AMEP National Forum Report

Learners from Africa

16 - 17 November 2006

Drysdale Institute of TAFE
AMES Hobart, TASMANIA
INTRODUCTION:

This Forum was convened over two days to discuss issues in providing English language instruction to Learners from Africa. The delegates were representatives from AMEP Service providers and organizations involved in service provision to students in the AMEP.

The objectives of the forum were:

- to explore cultural and settlement issues and learning challenges experienced by learners from Africa
- to consider perspectives on strategic planning to meet their language learning and settlement needs

This report summarizes the main issues and suggestions emerging throughout the two days of presentations and discussions and is organized under the four main themes of the Forum:

1. Community & settlement
2. Literacy and employment
3. Perspectives on learner needs
4. Program design

A list of participating organizations is included at the end of this report and the full program and PowerPoint slides of presentations are available at http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/pdamep/nat_for/index.html

THEME 1: COMMUNITY & SETTLEMENT

❖ PANEL DISCUSSION: VOICES FROM THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY

- **From Sierra Leone to Hobart – My journey**
  Ellen B. Maryon, Migrant Resource Centre, South Hobart

- **My experience as a refugee and my new challenge in Australia**
  Hirut Woldemichael, Hobart Women’s Shelter

- **Gaining employment in my new country, Australia**
  Edward Ade Benjamin Phoenix Centre, Hobart

The presentations were about the speakers’:

- reasons for leaving their home countries
- personal experience as refugees, including separation from families and loved ones, sense of guilt, grief, suffering, fear
- identity and self-confidence
- settlement experience in Australia
- expectations and reality of life in the new land
- challenges in seeking employment in Australia
- aspirations and willingness to make a contribution to Australia

WORKING TOWARDS EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES
Juliana Nkramah, African Liaison Unit, Centrelink

Differences between migrants and refugees:
- Refugees are people who have fled their countries due to war or fear of persecution and serious human rights violation.
- Refugees cannot go return to their homeland, while migrants have a right of return.
- Migrants have a choice about which country they want to live in, whereas refugees do not. They have no choice of where to go and only have minimal belongings. Their decision to flee is very sudden.
- They are unable to maintain ties with their home country for financial support.

Pre-arrival situation:

Africa is a large continent with diversity in languages spoken, different countries and different cultures. There are 12 refugee countries represented in the African groups arriving under the refugee and humanitarian programs.

- Issues for refugees from Africa include:
  - Extended stay in refugee camps. Many young people were born in the camps.
  - Some communities do not arrive to a pre-existing community from their ethnic group or country of origin hence they are subjected to limited financial and social support networks in their own community.
  - Torture and trauma – many people do not identify their trauma.
  - Education – disrupted education or minimal education.
  - Language: Many refugees arrive with limited or no English some other people are pre-literate.

Abuse by officials or by members of the local population of the country of asylum makes it difficult for refugees to deal with authority, and they find it difficult to question the decisions made by people in authority.

Work of the African Liaison Unit, Centrelink:
The unit has held internal and external consultations with over 700 community members and over 1000 service agency workers. The issues raised include:

- fear and mistrust of authority
- age role reversal and gender role reversal
- survival behaviour
- the complexity and the size of the family
- family breakdown and family conflict
- physical and mental health issues
- complex community politics

Understanding and well-planned strategies will assist in dealing with these issues and in ensuring a productive diversity. Literacy is a major issue and the strategies deployed to remove the language barrier for the people from African countries to allow them access to work and employment should be considered.

**Communication**
- clients want face-to-face delivery of information. Centrelink has developed a means of disseminating information though audio CD (6 episodes)
- strategies to assist capacity building to allow migrants and refugees from African countries to have their own voice and learn about the new systems in their new country.
- communication mechanisms suitable for newly arrived refugee customers from African countries
- settlement issues of migrants and refugees from African countries, their needs and issues surrounding them/ how best to effectively address these issues and through which available channels

**Recommendations for AMEP service providers**
- develop creative teaching techniques, particularly the greater use of audio-visual materials for people who are illiterate but multilingual
- Centrelink to collaborate with AMEP to develop a module that outlines the different services, right and obligations of Centrelink customers to be included in the AMEP Curriculum
- AMEP service providers to employ more bilingual teachers to meet the needs of preliterate groups of refugees from African countries

**DISCUSSION TOPIC**

Identify 3 issues raised in this session that have implications for English language instruction in the AMEP. Discuss some recommendations for addressing these issues.

