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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF POST MIGRATION LIFESTYLE CHANGES ON MIGRANT SETTLEMENT TRAJECTORIES

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DISCLAIMER

Findings and conclusions presented in this report reflect a summary of consultations with the communities in the target areas, and other key stakeholders, and are complemented by a review of the literature. The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent those of Western Sydney University and its entities. All reasonable precaution has been taken by the report authors to verify the information contained in this publication. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or extracted lessons expressed in this report are those of the authors.

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Foreword



Migration is one of the three great forces that influence human populations. And migration intersects with health and well-being, thus influencing one of the other great forces – mortality. Migration feeds into the third population force - fertility. Australia has long relied on in-bound cross border permanent mobility (immigration) for at least half of its population growth, even more so if one takes into account how immigration makes our population profile younger, further enhancing fertility. Australian nation building is fundamentally indebted to immigration.

The economic benefits of immigration are immense. While there have been debates about the extent of the economic benefit of immigration, there are no serious or evidence-based commentaries that demonstrate a general economic loss. Migration leads to an exchange of culture, it generates innovation in the sites where migrants settle. The societal benefits of immigration are clear. The benefits of immigration for individual migrants are not always so clear. There are variations across age and generation. These are made clear for immigrants in Australia in this Report. Children adjust quicker, hastened by their socialisation experiences within schools and other social settings. That is not say that the children of migrants do not experience racism, because they do.

The migration experience is also gendered; again this is made very clear in this report. Migration is a threat to traditional or origin patriarchies, most often exposing immigrants to new patriarchies. For some women, migration to some countries can generate freedoms from traditional restrictions and expectations. But women can also bear the burden of immigration within a family, finding themselves isolated because of language and lost networks, or vulnerable through a dependency upon a single patriarch. For some men, the experience of immigration can unsettle privilege, associated with new gender roles and crushing social downward mobility.

Migration is racialised. Discrimination in access to scarce urban resources such as housing employment has been shown in this Report. Immigrants still face unnecessary obstacles to having their qualifications and experiences recognised by employers and guilds in Australia. But this experience is uneven across migrant groups, varied by birthplace, skin colour and religion.

Some immigrants face these obstacles, alienation and prejudice, and some do not. Immediately, this suggests that such experiences are not necessary or avoidable. Much of the frustrations of immigrants in Australia are unnecessary and avoidable. In this spirit, this Report not only documents the issues, but it moves to solutions. I commend this analysis and the recommendations that are made.

Kevin M Dunn

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Summary

Migration is a complex phenomenon which brings with it settlement and integration-related challenges. The research attempted to holistically view migrants' settlement journeys as they cope with the dynamics of changing culture, society and socio-economic status.

The research looked at successful settlement through the lens of migrants' self-defined paths, journeys, contexts and experiences surrounding their migration and settlement. It focused on post-migration lifestyles and life experiences amongst seven migrant communities residing in Greater Western Sydney with regard to changes in income, employment status, social status, family dynamics, English language proficiency, availability of settlement services, and cultural integration.

The major themes emerging from the research were: (i) language barrier; (ii) changing power dynamics and gender roles; (iii) intergenerational acculturation gap; (iv) changing socio-economic and employment status; (v) acculturation and changing social capital; (vi) isolation and identity of male humanitarian migrants; (vii) settlement services; and (viii) discrimination. Major barriers to integration identified by participants included cultural barriers, English language, lack of recognition of prior educational achievements, qualifications and work experience, lack of local experience, and limited avenues to gain local experience.

Participants noted that English acquisition has played an important role in facilitating their integration in the new environment and participation in the workforce. Negotiating the new cultural environment has had an impact on family dynamics and functioning, leading to intergenerational acculturation gap and conflict. The social and cultural changes resulting from migration have had a significant impact on individuals and families. Participants coming from a patriarchal collective family system faced challenges and conflicts within families with respect to factors such as sharing the household chores, women working outside the house and the financial independence of women and children.

While migrants try to navigate the new individualistic culture, the younger generation tends to move away from the collectivistic culture due to acculturation. The younger generation acculturates much faster than their parents, learning the local language and systems while their parents struggle to adapt. Participants articulated their struggle to secure jobs that matched their skill set, experience, and qualifications. This can be because their qualifications are not recognised in Australia, meaning migrants are over-qualified for the jobs they take. They mainly found employment and found themselves trapped in the so called "3D" (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) jobs.

Another aspect of our findings is that migration challenged the traditional conceptions of masculinity of men within the family and society with regard to employment, learning the language, dynamics within the family and income. Men were continuously constructing their new identity as they struggled with all these challenges, especially the gender role reversal. Other issues to emerge included the under-researching of social and health issues of migrant men, migrant single mothers and migrant youth.

Participants expressed experiencing discrimination in their interactions with the wider society and with institutions, especially when seeking jobs and housing. There were instances of not being given employment because of their migration status, as well as stereotypes and labelling at work based on their religion, ethnic background and colour. There were also instances where migrants experienced discrimination when seeking to rent a house or apartment, with landlords refusing to rent properties to recently arrived migrants.

Based on these findings the following recommendations are proposed:

1. That settlement services prioritise mentoring programs for skilled migrants to maximise their chances of accessing highly skilled jobs. Such programs will acquaint migrants with the Australian working environment and the socio-cultural expectations it brings with it, give migrants access to potential referees when seeking employment, and provide an enabling practical learning environment that will help migrants practice their skills and English.
2. That migrant family and children's services go beyond family relations and family support and instigate programs that support fathers' involvement to bridge the stigma associated with gender role reversal and the family conflicts it brings with it; and address challenges associated with change in family structures and roles, and poor family functioning.
3. That settlement services need to acknowledge the clash between collectivism and individualism and adopt a multigenerational approach to project planning and implementation in order to address intergenerational conflicts.

4. More interventions for migrant youth be prioritised and focus on helping them cope better with life challenges post migration, including acculturative stress and coping mechanisms for negotiating different cultures (home and host cultures).
5. That services be put in place for mentoring refugees and humanitarian entrants and family reunion migrants through volunteering and internships, in partnership with public and private corporate organisations, to help them get the required 'local' experience.
6. That further research be undertaken to generate the evidence related to the impact of migrant men's social and economic downward mobility on their coping mechanism for acculturative stress, as well as their social and emotional wellbeing.
7. That a cultural competence framework, guided by the human rights and anti-discrimination laws, be developed and validated to guide the development and implementation of settlement services, and to help reduce discrimination-related inequalities.

EMERGING THEMES

1

LANGUAGE BARRIER

2

CHANGING POWER DYNAMIC
AND GENDER ROLES

3

INTERGENERATIONAL
ACCULTURATION GAP

4

CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC
AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

5

ACCULTURATION AND
CHANGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

6

ISOLATION AND IDENTITY OF
MALE MIGRANTS

7

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

8

DISCRIMINATION

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Background

Australia is home to an increasingly rich culturally and linguistically diverse population. The Australian population has experienced social, cultural and demographic transformations over the last 100 years as a result of migration (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011-12 and 2012-13). According to the 2015 Australian Census the percentage of population born overseas increased from 24.2% in 2005 to 28.2% percent in 2015 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). Government policy with respect to migration has adapted from one of assimilation during the 1940s and 1950s, to embracing multiculturalism from 1973 onwards (Koleth E. 2010, Australian Department of Social Services 2014).

Migration is a complex phenomenon which brings with it settlement and integration-related challenges, but such challenges are more likely to be pronounced among the refugee and humanitarian migration stream due to their socio-economic disadvantage. The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection manages the migration of people within Australia through temporary and permanent migration, citizenship and also protection visas for humanitarian migrants. The most common Australian migration stream can be categorised into three broad groups: skilled migrants, refugee and humanitarian entrants, and family reunion migrants. Temporary migration has also increased over the years, contributing to Australia's social and cultural diversity (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2014).

