be more security but it’s safe.” You can see in their face that they accept everything and they say OK we’re coming to Christchurch, so I can see they are resilient. |
| Sally | Just to finish off then, your feelings on the fact that next year, very soon there will be refugees resettled right around New Zealand, in all the existing locations but also, Sarah, in those six new locations that you mentioned. What are going to be some of the fantastic opportunities that we’re going to see coming out from this? |
| Sarah | So for the next year I’m really focused on opening the six new resettlement locations and I just have to say I found it extremely heartening to get out to the six new locations and meet with the councils and stakeholders and community where they’re going to be welcomed. I just think there’s so much potential and opportunity to extend New Zealand systems and residents experience working with refugees. I see a real opening of arms from the employment sector as well and I just think it’s a fantastic opportunity to really make New Zealand - the whole of New Zealand not just the core cities - a welcoming place. We’ve had some really fantastic response from iwi partners about wanting to be part of this journey for refugees and I just… I’m really looking forward to it. It won’t be completely easy, there will definitely be challenges along the way and things around housing and making sure that agencies and communities are well resourced and we have time to get them prepared to be welcoming but I think the foundations are there and there’s a real willingness so I’m really looking forward to it. |
| Sally | What’s your sense of you guys, looking out from Christchurch? |
| Jo | I think that, like I said before, I think that New Zealand as a whole will be a lot richer for it. I think it will increase people’s awareness and I think sometimes we’re still a wee bit ignorant about what’s out there in the world. I think it will really support that. People come with their preconceived ideas and when former refugees are living in your communities, they’re your neighbours, friends of your kids, when you see them day-to-day you realise oh my goodness, they’re just like everyone else, we’re just living in this human race, we’re just walking along the way, we all come with our different stories, our different journeys but we’re richer for it and that’s what I believe. I believe the smaller towns like Ashburton and stuff, it will be so much richer for it and I’m excited, I’m excited to see when I drive to different places around New Zealand that there will be people that I know and I love that have enriched my life, that will be enriching everyone else’s as well and I’m so excited. |
| Aki | The same, I just see especially we have Timaru and Ashburton near to us. I love to see more diverse community there, I have been to Timaru, not Ashburton but I can see it is small and I know the Egyptian community there, I go to the Egyptian church in Timaru but it is good to see also a diverse community and that would show our richness in our culture and all stuff. I think small towns like Timaru and Ashburton we’ll do more and more and in small towns people know each other and they are accepting others, so they will be one family. It’s like different to big cities. It’s like Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch. I think refugees will like it, like the former refugees, it’s a very nice place, I love to see that resettlement has started, even from this year not next year. |
| Sally | Sarah’s thinking, “Oh”! |
| Sarah | I’m going as fast as I can! I need more time! |
| Sally | Namrud, have you got anything you would like to say, just to finish up? |
| Namrud | Just I love doing, wanting if the government of New Zealand, if they are willing to bring refugees from overseas, if it is able to increase the quota of refugees from Ethiopia especially for the Eritreans, they stay for almost ten years; they suffer more. And also the information between the New Zealand and UNHCR is increased, that is my opinion. |
| Aki | I think on that point, from what I understand, he also reflect… Also I think maybe as the Red Cross I need to see the end of the resettlement programme which is a family link to Middle East and Africa which is if you are a refugee you are a refugee whoever or wherever you are. So the resettlement process needs to go smooth. So most of these people, especially the Eritrean, they can be good to have a family link, so I would love to see the government in the resettlement needs to be like smooth… Also there are many other people suffering if they can increase because it is good to be a good neighbour in our region and also there are many people suffering in Libya, Ethiopia, in other regions of Africa that needs attention. |
| Sally | Well, increase the Quota even more!  OK well thank you very much to all of you for coming in today and for Sarah for calling in from Māngere. It’s been really fantastic to have your perspectives and it’s really cool that Christchurch is accepting new former refugees - it has been a long time coming - so it’s great to see that and so much positivity as we move forward into 2020 so that’s really good to see too. Thank you very much. |