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<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to integrate the work components though all the levels of CSWE - difficult to find introductory work focus from beginner classes</td>
<td>Tasmania are finding work experience for students in CSWE 1 &amp; 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy needs and beginner levels</td>
<td>Development of writing skills in CSWE at all levels.</td>
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<td>pressure being put on service providers for outcomes related to work.</td>
<td>In Canada the government works with employers on providing English in the workplace.</td>
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needs the government to give an incentive to employers to take on immigrant and refugee workers without experience. Employers tend to be reluctant even though we can offer AMEP classes in the workplace.

- Different needs for different groups, ‘the system’ (for example employment).

- Role of teachers in terms of ‘frustrations’ felt by students, as expressed by the panel presentations

- Information on settlement and related issues

- Listen to them and teach only S/L, not R/W – how?

- Difference between classes with one dominant group VS a mixed group

- Issue with Centrelink

- DIMA should look more flexibly at how and where students can use their AMEP hours.

- Issues for Professional Development for teachers – content knowledge; for students – ‘practical’ examples/packages. CSWE has to be in context.

- System knowledge/rules of the game. What do students want and need and how can we best deliver/provide that? Work experience is important with respect to employment.

- Tailored individual approach – counselling

- Teachers’ expectations relayed to the student – for example punctuality, seeking counseling

- Include bilingual workers in process

- Train bilingual assistants

- Need to give much information but need to present it gradually.

- Need more professional development around innovative strategies for working with learners with no or minimal literacy – including coaxing them into literacy (using art, computers, Photoshop)

- Needs for specialist classes

- Clarification needed on Centrelink policies for jobseeking after first 13 weeks.

Emergent issue:
The JCA referral to job network members is not mandatory for refugees. The 13 week exemption stays as it is and has not been changed. It is still in place and will be enforced.

If refugees are doing 20 hours a week in the AMEP program, it is considered work activity. If they have an appointment, it should be outside the 20 hours of English lessons. Reporting to Centrelink is not on a fortnightly basis but on a six weekly basis.

THEME 2: LITERACY AND EMPLOYMENT

- SUDANESE LEARNERS AND REQUESTS IN THE WORKPLACE (Lynda Yates, AMEP Research Centre)

The information presented at in this session was based on the research project entitled “Cultural aspects of language use by learners from Africa”

Data was collected from native speakers forming complex request role play tasks and from learners from a variety of backgrounds. Lynda presented samples of role play cue cards together with an analysis of possible sources of difference such as socio-cultural issues: transfer of cultural values;
language-related: learners are not aware of the range of mitigating devices available, their force or how they are used, by whom and when.

Comparison on aspects of pragmatics such as request stance and preparation was also discussed and the outcomes revealed that:

- **Native speakers** – signaled empathy and mutual responsibility through disarmers, empathetic markers, interpersonal markers, consultative devices
- **Dinka speakers** more often left it to interlocutor to work out a solution while native speakers prepared for their request with pre-acts such as ‘let’s talk’ routines, less repetition and upgrading, more explanation in reasons
- **Native speakers** use aspects of mitigation to soften their request. Samples of mitigation include: Syntactic mitigation; Lexical mitigation, Propositional mitigation.

A comparison between Dinka speakers’ strategies and those by native speakers were presented. The finding indicated that the interactive style of learners from Southern Sudan was direct and tactile.

Some implications for teaching include:

- Concepts and system in Australia of workplace conditions/rights/responsibilities
- Request forms
- Alternatives to repeated reasons for persuasion
- Delivery e.g. signaling empathy, disarming
- The use of lexis and syntax to soften
- Staging of requests, preparation,
- Concept of “offers” and negotiating

Awareness raising for employers on the importance of family/community to African community groups.