Newly arrived migrants experience a number of stressful events, including finding employment, parenting, cultural differences, changing gender roles and social capital. Although there are a considerable number of factors which influence migrant settlement trajectories little is known about how migrants' pre-migration differences impact on their settlement and integration into Australia. This research explored the perceived impact of changes within these factors, assessed the factors that facilitate or hinder successful settlement and integration into Australian society, and examined the ways in which migrants cope with these changes and their outcomes.

GROWING CALD POPULATION IN AUSTRALIA

Australia is home to an increasingly rich culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) population.



ABS, 2015

The Project

The project investigated the influence and role of changes in lifestyle (e.g. changes in income, employment status, social status and capital, family dynamics, English language proficiency and cultural integration) on settlement trajectories amongst seven migrant communities within the Greater Western Sydney region. The seven migrant communities were Afghani, African, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Nepalese, Indian, and Iraqi, all residing within Greater Western Sydney.

The specific aims of the project were:

1. To investigate the impact of post-migration lifestyle changes on migration settlement trajectories among migrants in a meaningful and significant way;
2. To document the impact of migration on family functioning, parenting-related challenges, child protection issues (e.g., residential segregation, inter-generational conflict, health outcomes and general wellbeing among migrants);
3. To explore how migrants cope with post-migration settlement-related challenges, including how they cope with acculturative stress and intergenerational conflicts; and
4. To better understand the systemic and family-related factors that facilitate positive settlement experiences for recently arrived migrants from the identified communities in Greater Western Sydney.



Adopted Methodology

SETTING AND STUDY POPULATION

The research was conducted in the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) area of New South Wales, a priority state for migrant settlement with a 28% overseas born population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). Greater Western Sydney has 35.3% of its population born overseas, and 29.8% of these are from non-English speaking backgrounds. In this region between 2006 and 2011, the number of people born overseas has increased by 15.1%, and the number of people from non-English speaking backgrounds increased by 18.1% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

DESIGN

The research adopted the principals of Participatory Action Research frameworks (Chevalier and Buckles 2013) to undertake community-based consultative focus groups. Participatory research emphasises involving the community in every step of the research process with a focus on locally defined priorities and local perspectives (Jewkes 1995, Zandee, Bossenbroek et al. 2015). The research protocol was approved by the Western Sydney University's Human Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval No. H11213).

Focus group discussions (FGDs) as a method have proven to be a useful tool to understand various emerging issues with new migrant settlement (Renzaho, Green et al. 2011, Renzaho, McCabe et al. 2011).

SAMPLING

Participants were purposively sampled according to geography (settled in Greater Western Sydney) and by country of origin. Participants were recruited with the assistance of community leaders from the Migrant Review Panel (MRP) and from existing groups of community organisations. The MRP is a de facto community owned steering committee established by Western Sydney University. It

is a voluntary group of community leaders representing various migrant communities living in Greater Western Sydney. The groups were drawn from existing networks to enhance the contribution of participants, helping them discuss sensitive issues with ease as they were amongst known peers facing similar challenges. Separate focus groups were conducted for each community with men-only, women only, and a mix of male and female participants, based on the participants' comfort. These strategies ensured that our focus group discussions were well attended. Participants related that they felt refreshed recalling their personal experiences and that they benefitted from learning about migration related factors and socialising with community members.

DATA COLLECTION

The study comprised of ten groups formed from existing community groups, and four new groups with a total sample size of 164 participants. FGDs included migrants from a mix of humanitarian, skilled and family migration streams. However the majority of groups (10 of the 14 groups) were comprised of participants from the humanitarian migration stream. Participants were given a \$25 supermarket gift card in appreciation of their time. Each focus group discussion was for around 90 minutes. Written consent was taken at the beginning of each discussion; verbal consent was taken in some groups (Nepalese and Burmese) where participants had low text-based literacy. The Participation Information Sheet and Participant Demographic and Consent Forms were translated into Arabic and Dari for the Iraqi and Afghani groups. In groups where participants had low text-based literacy (Nepalese and Burmese) the Participant Information sheet was read out and the Demographic Form was completed with the help of bilingual workers. For all other groups English was used as the preferred language of participants. Table 1 provides the demographic characteristics of groups.

MIGRANTS IN GWS



35%

overseas-born
Australians reside in
GWS



30%

GWS residents are from
non-English speaking
backgrounds

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS



164

total participants



14

focus groups



7

GWS migrant communities
participated from

Migrant communities

include:

Afghani

African

Bangladeshi

Burmese

Nepalese

Indian

Iraqi

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The discussion centred around key topics (with probes) identified in our initial scoping exercise and literature review. Key topics included:

- **Changed economic status:** pre/post migration demographics (changes over time?); socio-economic status; recognition for their overseas qualifications; employment status; loss of status in the workforce
- **Shifting from taking collective responsibility for social problems to taking on individual responsibility in the post-migration phase:** culture shock, intercultural conflict, changes in social status and social capital, acculturative stress, cultural integration, perceived prejudice and/or discrimination
- **Adapting to changing family dynamics:** gender role reversal, role of children, construction of childhood, intergenerational conflicts (main causes as children often acculturate faster than their parents), changes to family structures, family support structures, connection between generations
- **Perceived discrimination and its impact of migrants' wellbeing**
- **Services support (what worked well and why? what didn't work well):** Important ways the services helped; when and how they didn't help?

DATA ANALYSIS

Transcriptions of FGDs were independently and manually coded by two members of the research team and confirmed by the third team member. The data was coded and analysed using Braun and Clark's six step process: (i) familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts and field notes; (ii) generating initial codes and inserting the initial codes in the transcripts; (iii) developing and searching for themes and grouping the codes into developing relevant themes; (iv) reviewing the themes against the coded extracts and the data extracts and create a thematic 'map'; (v) defining and naming the themes and sub-themes; (vi) narrating the themes and sub-themes, with a selection of participants' voices for each theme (Braun and Clarke 2006). The MRP members were consulted throughout the data analysis process to finalise and streamline the themes.

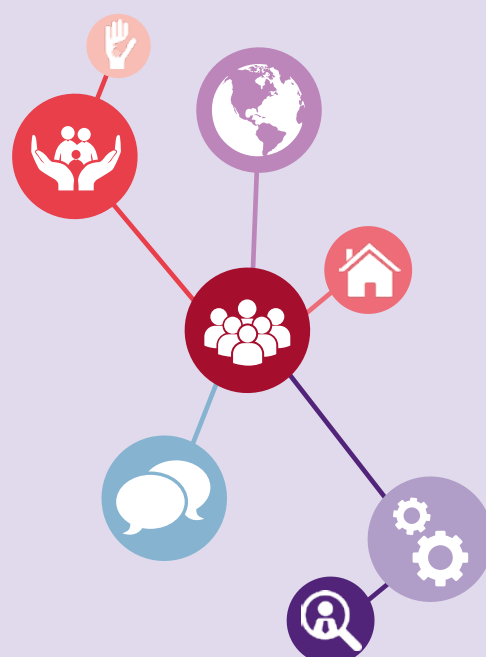
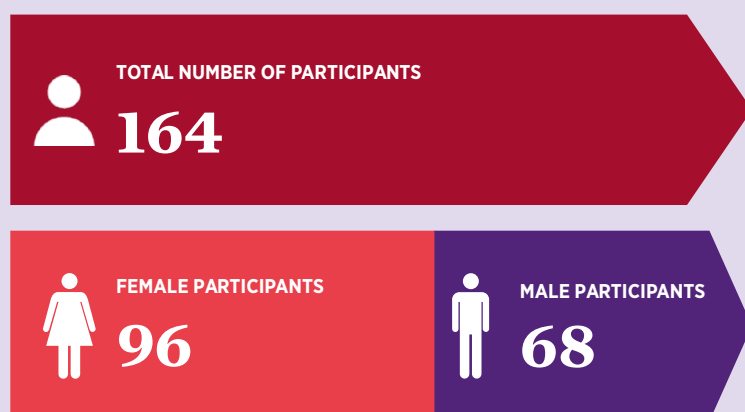
**TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHICS CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS
(LISTED IN THE ORDER CONDUCTED)**

FGD NO.	BACKGROUND	NO. PER FGD	AGE RANGE (YEARS)	MEDIAN AGE (YEARS)	GENDER MAKE UP	MIGRATION STREAM	LOS IN AUS. (> 5 YRS, < 5YRS)
1	Afghanistan	10.0	58-77	66.5	100% M	Refugee/humanitarian	More than 5
2	Bangladesh	11.0	22-52	40.0	36.4% F; 63.4% M	Mixed visa status	Mixed
3	Iraq	10.0	28-69	55.5	10% F; 90% M	Refugee/humanitarian	Less than 5
4	Nepal	11.0	46-73	59.5	100% M	Refugee/humanitarian	Mixed
5	Afghanistan	13.0	21-62	54.0	100% F	Mixed visa status Majority humanitarian	Mixed
6	Nepal	15.0	21-59	47.0	100% F	Refugee/humanitarian	Mixed
7	Bangladesh	13.0	24-47	40.0	23.1% F; 76.9% M	Mixed visa status	Mixed
8	African*	13.0	24-58	49.0	63.6% F; 36.4 %M	Mixed visa status Refugee/humanitarian	Family/partner Mixed
9	Burmese	13.0	23-80	38.0	61.5% F; 38.5% M	Mixed visa status Majority humanitarian	Mixed
10	Iraq	11.0	36-66	52.0	100% F	Refugee/humanitarian	Less than 5
11	Iraq	6.0	20-29	23.0	100% F	Refugee/humanitarian	Mixed
12	African*	7.0	31-54	35.0	14.3% F; 85.7% M	Mixed visa status Refugee/humanitarian	Family/partner mixed
13	India**	14.0	18-65	43	64.3% F; 35.7% M	Mixed visa status	Mixed
14	India**	17.0	20-68	38.5	100% F	Mixed visa status: Refugee/humanitarian Family/partner	Mixed

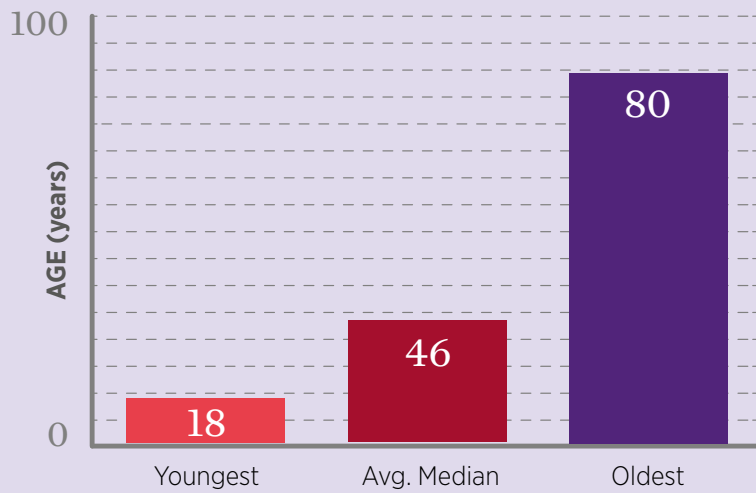
*African group participants were purposively recruited from across the continent for diversity and data richness

** Indian group was a mixed of migrants from India and Pakistan from existing groups of the community organisation

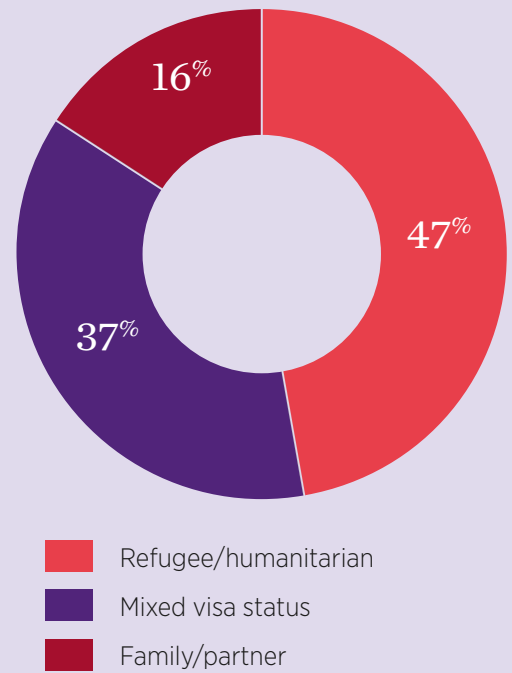
GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS



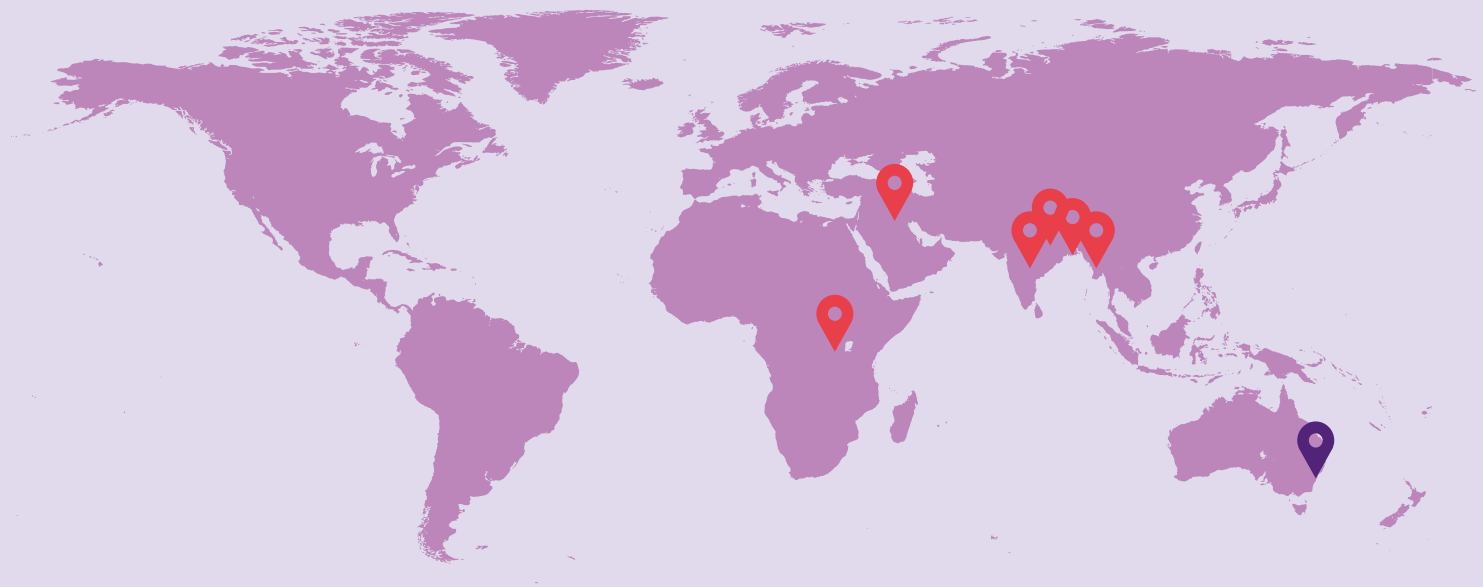
AGE OF PARTICIPANTS





MIGRATION STREAM



BACKGROUND OF PARTICIPANTS



-  Migrant Communities
-  Greater Western Sydney

Findings

Our research showed that while migrants were generally happy after migrating to Australia there are challenges they face in different aspects of their lives which affect their settlement experience. Key findings from the research are provided below.