For more information on the methodology used in this project, visit the website and the PowerPoint presentation at [http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/pdamep/nat_for/index.html](http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au/pdamep/nat_for/index.html)

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**RETHINKING ASSUMPTION OF STUDENT EXPERTISE: ‘OUT OF CLASS’ LITERACIES OF AFRICAN REFUGEE YOUTH** (Greg Curran, Victoria University)

This research project is in its early stages. The research data will undergo further analysis and development.

**Key issues:**

- Student disengagement
  - Attendance problems
  - Attrition rates
  - Disinterest in curriculum content
- Writing difficulties
- Differing learning styles

**Theoretical Framework:**
Multiliteracies – “…the range of literacies and literate practices used in all sectors of life and how these literate practices are similar and different.” (Anstey & Bull 2006: 20)

A Multiliteracies approach moves away from the traditional notion of literacy as a singular entity - to the notion of many different literacies. There have been many changes in society – socially, economically, politically and culturally. This has led educators to revise/rethink their ideas about literacy, in particular, the sorts of literacies that are needed to function in society. This project looks beyond the classroom, inviting students to share something of their worlds, their lives. In so doing, we recognise that education does not only happen in the classroom, there are many sites and ways of learning.

What does a Multiliteracies approach offer?
1. It provides opportunities for engagement.
   The key strength of Multiliteracies is its connection to students’ lifeworlds, ways of knowing, and ways of learning. Pre-service teacher education programs devote considerable time to the notion of student learning styles. We need to take this issue into account when planning our programs.

2. It broadens the range of text types we utilise.
   The traditional curriculum is largely centred around print-based, linear texts – focusing on the linguistic semiotic system (a text’s set of signs and symbols – i.e. letters, words and grammar). Those things are still important but we need a broader skill set nowadays because many texts are multimodal for example digital texts, websites, SMS, blogs, mobile phone, TV, movies, video games.

3. It focuses attention on students’ Literacy Identities
   We are challenged (as educators, and managers of English programs) to think about:
   - What resources are valued in our classroom?
   - What resources are brought to, and utilised in, class?
   - What resources are left outside the classroom (not seen as valid or relevant in the English classroom)?

   Teachers want students to be able to look at a learning task and consider how their skills and knowledge match its requirements. They might do so by asking the following questions:
   - what can I do?
   - what do I need to need to learn?
   - what can’t I do?
   - how can I learn this?

Research themes:
1. The desire for and drive towards, independence.
   The African students (in the research project) said that many of their everyday tasks required computer-related skills (digital literacies). Many of the skills and knowledge they felt they needed in order to be independent they had to learn outside the classroom. These students spoke of independence as being able to perform a range of technology-related tasks - away from the gaze of other people (privacy).

2. Re-thinking teachers’ assumptions about student expertise:
   The curriculum, with its limited range of text types, provides a partial view of learner’s skills and knowledge. Teachers are not given insight into the range of skills a learner can demonstrate in his
engagement with other medium such as website of their interest. We should take into account
learners’ ability in their chosen context, (such as their favourite website) which could be purposeful,
closely related to their identity and culture.
3. The Centrality of Culture
Keeping his culture alive, maintaining an ongoing connection with that culture, highlighting the
centrality of culture to learning. Teachers should be thinking about, or factoring in, the role of culture
(western culture or learner’s culture) in respect to learning.

Implications: Educators need to:
1. broaden our notions of what ‘learning English’, ‘survival’ or ‘functional’ English’ looks like or involves.
2. broaden the forms of texts that we value (outside print and linear-based texts) in the classroom- for example digital texts
3. factor in the ongoing connection that some students have to their country of origin and community.

❖ TENSIONS BETWEEN 'LEARNING TO READ' AND 'READING TO EARN': DILEMMAS FOR AMEP LEARNERS IN MOVING ON FROM SURVIVING WITHOUT LITERACY (Howard Nicholas, AMEP RC)

The presentation draws on two different SPRP projects and is about what it means to connect the content delivery in the AMEP with English for work

In his speech at the AMEP National Conference 2006, the Parliament Secretary, the Hon. Andrew Robb, stated that for migrants to get a job as soon as they possibly can may first be confronting but work helps to heal wounds, builds confidence and assists in the learning the English language.