LANGUAGE BARRIER

English language literacy was a major barrier that prevents migrants from mixing into the wider community, accessing services and gaining employment. This was a dominating theme across all FGDs, especially for humanitarian immigrants. Poor language literacy outweighed all other challenges faced by the migrants, as it made them dependent on others in order to navigate the new system and their new lives. For example, participants commonly shared that they needed support with reading information and legal letters, using public transport, shopping, or to see a doctor. Migrants' poor language literacy also limited the sources of information available to them concerning the new environment and settlement services as well as their ability to gain employment. This dependency also led to participants' losing self-confidence as they lost their voice and authority within the family and society, and were also unable to interact or communicate with the wider society.

"Compared to Australia being raised back home with a quite different social economic status, here in Australia I compare myself as being a very, very illiterate person, because of language", Afghani male participant, FGD 1

The inability to speak the local language led to social isolation, as participants were unable to interact with anyone from the wider community.

"It's hard to go somewhere else. I think I know about people in our country, a lot of people just speak to each other, but in here it's different. You are friendly, but I don't know how to speak English, so very scared", Burmese female participant, FGD 9

"Back home I was a lawyer and would advocate for big causes and human rights but here I can't even advocate for myself because of the language", Iraqi male participant, FGD 3

Low language literacy emerged as a major deterrent to getting employed, especially for humanitarian migrants and family reunion migrants.

"We think that if we arrive to Australia we'll have better life, we will have our job ... but to our surprise when we arrive... there is no job because of the language barrier", Iraqi female participant, FGD 10

CHANGING POWER DYNAMICS AND GENDER ROLES

Change in family dynamics and functioning

Migrants coming from patriarchal systems—where they had traditionally defined roles for men and women in the family, with men having authority over family decision-making and being the 'head' of the family—found the transition into Australian society particularly difficult. Participants felt that traditional male and female roles within the family were being challenged, with the need for men to contribute to household and child care work, such as cooking and changing nappies. Female participants felt more empowered after arriving in Australia, as they could freely work outside the house and were financially independent, either through employment or welfare support. But there were also cases in families where women had to manage working both outside the home and undertaking all of the household work, which affected their health and also led to conflict.

Despite the challenges to traditional gender roles, men adapted to the changing lifestyle and contributed to household work:

"It doesn't matter if my wife is working or not, the kids they are my kids, too, I also need to worry about what's going on. I love to clean my own house", Bangladeshi male participant, FGD 2

"Compared to Australia being raised back home with a quite different social economic state, status, here in Australia I compare myself as being a very, very illiterate person, because of language"

AFGHANI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 1

"Back home I was a lawyer and would advocate for big causes and human rights but here I can't even advocate for myself because of the language"

IRAQI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 3

“That was the most difficult thing I have seen here... it was my first time to change the nappy so it was hard for me. It was a good experience but it was also hard for me to digest that one because I was always saying to myself that this is not my job you know”

AFRICAN MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 12

“Back home one person, head of the family... was working, financially supporting... But here individually everyone works, everyone financially supports themselves, so we feel that individuality has an impact on us...”

AFGHANI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 1

“They are so much busy into their personal own type of life that they won’t get time to come and check with me and talk with me... or help me with the kitchen...”

AFGHANI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 5

“That was the most difficult thing I have seen here... it was my first time to change the nappy so it was hard for me. It was a good experience but it was also hard for me to digest that one because I was always saying to myself that this is not my job you know”, African male participant, FGD 12

Men coped with the change:

“Back home one person, head of the family, usually the father, was working, financially supporting, and then all the issues were resolved, family issues, whatever issues, was resolved by that same person. He decided and we respected the decision of the head of the family, based on a consultation. But here individually everyone works, everyone financially supports themselves, so we feel that individuality has an impact on us. Yeah it was a big shock...”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

Female participants shared that when they choose to take up a job they have the double burden of working outside the home and doing household work as their husbands come from a background where women manage all domestic duties and men have not yet adapted to the idea of contributing.

“If women have to go to work, when they come back husband will say ‘oh I’m tired I’ve been to work’ so the wife has to leave them for a while watching TV and have to work in the kitchen even though she has gone to work, but kitchen work is her work”, Nepalese female participant, FGD 6

Changing power dynamics in family

Participants shared that along with changes in family functioning there has been a shift in power dynamics within the family. Financial issues and income are linked to who holds power within the family. As women are now financially independent, husbands feel they are losing ‘authority’ and control over the family. Participants also shared that they are sending money overseas to support their family and friends, which often leads to conflicts within the family.

“Your children will look to you as if you are rolling stone, somebody who does not work. There will be no respect. They will listen to their mum more than you because you are not giving anything. You’re not giving anything; you don’t have any income or something like that. The mother, she gets everything”, African male participant, FGD 8

“Most of the time conflicts between husband and wife are caused by sending money back home”, case worker, community organisation

INTERGENERATIONAL ACCULTURATION GAP

Migrant children adapt much faster to the new culture compared to their parents. This results in intergenerational and intercultural conflicts.

Loss of family capital

Migrant families conceptualised family capital as the social solidarity, influence, and control at the family level that governs obligations and expectations, intergenerational knowledge transmission and information flows, social norms, and cultural identity. Participants noted that the loss of family capital was characterised by impaired family-unit level attributes where upon migration children “no longer like to associate with their family” and “prefer to separate from the rest of family members”. Children do not want to meet extended family, do not respect or obey their parents. Rather, they prefer to be by themselves and in their rooms alone, and want their own rooms, “space”, and “privacy”. As participants observed:

“Lots of times before we used to go together to see like friends, like I mean relatives and stuff, but now only mum and dad go and visit them... ‘cause even if we would go with them, they’d be no, not kids our age, they’d be like just the parents, and like why are we going there?”, Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

“They are so much busy into their personal own type of life that they won’t get time to come and check with me and talk with me or go to the kitchen or

help me with the kitchen, so she's always grooming her hair or being on mobile for so long, and sometimes I get so nervous that I just want to go and cut the hair...", Afghani female participant, FGD 5

Parents also acknowledged that children have more exposure to the new culture. They go to school and learn of the new culture, socialise with school mates, listen to English music and adapt faster to their new cultural environment. While this facilitated children's integration in the new environment, parents in contrast, do not have that social exposure or a social circle to facilitate their interaction with the new environment, and continue to follow news in their home country and hold on to their older cultural values. The different environment between school and home and associated acculturative stress means that children find themselves confused as to which values to hold on to while parents try to adapt, but fear that their children will lose their culture. Migrant youth find themselves caught between and negotiating two cultures with unwanted consequences at the family level. As participants noted:

"...if they [children] come here young, they adapt to society, their parents don't want them to lose their culture 'cause they think this is what we want our kids to be. And like say with physical punishment and all of that, they still think it's right. Well some people don't do it as much now, but they think that oh, our children are adapting in to this society and they're forgetting our culture, and they don't want that. So there's always conflict between how kids are growing up here and they're forgetting their culture", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

"...I have to respect my dad and my mum, 'cause still I'm stuck in the culture as well, 'cause I came to Australia not too long ago. Sometimes I feel no, I can't put my parents in a situation they'd be ashamed", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

The difference in the pace of acculturation between children and parents leads to challenges related to parental expectations of their offspring. Children learn quickly that,

in Australia, it is okay to have a girlfriend, to sleepover or invite a friend for a sleepover, and to date or marry outside their communities. These are changes in traditional cultural values that do not sit well with parents, and which can lead to tight parental control, close scrutiny of children's behaviour with restrictions, culture clash around physical punishment or talking loudly. It is interesting to note that participants identified different restrictions for sons and daughters, and some of the parents' actions could be seen as an invasion of children's privacy. As participants who reflected the views of many parents across FGDs summed it up:

"... she just tells you 'my friend at school invited me for a sleepover'. I will not allow her to go before I learn exactly where she's going. I will make sure that I know exactly if she's going to her friend's house and if also the parents will accept her", African male participant, FGD 12

"There is a fear, the community is very small, and if my daughter or son is seen with another guy...Yeah, outside the culture, my daughter has a boyfriend, and my neighbour knows it, the whole community will know it. Big fight", Bangladeshi male participant, FGD 7

Parents expressed a fear that their children would lose their culture as they adopt 'Australian values':

"A lot of the time they spend with them in schools, six or seven hours, you think that in 24 hours, six, seven hours, so most of the time they spend of the day, and their values are changing", Bangladeshi male participant, FGD 7

"We wanted to keep our values and culture but we are worried that our kids won't follow that culture or that values, they will adapt to the new culture", Afghani female participant, FGD 5

Parents said that they responded to these fears by being protective and by putting restrictions on their children:

"I call him every hour to ask what he's doing. He says, 'mum you're too boring'. I say, whatever you want to say but I

"...I have to respect my dad and my mum, 'cause still I'm stuck in the culture as well, 'cause I came to Australia not too long ago. Sometimes I feel no, I can't put my parents in a situation they'd be ashamed"

IRAQI YOUTH PARTICIPANT, FGD 11

"A lot of the time they spend with them in schools, six or seven hours, you think that in 24 hours, six, seven hours, so most of the time they spend of the day, and their values are changing"

BANGLADESHI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 7

"... that family unit is breaking, because basically parents and kids are never understanding each other, ... kids think oh, my parents are old fashioned, and parents are thinking, oh my kids are getting corrupted"

IRAQI YOUTH PARTICIPANT, FGD 11

guarding him, you know. And taking him out of trouble. Because the children here, when they come here, they follow the system here. They want to be out there doing different things.", African female participant, FGD 8

"Like our parents always prefer we go out with the same culture, but if I would go like with Australians or I'd say other cultures, they'd be like oh, oh who these people are ... So they know their kids are not being corrupted", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

Intergenerational conflicts

The new found freedom among children and their rapid transition into the Australian society gives them an increased sense of agency, which in turn threatens parental authority, leading to compromised parent-child relationships and subsequent intergenerational conflict. Participants noted that children think their parents are too old-fashioned, whereas parents think the new environment has negatively affected their children. Therefore, intergenerational conflicts identified by participants centred on poor communication. Poor communication between parents and children was an outcome of many factors including lifestyle related changes (e.g. no time to communicate or resolve issues due to everyone being busy), language barriers (e.g. children refuse to interact with parents in their mother tongue as they find it alienating while parents are unable to understand or speak English), disruption of family dynamics (e.g. increase in family conflict due to acculturation gap), and parenting ways (e.g. putting pressure on children to comply with parental demands or restricting children's liberty and decision making). Participants noted that the net effect of poor communication between parents and children was compromised family cohesion and increased stress in families. As participants observed:

"... that family unit is breaking, because basically parents and kids are never understanding each other, ... kids think oh, my parents are old fashioned, and parents are thinking, oh my kids are getting corrupted", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

"Easy for our kids at school, they learn the language so quick and difficult for us as middle aged parents. Sometimes we're embarrassed in front of our kids. I have a child is at primary school and he told me about whales, I wasn't able to communicate at the same level and that's really embarrassing for me as a Dad that I can't communicate as naturally. In fact, our kids are able to communicate and teach us and that puts more pressure on us and our psychology and it will affect us", Iraqi male participant, FGD 3

"Regular communication with the children is the only way to keep them... from that invasion. I must say invasion", Pakistani female participant, FGD 13

More power to the children

Participants believed that, upon migration, there is a change in power dynamics in the family, and parents lose control over children because they have power that did not exist prior to migration. Three forms of power were described, namely: (1) increased power to the children that derives from Australian law (e.g. protected against any corporal punishment or any parental neglect); (2) increased power to children due to their language and greater understanding of the functioning of social institutions (e.g. parents dependent on children to navigate the new system and losing control over their children); and (3) increased power to children due to financial independence (e.g. not having to rely on parents for pocket money or parental approval to make a purchase).

Participants emphasised the fact that children guide and help parents access transport and other work outside the house, hence gaining more authority. However, children don't always help as *"they get tired and bored of doing so"*. These key findings are summed up below, by participants, in their own words:

More power with the language:

"Because our children catch the language very good they... the authority become on their hands", Iraqi female participant, FGD 10

More power with the system:

"Our parents feel...[The system] turns them against their parents. And they feel like that we have no control over our kids once they leave to go to school, they're no longer our kids, and you can't do... like we can't raise them the way we want to", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

More power with the law:

"To my grandson, who kept playing with the clock, I say to him, if you do that again I will spank you, and he said, 'Grandma I will call the police'. A two and a half years old child, who taught him about police?", African female participant, FGD 8

Dependant on children:

"... they are educated, they know everything, so sometimes we have to depend on them. We give them the power in the family to go for marketing or doing anything. So whenever they do some mistakes, we just advise them. And after that they are being given all the power... they know that we are depending on them", Nepalese male participant, FGD 4

CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Migrants' enjoyed a better standard of living as compared to back home, but struggled to find employment in their area of expertise. This is due to various barriers such as non-recognition of prior degrees and work experience, language, age, and lack of local experience.

Quality of life

The participants' socio-economic status had improved compared to back home. They felt safe and secure in the new environment and were happy with the freedom of speech, freedom to practice one's own religion, and freedom to exercise their rights. Government benefits and welfare support helped them to have a decent standard of living, with better facilities in health care and education. But along with these experiences there were also certain issues that impacted upon their smooth

integration in the new country, such as limited or no social circle and family support, increased family conflicts due to acculturation gap, and language barrier, which in turn affected a host of other aspects, as mentioned earlier.

Employment in the new country

There was common appreciation for the Australian work culture and the Australian society, and participants felt there is dignity in labour and they could sustain a decent standard of living, noting that government benefits also help.

“Australia made us to be hopeful for our self and for our children, so we have hope in the future”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

Despite the positive experience of settlement there have been challenges in finding employment in the new country, with a major barrier being non-recognition of educational qualifications and previous work experience. This had also led to participants restarting their career path and working outside their main profession. Humanitarian migrants who were mostly coming from non-English speaking backgrounds find it more difficult to find employment.

“I was a doctor and a Chief executive officer of three hospitals and was unable to get the same job as I had back home. I even went to talk to the health minister. He said our overseas qualification was not recognised and was told to start again to study medicine”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

“I apply, like, 100 times on the internet and every time I apply they say, you don’t have local experience. How can I have experience when I can’t get a job .. I do construction work now to support myself”, African participant, FGD 8

Participants who were well established in their careers pre-migration have been unable to find employment in the same career. Some have had to restart their career paths, which has led to frustration and a feeling of losing their skills and status in the workforce. Most participants shared their keen desire to continue working and to contribute to Australian society.