The connection has been made with the Canadian work model – in which the integration between English teaching and work preparation could be implemented in an unproblematic way. The Bridge to Work programs in Canada are designed to work with skilled migrants in occupations of demand. In Australia, the issues (in the CSWE context and course delivery) of what should be done and in what manner need to be considered.

In discussing the employment related class, practitioners have to deal with all CSWE levels. What are the implications for engagement with the workplace both short term and long term? How in this program can program managers and teachers position students to be able to deal with both the short term and long term issues? (Short term issue = the sense that one looks for a job now only to serve one’s immediate needs/ financial reasons with no intention of staying in the job in the long term). In the Extending Repetoire Project, work was designed to permit some employment related work to be done with all levels. There has been mixed reaction to the project - the group interested in the ideas and the others who held reservation over its realistic application and the real challenge lying ahead.

Teachers have the responsibility to reinforce the sense of optimism about options and potential for employment for their students and this may create an inner conflict as teachers also are well aware of the challenge ahead of them. How can they bring this knowledge and acknowledgment of the
complication in the real world as they try to develop the sense of confidence among their students? This exercise addresses the issue of how to apply for a job and possibly get a job.

**Issues to consider**
- What is perceived as being appropriately included in Pre CSWE level?
- What is meant by ‘short term’ and ‘long term’ options?
- How do we represent the system?

**DISCUSSION TOPIC**
- Discuss the issues that arise in integrating workplace English curricula in a settlement-focus program.

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| 510 hours entitlement – settlement (legal basis) | Should English for work component come out of the students’ 510 hour entitlement?  
Night classes |
| Work placement is problematic and difficult to arrange. Employers not keen/supportive | Workplace visits? Guest speakers can be invited to discuss employer expectations  
Tapping into existing skills and making connections |
| Work readiness – so much has to be learnt before – more time and support are needed | Need a high degree of literacy for some jobs/ even basic level positions have high literacy demands, eg OHS;  
many issues to learn about: safety, conditions, pay rights and responsibilities. |
| The role of real experience VS classrooms  
Job search is a issue that takes time to prepare and teach | Generic employment skills – pair work, group work, projects C/R are set up to mirror these skills  
Application of transferable skills |
| Not every learner is a job seeker. Some students do not intend to look for work, especially women with young children – some men don’t want wives to work. | Workplace language should be integrated into settlement programs only for those expressing intention, but not mandated for everyone. |
| Program has to balance settlement focus but to what extent and what proportion? | Developing materials that look at both settlement and finding work. |
| Unrealistic expectations – can be discouraged when they realize they cannot achieve what they want | Learner pathways are ongoing discussion with learners, not a one off interview and results should feed into the language program |

**THEME 3: PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNER NEEDS**

✈ **UPTAKE OF AMEP BY YOUTH FROM AFRICA – NEEDS, EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND ATTITUDES** (Rosemarie Lloyd- AMEP Research Centre)

The project methodology included analysis of DIMA databases; interviews and focus groups Australia wide with various settlement service providers. The interviewees were asked about the
previous experience of African refugees. The views expressed by African Community leader, IHSS (Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy) and an expert (researcher who specialises in African communities in Australia - not associated with the AMEP) were that many refugees had interrupted or lack of education due to war and conflicts in their home countries, resulting in trauma experiences which also impacted on their concentration and settlement.

Many of these refugees have family issues as follows:

- Competing Priorities - Financial issues
- Gender issues
- Culture shock
- Broken families
- Family educational level
- Role reversal - Young people acquire English first and so they guide their families

Other factors include:

- **Impact of previous life on Education**
  Growing up in a war torn country makes it difficult for young people to settle and study. Youth need to have their settlement issues addressed, eg managing financial obligations like rent payments.

- **Education: Goals and expectations**
  *Aspirations* for many are to go to university and study law, medicine, engineering. This is because of the high prestige and high incomes associated with these professions and also because of the lack of exposure of these refugees to other careers in their previous life and in refugee camps.

Some parents have high and unrealistic expectations of their children’s education and how quickly their children can make the transition

**Differences**: Refugees from African countries are from diverse groups and they have different views on education depending on their background. Whilst some people aim for high education, others, who never went to school, do not believe in the merits of education.

- **Education: Australian system**
  *Support*: Young people need a lot of support for their schooling such as for English, help with homework, a better understanding of computers.

  *Age appropriate placement*: Students are placed in age appropriate and not ability appropriate classes. This results in real difficulty for students 12 years and older as often they had little or no prior education due to war and break down of the educational system in their home countries.

  *Pathways*: Students’ preferred pathways are to progress from primary to secondary school, to university as this was the only pathway available to them in their home countries. Vocational, technical education was available but was not perceived as a viable option. In Australia there is some resistance to job training since it is a difficult concept for learners from Africa.

- **Education: Role of language and literacy**
  *Learning how to learn* is a major issue because a lot of learners have never been exposed to systematic learning, - being able to manage and collate information and other skills are important.
High oracy, low literacy – Parents of children with high oracy and non commensurate literacy often resent the fact that their children are not placed immediately into mainstream education. In stead they are in the English class in order to acquire literacy skills.

- Education: AMEP or school?: AMEP survey

**Age:**
Being placed in an AMEP class with older adults is often resented by young learners. Their learning pace tends to be faster than that of older people. Of the 13 AMEP service providers, only 3 indicated they have youth classes.

**Curriculum:**
General perception is that school education is for youth and the AMEP is designed for middle aged and older learners. Learners believe they need school certificates for their pathways to tertiary education and that CSWE Certificates does not assist them in their university admission.

Areas of desired English tuition mentioned by African youth include:
- Grammar, reading writing
- Accent
- Computer
- Mathematics
- Science
- Geography
- Technical language / work related English
- Driving test

**Information Dissemination**
It is important to keep the African community informed about the following areas:
- importance of education and learning.
- pathways
- difficulties of transition and impacts of trauma

Information on trends and issues should be continuously updated. Information is best disseminated by auditory methods such as radio, DVDs. Printed matters are less successful in getting the message across as many of the African refugees are not able to read. Barriers to Participation in Education and English Language Learning have been identified such as child care / home duties; work to support others and oneself.

**Recommendations**
- Recognition of heterogeneity of youth from Africa
- Coordination across government departments – state & federal
- Youth classes
- CBI-based instruction in the AMEP
- Review eligibility criteria
- Coordination of volunteer groups
- Education of broader community
- Pathways for community members to work as aides, teachers
AMEP COUNSELLING: PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTION (Pamela McPherson, AMEP Research Centre)

Issues/ challenges for counselors:
- time management and increased workload –
- The current student population has exceptionally high needs; students need more frequent visits to the counselor, more time per visit.
- keeping up with information services – constant changes in organizations and service providers make it difficult to maintain contacts. Outcome of the project is a contacts database for all AMEP counselors with links to organizations providing essential service to migrants and refugees.
- meeting the needs of humanitarian clients. Large numbers of learners from Africa have a range of problems that require support. Long periods in refugee camps; health and mental health issues; lack of community networks, all contribute to high needs.

Student interview
Most of learners interviewed were refugees from African countries. Some comments from those who have used the counseling service are:
- they get valuable information from the counselors session and would recommend it to their peers
- would like more upfront information about options in the AMEP,
- counseling is weighted towards women’s need; not enough support for men’s issues
- there needs to be more collaboration between teachers and counselor

Counselors’ views of their roles:
- their role enhances learners’ settlement
- they provide vocational pathways such as to TAFE, vocational courses

Recommendation:
- AMEP RC to develop a contact database and forum for contact between counsellors

DISCUSSION TOPIC
Discuss the student expectations and needs reported in these sessions. What policies, strategies, interventions or resources would you recommend to respond to them?