“It is quite frustrating because we are highly qualified and we have a calibre. We don’t want to live on Centrelink benefits, we want to pay taxes, we want to work”, Pakistani female participant, FGD 13

“It becomes frustrating with education of my understanding of university and qualifications and you know you go losing even those skills that you have because you’re working in a different industry. You can’t access the same job that you were pursuing.... where have all your qualifications gone of all the years, more than 16 years of education. What makes it even harder is when you’re coming in terms with such things ongoing in your mind, where is your advancement into professionalism, into income, life is pulled back by such things”, African male participant, FGD 12

Age was identified as a barrier to finding employment. Also participants, especially humanitarian migrants who were forced to leave their home country, and who were either middle aged or older, found it difficult to find suitable employment. Along with being unable to find employment in the new country, migrants also struggled with a lack of opportunities that would help in bridging the gap of not having local experience. Participants shared having tried multiple times to find opportunities for internships or volunteer work, but without any outcome:

“I feel there are not many organisations that provide an opportunity where we can just go and do volunteer work and gain some local experience”, Indian female participant, FGD 13

Some participants shared that as they were unable to find suitable employment they were forced to do ‘cash job’ (cash-in-hand jobs) in order to support the family.

“Most of Afghani women who are looking for a job, first of all language is their barrier. They don’t have any local experience, they cannot drive, they cannot speak English, and they don’t have the experience. They end up finding jobs which are, like, cash jobs. So actually

“I was a doctor and a Chief executive officer of three hospitals and was unable to get the same job as I had back home. I even went to talk to the health minister. He said our overseas qualification was not recognised and was told to start again to study medicine”

AFGHANI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 1

“It is quite frustrating because we are highly qualified and we have a calibre. We don’t want to live on Centrelink benefits, we want to pay taxes, we want to work”

PAKISTANI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 13

“Our riches are the family”

AFRICAN FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 8

“There is no social life. There is no family. You can’t find enough time to talk to your own children or to share their life”,

IRAQI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 10

they're working instead of five or four person to get wages for one person, so that's why it's very hard for those people to look for a job, and I don't think they will be able to find a job. That's why we are encouraging them to get some local experience, to start learning English first, and then get the job", case worker, community organisation

ACCULTURATION AND CHANGING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Migration has impacts on families and individuals through various social and cultural changes in the new environment. Our research highlights the role of extended family and community in providing support with these changes, especially change in family structure and culture, and a lack of traditional forms of community support.

"Our riches are the family", African female participant, FGD 8

Increased intercultural conflict

With a change in the new environment and different cultures, participants shared increased intercultural conflict with experiences such as looking others in the eye when talking with them; having no family to support/help with household work; new ways of dressing, and even the way of talking. Additionally participants said there was a constant pressure (both from the environment and their children) to adapt to the new culture, while they feared losing their own culture, which often led to stress and conflict in families.

"We were not supposed to wear pants, like women can't wear pants you know we have to wear sari's all the time and then we come here and all change. To fit in. So we're trying to fit in with the next generation as well.. like you know surviving generation like we have changed . And wear pants now... but this very easy rather than wearing the sari's and working at home.", Nepalese female participant, FGD 6

Change in lifestyle from collective to individual cultural values

Migrants come from a collective culture where there is a lot emphasis on the role of family, friends and community, which influences decision making and the culture of doing things together. In contrast the post migration society is driven by individual cultural values. Participants shared that this cultural change, coupled with the lack of a social circle, network or close family, leads to social isolation and loneliness. There were also changes in lifestyle with the increased burden of household work and childcare that they have to manage, as opposed to being shared with extended family back home. Our research also found cases where migrants who had family and friends back home would make consistent efforts to connect with the news and the happenings in their home country without showing any keen interest to explore their present environment.

Extended family support with household work:

"Women at home, hard to manage everything so if someone works, wants to earn money and bring home the money, and then she has to manage everything around the house. Back home there were grandparents, aunties, uncles, they all around the corner. It's not too far", Burmese female participant, FGD 9

Social life:

"Here no-one can come and knock your door and just he want to visit you. But in our countries that happen. We are just in the shopping centre and your house is very close, and we say, we say hello and drink a cup of tea. It's not happen in Australia", Iraqi female participant, FGD 10

"There is no social life. There is no family. You can't find enough time to talk to your own children or to share their life", Iraqi female participant, FGD 10

Community support

Participants shared that meeting with their local community helped them get the desired support to interact with people of similar cultural values, which helped in their settlement process, especially in the initial period. Participants also shared that they were always supportive and protective of people of their community and background, and this also helped to preserve their culture.

"Now the children or you know the community interact, so the children would know – adults, when they see adults around ... It's our duty. One time right in the shopping centre, I was coming out from the shop, and I saw one of my community's son standing with the police. I was sure they pass by my business. No, it's my business.. So it must be our duty as an African to protect our children. Don't say, because the child is not my child", African female participant, FGD 8

ISOLATION AND IDENTITY OF MALE HUMANITARIAN MIGRANTS

Migration challenges the traditional conceptions of masculinity within the family and society. Male humanitarian migrants struggle with the changing dynamics of employment, learning the new language, family and income. This can lead to loss of identity and social isolation.

While finding employment in the new country was identified as a major challenge for all migrants coming through different migrant streams, this burden is exacerbated in the case of humanitarian migrants. They found it much harder to find employment due to language barriers and their background. The FGD participants shared that they had been professionally well established in their home countries, and able to comfortably provide for their families, but due to unavoidable conditions of war they were forced to migrate. Participants included professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, and teachers, who after arriving in Australia could no longer continue in their professions.

“I lower my expectation because I know that I cannot reach to that point that I want to be, or I was, so that’s why I don’t feel discriminated upon”

AFGHANI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 1

“The men have lost their identity and it is a big pressure on them. If a woman is saying, I have the same income that you have, or Centrelink give me the same money as you have, that is the biggest threat for the men, to make the violence inside the house”

AFGHANI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 1

“I’m coming here and I have no knowledge. I don’t know where are the services, which services are there for me, where can I go for them”

AFGHANI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 5

“When I came to Australia I come alone, I didn’t know, how do I find a job or how to get the renting property”

BANGLADESHI MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 2

“I lower my expectation because I know that I cannot reach to that point that I want to be, or I was, so that’s why I don’t feel discriminated upon”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

“The men have lost their identity and it is a big pressure on them. If a woman is saying, I have the same income that you have, or Centrelink give me the same money as you have, that is the biggest threat for the men, to make the violence inside the house”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

Barriers to employment included language, age, lack of awareness of available options, non-recognition of prior education and work experience, and lack of local experience. Participants shared a sense of loss as their work and jobs had provided them with an identity, at least until they had to change their professions, or not work at all. Low language skills further isolated these migrants from communicating within their families and the wider community and made them dependent on others to navigate the new system. Within the family, traditional gender roles are being challenged, and men are expected to contribute to household work and are no longer solely ‘in charge’ of the family’s decisions and finances. Male participants shared that they lose authority within the family. Hence their new life has offered them a downward mobility where there is a sense of loss with all aspects—with family, professionally and in society—leading to isolation and a lack of identity, sometimes leading to frustration and causing violence within families.

“How do I cope? I have to cope because I don’t want to put a damage to my reputation, to our family, so if the kids, especially the sons, they say something, they argue, and I think that maybe my generation or I myself don’t much understand about that particular topic, maybe my son knows about it because he speaks English and he argues in English. Mostly I don’t understand and I accept”, Afghani male participant, FGD 1

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

The research brought out mixed experiences of participants with their use of settlement services. While participants have had positive responses about the community organisations they engage with, they are not very satisfied with other services, such as those related to English language and employment. Participants also shared they were not aware of many services at the time of initial settlement, knowledge of which could have eased their settlement experience.

Poor awareness of services

Participants shared that there were so many services available, and that they are aware of them only now as they became more settled and are able to seek information. They believed that it would have been very useful to know of these services during their initial integration period.