* indicating a number of the same comments by delegates

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<tr>
<td>DIMA participation at Forums and settlement issues (2)*</td>
<td>DIMA personnel should/attend forums to hear and take on board recommendations/problems raised by teachers/managers working at grass roots level of service delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>General community awareness is important – special program raising awareness of how</td>
<td>Involving community elders (respected influences) and past successful students</td>
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| systems work (social, education, support) (2)* | | Education of sponsors | Education of sponsors and community as well - young African refugees being sponsored should receive the right information  
Bilingual support and community educators are needed to run these sessions. |
| ----- | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| • Education of sponsors | • More support for rural areas | • Education of sponsors and community as well - young African refugees being sponsored should receive the right information  
Bilingual support and community educators are needed to run these sessions. | • Staff awareness and educational pathways for rural areas to reduce possible social disturbances |
| | • orientation for migrants | | • On arrival – needs info sessions.  
• orientation session on arrival about educational systems in Australia. The information they receive currently is not coordinated. |
| | • Youth classes – variable backgrounds: none, some, lots - different pathways and perhaps different extra curricular activities (3)* | • needs structure and sense of belonging to a group.  
• response needs to cross boundaries – partnerships and flexibility; relationships must be broad: - nurturing/ mentoring (structured); multiple pathways are crucial | • Classes: -expanded curriculum, holistic program; - timetable similar to high school |
| | • Most youth needs to be catered for separately (2)* | • the law, the rules  
• Clarity: praise and feedback  
• Explicit program support  
• Leadership First Aid, Sports program  
• Youth wanting to be part of peer teaching – soccer/ AFL, garden project.  
• Fire and police visits/ relationships, open day, authority figures.  
• Spend some time illustrating settlement feelings, the newest of all in a group, front runners in a group.  
• Mentoring training  
• Childcare provider – cooking a meal for children  
• Disabilities and the AMEP classroom – mental skills, sight.  
• Issues on law, what to one person is a hello is to another sexual harassment. | |
| • Topics and program support appropriate for youth | • Intervention and resources | • Knowledge of high school curriculum (CSWE used in NSW high schools)  
• Access to instruction in projects involving digital technologies  
• access to sport/ music/ drama/ maths, also variety of activities and meeting “aussie kids” (connect to younger community)  
• Training and support – 15 year old mothers see themselves as “older”. | • Interface IHSS, mainstream services (Institutional, Mental health)  
• Complex Case management  
• Vicarious trauma/ information for staff  
• Multicultural policy part of DG’s performance plan. |
| | | | |
**Barriers:**
- AMEP inflexibility – limited facilities or limited ESL support in schools
- Whole of government approach
- Mixing new arrivals with young people who have been here longer
- Difference between applying for visa and age on arrival can exclude from AMEP
- SA Model: excellent school level facilities and close liaison with AMEP – flexible entry into schools, copes with full age range
- Jointly-managed registration process – partnership;
- Group learners and counsellor Q+A sessions
- Counseling/support load very high, demands on teachers
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**THEME 4: PROGRAM DESIGN**

**THE AMEP IN TASMANIA: DEVELOPING PATHWAYS** (Helen Ebsworth, AMEP Hobart)

One of the aims of the immigration policies is to ensure that settlement also takes place in regional areas. There are issues and implications and the response of TAFE Tasmania include:

- Content based learning
- Independent learning
- Work experience
- Vocational training

### Difficulties in regional delivery and program management
- Small population for centres – not enough students for a viable youth program; not many choices
- High unemployment / limited opportunities
- Lower levels of services to support settlement such as torture and trauma – restricted to major cities; public housing, refugees are not high on the list for public housing

### Advantages in program delivery in Tasmania
- Volunteer community – very active and supportive
- Rural outlook and surroundings – some migrants and refugees are from rural background and so it makes sense for them to settle in the rural environment
- Closer access to ‘mainstream’ communities – an opportunity for migrants and refugees to practice and use their English.