“I’m coming here and I have no knowledge. I don’t know where are the services, which services are there for me, where can I go for them”, Afghani female participant, FGD 5

“When I came to Australia I come alone, I didn’t know, how do I find a job or how to get the renting property”, Bangladeshi male participant, FGD 2

“When I came in 2003 we never had someone to guide us, to tell us what’s best for us to do to get a job or whatsoever, we’re not really literate on that. We just had to work our way out, to find something to do”, African female participant, FGD 8

Positive role of community organisations in the settlement process

Participants from the FGDs that came from existing community groups (10 of the 14 focus groups) shared that their community organisations play a very important role in the integration process, especially in the initial period. These continue to be a platform for migrants to socialise, and to meet people from their community. Observation during the focus groups confirmed the ease amongst

participants in discussing sensitive and personal experiences. These community groups generally get together for a yoga class, knitting classes, have a meal together or pray together.

“Without [name] we can’t imagine how we survive, how we face all the challenging, all the difficulties. I believe that without their support we would get lost, wouldn’t be able to face all the difficulties and the challenging things to settle in this new country. Most of the subjects discussed at the meetings before and the sessions, training sessions ease the difficulties, give us ideas and knowledge about different Australian cultural aspects, Australian legal system. We value the presence of [name] in our lives”, Iraqi male participant, FGD 3

English language classes

The Australian Government under the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides up to 510 hours English language classes to eligible migrants and humanitarian migrants (Department of Education and Training). Participants shared that 510 hours of the language training was not enough to learn a new language. Some participants had not gone to school and had low text based literacy, making it harder for them to learn in a conventional class room setting. Participants believed that classroom style learning was not useful and they needed more practical ways of learning, such as work groups or going on a job with English speaking colleagues.

“We speak English better when we are in a job. If I go to a school class, I learned one year, not much English. If I go to get a job, I learn English better. You learn more in workplaces”, Nepalese male participant, FGD 4

“I don’t know because of the age or what, we study English and after we study we forget everything, and we need to study again and forget everything.. We have nowhere to practice the English language we learn, it is only in theory that we learn.”, Iraqi female participant, FGD 10

Employment services

The Australian government National employment services system Jobactive provides support to new migrants seeking employment. Unemployed migrants are also eligible for Centrelink benefits until they find employment. Humanitarian migrants can seek additional financial support benefits from the government (Department of Human Services, Department of Industry 2016). The FGD participants did not have a positive experience of these services as none of them were able to find employment through them. Participants noted that the service providers seemed to have a ‘tick box’ approach, rather than to actually help them find a job. Additionally, the service providers are not sensitive to the poor language skills and poor technological literacy of the job seekers, worsening their job seeking experience:

“Job Network staff doesn’t even want to know what kind of job you want to do or actually what you can do. It’s what they want you to do, you know, so sometimes it becomes a negative. You go, they give you a programme, they say, ‘well we have a program there today so we have already enrolled to attend that programme that might help get you a job’... They you don’t have local experience, so basically the job networks they will look for – yeah you’ll be looking for maybe to drive a bus, they tell you, well we have a cleaning job here, how about this? So that’s the difference, so basically they’re not supporting anyway”, African male participant, FGD 8

“The employment agencies keep pushing and pressuring them “You go and study English or you go and start working, looking for work”. So it’s very hard because they’re actually not fit enough and maybe their English is also a barrier”, case worker, community organisation

Language and services:

“Some rules have changed so we have to go to Job Network every day because we need to report to Centrelink. We don’t understand what the Job Network

“We speak English better when we are in a job. If I go to a school class, I learned one year, not much English. If I go to get a job, I learn English better. You learn more in workplaces”

NEPALESE MALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 4

“I don’t know because of the age or what, we study English and after we study we forget everything, and we need to study again and forget everything.. We have nowhere to practice the English language we learn, it is only in theory that we learn.”

IRAQI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 10

“From our own experience and even from the experience of my clients, Job Network are not helping them... I hear if you want a job you have to go through the system, but it's not helpful at all. You only go there and they tick”

CASE WORKER, COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

“The colour of your skin really matters when you go for a job”

INDIAN FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 13

“I went for an interview and the person was like just wanted to meet me 'cause he went through everything. He said you are good enough and just because he revised my resume then he start with ah, you are from [name]... then the focus of the interview moved to my background, I didn't get the job!”

IRAQI YOUTH PARTICIPANT, FGD 11

case manager is saying to us as we don't understand the language... our children can't come with us every time. So we just go sit there because at the end of the fortnight we need Centrelink money to pay rent, so we have to go. Physically it might be OK but mentally it's very hard”, Nepalese female participant, FGD 6

“From our own experience and even from the experience of my clients, Job Network are not helping them, they only go there and just tick.. 'yes you came to this, we did computer, you know, just tick, tick, tick'.. that's what they do. Like, those that can read and write going and asking to sit on computer, is fine. But so many of my clients who can't read and write. Well when they go to this Jobsearch- they are given a newspaper to search for jobs. How can you give newspaper to someone who cannot even read or write, to do a job search? Or even place them on the computer to do a job search? .. I hear if you want a job you have to go through the system, but it's not helpful at all. You only go there and they tick”, case worker, community organisation

Interpreters at Job Network:

“Sometimes they are there and sometimes not there. So sometimes when we ask for an interpreting service at Job Network they ask how long have we been here. And because we have been here long they say that so now you can speak English you don't get an interpreter”, Nepalese female participant, FGD 6

Need for targeted support services

In addition to the services of language and employment, participants shared that they needed a host of other support services to help them settle better in Australia. While the Government provides information sessions with regard to culture, the legal system, schooling and health, participants shared that these sessions were generic and one-time-only. There was a common consensus that such services needed to be more focussed, and include an understanding of Australian culture and how

new migrants can acculturate better, resolve family issues as a result of acculturation. The lack of housing support services to assist with finding stable accommodation was also a common issue. Participants also wanted more awareness workshops to understand the legal system, immigration, and managing their budget. Outdoor events and more curricular activities were also common suggestions, especially for families with young children.

DISCRIMINATION

“There is a difference between Australian of the paper and the Australians that were born here. Ours is just a certificate that doesn't even help. You are just encouraged to get it but actually you don't get what is supposed to be found by an Australian”, African male participant, FGD 8

Participants experienced discrimination in Australia based on their colour, background or religion. These instances occurred when finding employment, or in unrelated experiences.

Institutional racism

Participants shared experiences of discrimination at various levels in their interaction with the system at an education centre, or while seeking employment. There were also instances of hidden discrimination, such as employers not giving employment to migrants after discovering their background, or people losing their job for no specific reason. A few participants also shared that family visas were granted based on the person's background.