In Tasmania Humanitarian entrants form a significant proportion of immigration to its state. Recent Humanitarian entrants generally have:
- lower levels of English
- lower levels of education
- higher levels of settlement needs
- higher levels of torture and trauma related issues
- no work experience
Learner characteristics

- Learn by ‘doing’
- Low literacy
- Culture of dependence – due to the long period (28 years) spent in refugee camps with no established infrastructure, it is probable that their culture is the refugee camp culture rather than the culture of their country of origin
- Low levels of formal qualifications and work experience
- Different cultural experiences

Implications for service delivery

- Economies of scale / critical mass- Program Managers need to be realistic about what they can do in terms of the numbers of students enrolled. Ideally a youth class should be formed but they may not have the numbers to justify such a class.
- Small communities of the same cultural backgrounds – there are no established community groups in Tasmania
- “brain drain” to other areas such as to the mainland
- Surrounding infrastructure may be fragile such as mental health services being under pressure, child protection services
- Host community needs cross cultural awareness training – each group of refugees from African countries is different and generalization should be avoided.
- Bi-cultural opportunities are limited – partly because of the small numbers

The response of TAFE Tasmania:

Content based learning – This is an attempt to build on real life skills and the needs expressed by the learners. Options are sometimes in partnership. Special Programs in partnership with organizations include:

- Water Safety (with the Water Safety Council of Tasmania) – an information package has been produced - activities for learners with low literacy- a combination of settlement and content information for English and literacy learners
- Home Heating (The Tasmanian Environment Centre)
- Fire Safety (with TAS Fire Service)

AMEP Staff in TAFE Tasmania aim to:

1. Build independent learners

2. Build life skills - In order to build independent learners, learners are offered choice, empowered and encouraged to reflect on their own learning in order to build skills.

3. Improve settlement information - One of the strengths of the program is that an attempt has been made to switch the role from teacher to learner to incorporate learner to learner role within the classroom and in the ILC.

4. Increase employment pathways - there has been collaborations with STEPS (a Job Network Provider) in organizing assisted work experience program which consists of 2 days a week in the
classroom and 2 days a week in the workplace ‘sandwiched’ between the classes and separate programs for different clients. These courses are:

A. Break the Cycle: A program for Pre / 1 CSWE learners with low English, low literacy, minimal formal work, no work history in Australia. Work placements are in the areas of retail, hospitality, cleaning, aged care, child care, garden maintenance and driving. Participants have to express desire to work and be committed. Strengths of the model owe to the fact that:
- it gets support and back up from Job Network agency.
- for teaching staff, the course content is highly contextualized, learners are in the workplace and they return to class and discuss their work activities.
- workplace communication and workplace culture are experienced by the learners.
- demonstration of ‘unseen’ skills by learners when they are in the workplace is reflected in the work experience reports
- there is support amongst the participants. Mixed level class was seen as an advantage by learners.

Outcomes
- Jobs – part time work
- Increased awareness from employers
- Increased enthusiasm for ‘training’ i.e. more English classes or other training courses
- Awareness of possibility “I can work”

B. Crossover Course: A program for CSWE 2 learners - This is a combination of AMEP and LMNP funding which is similar to the Canadian model. With work placements, learners can obtain work reference and work experience in Australia.

Challenges:
- How do we define ‘work readiness’?
- What information and skills do AMEP learners require in order to ‘take the next step’?
- What are the structural problems with the AMEP contract and other issues which hinder the development of pathways? Is there enough flexibility?

CUSTOMISING COURSES AND CHILDCARE: INCREASING ACCESS TO VET FOR AFRICAN WOMEN (Cathy Domahidy, AMES West Coast, WA)

The presentation was about three customized English courses for women from African countries.

Some of the issues/barriers preventing African women from attending VET courses:
- Childcare – These women have many children and infants who are below six months of age with no support in the society.
- Family commitment –women’s responsibility to look after the children
- Venue- Accessibility and proximity of the location
- Appropriateness of courses –women from Africa cannot commit to study full time
- English language skills – often prohibit them from enrolling in the VET courses
- Literacy skills
Money
Equipment for the courses that they will have to provide for the course

Factors that need to be considered
The settlement issues encompass the whole range of issues:

- Community attitude – It is important that the community supports women in attending a course. They need to be convinced of the importance and the usefulness of the course.
- Transport – most of the women live in outlying suburbs with poor public transport. Toddlers and infants have to be taken to childcare and this makes it difficult for those women.