For employment:

“The colour of your skin really matters when you go for a job”, Indian female participant, FGD 13

“I went for an interview and the person was like just wanted to meet me 'cause he went through everything. He said you are good enough and just because he revised my resume then he start with ah, you are from [name]. And he was like, he said, oh Jesus, you're from [name]' and then the focus of the interview moved

to my background, I didn't get the job!",
Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

Hidden discrimination:

"I was working in an office but during prayer time I used go for prayer and the boss didn't like it and I lost her job",
Afghani female participant, FGD 5

"I called him and he asked about my experience and other stuff, and he said, you're spot on, you go ahead, tomorrow your first assignment is in Liverpool Centrelink office and you go there, and I said OK. Then I started the job without the proper interview so he hired me and he asked for the bank account details to pay me, then one day we met each other in a Jobsearch office and he said, 'oh you are [name] and he was just... He never called me again", Afghani female participant, FGD 5

Individual experiences

Participants shared experiences of people swearing at them and also being discriminated based on their background:

"I used to be a chef before in the city so I was working for seafood restaurant. One lady use to come there regularly for fish and chips.. I use to cook it. One day I came out with the five boxes to hand it over to the boy to give to her she was looking at me, she was shocked that I'm cooking with this colour", Bangladeshi male participant, FGD 2

As it was easy to identify women because of their traditional dress, women often experienced more discrimination than men:

"Like as I'm wearing hijab so if I'm going on a street out there somebody will bully me, somebody will call out names, "Look she is a Muslim, she is like that, she is wearing", and even my class fellows they say "Why you wearing this?" "Isn't it hot?" and "You should take it off""",
Pakistani female participant, FGD 13

"So when I went to an interview, I put down my scarf, and then after a few days I asked my employer, 'can I have

my scarf?' And he said, 'no, if you want to wear a scarf, you cannot come'",
Pakistani female participant, FGD 14

Finding a house was another challenge, especially for Muslims, and the size of the family was another factor: There were also experiences of stereotyping based on the background, *"if you are well behaved, or doing a good job then you must be from a western country",* or because you are of a certain colour or a religion you might be a 'certain type'. The role of media was identified as large influence in constructing negative and stereotypical images of a particular religion or background:

"Yeah what they think. So it's not like 'Muslims are terrorists, she is wearing a hijab so she must have a gun inside her hijab'", Pakistani female participant, FGD 14

Media stereotyping:

"It's been stigmatised a lot in the media, that's why. So whenever I say I'm from the Middle East, they're like mmm, where exactly? And they get shaky", Iraqi youth participant, FGD 11

"Like as I'm wearing hijab so if I'm going on a street out there somebody will bully me, somebody will call out names... and even my class fellows they say "Why you wearing this?", "Isn't it hot?"..."

PAKISTANI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 13

"So when I went to an interview, I put down my scarf, and then after a few days I asked my employer, 'can I have my scarf?' And he said, 'no, if you want to wear a scarf, you cannot come'"

PAKISTANI FEMALE PARTICIPANT, FGD 14

Discussion and Recommendations

Poor language literacy overshadows all other challenges faced by migrants, affecting their ability to obtain employment and access settlement services, and making them dependent on others to navigate life in a new country.

Participants shared that poor language literacy also negatively affected family communication and negotiations, with children learning the language much faster and understanding the culture and the new system better than their parents, while the elderly struggle to adapt. Earlier research studies have stressed language learning as an important factor for the economic and social integration of migrants (Vigers and Tunger 2010). Our research participants shared that the present 510 hours of language training was not enough to learn a new language and the conventional classroom setup makes it harder to learn. Previous studies have shown work related language courses, conversation groups and mentoring programmes have better language literacy outcomes when compared to those in classrooms (Fisher, Durrance et al. 2004, OECD. 2007).

Recommendation 1: That settlement services prioritise mentoring programs for skilled migrants to maximise their chances of accessing highly skilled jobs. Such programs will acquaint migrants to the Australian working environment and the socio-cultural expectations it brings with it, give migrants access to potential referees when seeking employment, and an enabling practical learning environment that will help migrants practice their skills and English.

Our research found that migration-related social and cultural changes have a significant impact on individuals and families. Participants coming from a patriarchal collective family system faced challenges and conflicts within families with respect to factors such as sharing the household chores, women working outside

the house and the financial independence of women and children. The majority of migrants entering Australia from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and to some extent Eastern Europe, tend to come from collectivistic cultures where there is immense interdependence and importance attached to the social network (where obedience to authority is valued), yet they find themselves in a new individualistic environment (valuing self-maximisation, self-reliance, individuation, and autonomy) (Renzaho, McCabe et al. 2011). Post migration, migrants want to preserve their culture while at the same time being confronted with gender role reversals. In negotiating their rapidly changing social and cultural environment, migrants are confronted with changes in family dynamics, which together with the lack of extended family and friends, leads to increased instances of conflict within the family, and to loneliness. The collective culture amongst these migrant communities also lends support to the development of whole-community interventions that address ways in which cultural and social networks operate and communication occurs within families and extended families across cultures, especially in the absence of wider family networks.

Recommendation 2: That migrant family and children's services need to go beyond family relations and family support and instigate programs that support fathers' involvement to bridge the stigma associated with gender role reversal and associated family conflicts; and address challenges associated with change in family structures and roles and poor family functioning.

Our research highlights that while migrants try to navigate the new individualistic culture, the younger generation tends to move away from the collectivistic culture due to acculturation. The younger generation acculturates much faster than their parents, learning the local language and systems while their parents struggle to adapt. Our findings confirm prior research that all these factors result in an increased intergenerational acculturation gap, which often leads to conflicts and poor

communication between parents and children (Renzaho, Green et al. 2011).

Recommendation 3:

A: That settlement services need to acknowledge the clash between collectivism and individualism and adopt a multigenerational approach to project planning, and implementation in order to address intergenerational conflicts.

B: More interventions for the migrant youth be prioritised and focus on helping them cope better with life challenges post migration, including acculturative stress and coping mechanisms for negotiating different cultures (home and host cultures).

Our research participants shared a common experience of struggling to find employment that matches their skill set, experience and qualifications. In this sense they are often under-employed. Under-employment is defined as holding a job that does not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the job holder, and is a common experience for migrants in the labour market (Ager and Strang 2008, Strang and Ager 2010). Factors associated with under-employment include a lack of English proficiency, lack of recognition of prior educational achievements, qualifications and work experience, lack of local experience, and limited avenues to gain local experience. These findings are consistent with previous research (Hawthorne 2002, Wagner and Childs 2006, Ressa 2010). That is, while English speaking background (ESB) and non-English speaking background (NESB) migrants would have similar occupational achievements prior to migration, their experiences differ drastically post migration (Ho and Alcorso 2004). For example, the Australian medical profession only accepts qualifications from migrants the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the United States of America, Canada and Ireland (Department of Health 2010). Migrants from ESB are more likely to be in professional positions, as compared to those from NESB, who are more likely to get jobs in low paid sectors (Colic-Peisker 2011, Rynderman and

Flynn 2016). While the Australian government provides various benefits and services to find employment, our participants did not have a positive experience using these services, with none of them able to find employment through these services. They emphasised that this extended struggle to find employment often led to a sense of loss and disempowerment.

Recommendation 4: That services for mentoring refugees and humanitarian entrants and family reunion migrants through volunteering and internships, in partnership with public and private corporate organisations, be put in place to help migrants get the required 'local' experience.

Our research found a loss of identity and increased social isolation was being experienced amongst male humanitarian migrants. Migration challenged the traditional conceptions of masculinity of men within the family and society with regard to employment, learning the language, dynamics within the family and income. These men thus are continuously constructing their new identity to help them fit into the society.

Recommendation 5: That further research be undertaken to generate the evidence related to the impact of migrant men's social and economic downward mobility on their coping mechanism for acculturative stress as well as their social and emotional wellbeing.

Service providers (an array of both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations) operate in a quasi-market environment in which they compete against each other, especially those for providing employment and language assistance. The operations of such organisations could lack societal or community aspirations (McDonald, Marston et al. 2003, Considine, Lewis et al. 2011, Fowkes 2011). Our study participants emphasised the need for settlement services to be more

focussed to help different groups with their settlement experiences, especially those linked to language, employment and housing. Our findings support research that shows that the availability of settlement services promotes migrants' social well-being and contributes to their full integration in their new country (Masinda 2014).

Participants had experiences of discrimination in their interactions with the wider society and with institutions, especially when seeking a job and securing rent. There were instances of not being given employment, and those already in the workplace endured cultural stereotypes based on their religion, background and colour.

Recommendation 6: That a cultural competence framework, guided by the human rights and anti-discrimination laws, be developed and validated to guide the development and implementation of settlement services.

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