Courses in Parenting skills /playgroup
1. *Family Day Care course* – This course is based on the class in Canada in which the content covers English and parenting skills- co-facilitated by an ESL teacher and an African leader who speaks several languages. The mothers discuss the issues in child rearing such as nutrition and food preparation, interaction with children, childhood development, role of parents in school and other settlement issues.

2. *Sewing/English course* – Women who wanted to sew for their families expressed the needs for the course. It was a partnership between West Coast TAFE and the Department of Community and Development. Childcare was provided by the Somali community with the coordinator provided by West Coast TAFE. Transport was also provided. Learners also had the ESL component in this course (0+ to 1+).

Emergent issues
- Selection of students – women doing the childcare course were chosen by their Somali community. What were the selection criteria? Were they given choices of the course to attend?
- Lack of English among students – Instructions could not be directly given. It had to be done through an interpreter and communication breakdown may have occurred.
- Experienced Childcare coordinator was a major boost as she was able to provide guidance to the Somali women.
- Perception and understanding of children watching– interaction with children – Cross cultural issues

Factors to be considered
- Time – tardiness due to family commitment/ teachers need to get to their next classes at the end of the sessions.
- Logistics/system – explicit explanations and rules such as mothers’ presence on site while the children are being minded needs to be reinforced
- English VS Somali – women wanting to use L1
- Cultural hiccups
- Safety – work safety needs to be observed
- Completing tasks
- Listening to instructions – learners do not paying attention to instruction in English

Organisational outcomes
- Mainstream teacher’s skills extended – Students with lower language skills are now accepted into the classes
- Development of content based courses
- New pathways – links with other organizations
- Networks strengthened (also networks for woman within the course)
- Childcare options increased
- Increased awareness of difficulties for the women and cultural awareness on both sides

**Non-language outcomes**
- Parenting skills extended among women such as disciplining of children by women
- Interaction for children with their peers outside their homes, they also learn to be independent to do things for themselves
- Children developing social skills and English
- Increased confidence for mother, children and teachers

**Recommendations**
- Start from the needs of the group
- Get to know the leaders in the communities
- Spend the time to build up partnership
- Be clear about expectations of all parties
- Be firm about what you can provide

- Include several cultures
- Establish procedures with equipment
- Discuss what child care watchers can provide
- Provide child care rules
- Provide guidance for the child care watchers

**ISSUES DISCUSSED**
- Employment and education
- Ability of individuals to interface in the community
- Provisions and the living costs for learners
- Abstract concepts for citizenship/ effort required
- ESL support for learners in work experience
- Counselling and support
- English in the Workplace – ability for students to relate interpersonally in the workplace
- Aspects of multiculturalism in ESL
- Funding for programs
- How the ideas and issues from the Forum can be forwarded to DIMA
- Distribution of funding into training
- Formulated policies and initiatives
- Integration and citizenship
- Traumatised clients and care for them – pressure on staff

**List of AMEP Service Providers represented at the National Forum**
- ACL Pty Ltd   NSW
- AMEP Charles Darwin University   NT
- AMES ACT
- AMES VIC
- AMES Hobart   TAS
- AMES West Coast   WA
- Central TAFE   WA
- English Language Services, TAFE SA   SA
- Holmesglen Institute of TAFE   VIC
- Institute of Languages – UNSW   NSW
- Kangan Batman TAFE   VIC
- LM Training Specialists   SA
- NMIT VIC
- NSW AMES   NSW
Swinburne University of Technology VIC
TAFE NSW Riverina Institute NSW
TAFE English Language Literacy Service QLD
Victoria University Sunshine Campus VIC

Community agencies and service providers
Centrelink- African Liaison Unit NSW
Centre for Access and ESL
Preston Reservoir Adult Community Centre VIC
Settlement Services Migrant Resource Centre TAS
South East Community College NSW