OM DHUNGEL

Changing the Debate on Refugees from “Sharing the Burden” to “Sharing the Opportunity”

Westpac Social Change Fellowship Report July 2017

Om Dhungel
Westpac Social Change Fellow 2016

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Executive Summary

I was awarded Westpac Social Change Fellowship based on my initiative: **Strength-based Approach to Refugee Settlement - a Bottom-up, Holistic Model.** My Fellowship had two components: International travel and personal development plan which included communications and thought leadership mentoring programs and relevant trainings.

As part of the overseas study tour, I travelled to Norway, the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand during the first half of 2016 and met with community development and refugee settlement experts and relevant organisations. I also met with Bhutanese communities resettled under the humanitarian settlement program from the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal as well as a wide range of people involved in refugee settlement and had the opportunity to learn both operational and strategic aspects of refugee settlement. I was exposed to a diverse range of programs and gained knowledge on different ways to support refugee settlement.

The overseas trip also allowed an exchange of ideas and experience sharing with community groups, settlement providers, practitioners, academics and funding bodies as well as policy makers. I was most impressed and was very encouraged to know the keen interest and desire shown by every organisation that I met to implement the strength based approach to refugee settlement and community development that we have adopted in the Bhutanese community in Sydney.

While it was quite challenging to organise meetings with relevant organisations and individuals, it also proved to be a valuable exercise in building relationships. I had to use all past and present contacts and other available resources both in Australia and overseas. Ultimately, working patiently, this resulted in very good outcome, having met and discussed with highly experienced people and thought leaders in the industry. In addition to developing a very valuable network, I have also now reconnected with a number of people with whom I have not been in touch for a long time.

Each of the organisations that I met had its own uniqueness underscoring the opportunity to learn from each other, the need to work collaboratively and build on each other's strengths. Overall, in dealing with refugee settlement, service providers are generally looking at meeting immediate humanitarian needs and exploring ways to do things better, improve service delivery and diversify funding sources. Long-term sustainability and innovation is more actively pursued by NFP funding agencies.

As a result of my study on refugee issue through this Fellowship, I am all the more convinced that:

1. Building on the success of refugee settlement worldwide, we can drive a paradigm shift: ***Moving the debate on refugees from sharing the burden to sharing the opportunity***.
2. Community development should be integral to the settlement process and there needs to be a ***shift from a 'need-based' approach to 'strength-based' approach*** to refugee settlement and generally in dealing with the broader refugee issue.
3. Currently, people with lived refugee experience are grossly underutilised and should be actively engaged and involved in all areas dealing with refugee matters including service delivery, research as well as policy input.
4. We have reached a tipping point: The developed countries in particular have moved too far in the 'I' space, focussing too much on the individual - individual ownership, achievements and successes. In the process communities are being dismantled and social capital eroded. Interdependence is the law of nature and its importance needs to be recognised and valued. It is the paradigm of 'We', combining our talents and abilities and creating something greater together and rebuilding communities for greater good.

Having completed the personal development activities supported by the Fellowship, I have now launched my own practice as a consultant and a practitioner of **Strength-Based Approach** to refugee settlement and community development. I also operate as a **Strategic Connector** assisting corporations to develop meaningful collaboration and community engagement plan with organisations in the NFP sector as well as offer **Innovation-Aware Governance and Management** training. I am passionate about creating champions in the wider community and operate my practice on a **Fifty:Fifty** model, committing 50% of my time in paid work to support the other 50% in volunteering.

From a global refugee settlement perspective, over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees from the UNHCR camps in Nepal have been resettled in seven developed countries since the program first began in 2008. This is the first such refugee resettlement program of this scale implemented by the UNHCR with the support of Core Group countries. The resettlement program warrants a close look at different aspects that contributed to this success including the way the refugee camps were managed, education and other activities in the camps, the role of refugee leadership and other relevant factors.

Building on my lived refugee experience and the mentoring and coaching received as part of the Westpac Social Change Fellowship program, this report begins by articulating the need for change in the way we currently approach service delivery and more broadly community development and captures the learnings from refugee settlements in a number of countries. The report then draws out some guiding principles that are relevant to governments, service providers and other organisations working on refugee and related areas and recommendations for resettled communities and also uniqueness of each organisation that I met. Given there was different learning from every meeting, the report also includes details of each meeting with the individual organisations.

By focussing on strengths and assets that refugees bring to the resettlement countries, demonstrating their socio-economic contributions and building on the success of refugee settlement worldwide, the report puts forward the case for changing the debate on refugees from “Sharing the Burden” to “Sharing the Opportunity”.

Acknowledgements

This overseas study tour is a result of many months of planning and preparation. The process itself was as important as the final outcome. The first conversation about the Westpac Social Change Fellowship started in Brisbane in 2014 when I was there for attending a conference. Susan Bannigan, the CEO of Westpac Bicentennial Foundation (WBF), a true Ambassador for the organisation, then spoke to me as with many others about the Foundation and what it was trying to achieve and the rest, as the saying goes, is history. Thank you Susan for introducing me to the Foundation!

What I have seen in the CEO flows throughout the organisation – it is the positive attitude, friendliness and the culture to work together. Starting with Rita Fentener Van Vlissingen, who helped me prepare the initial development plan and the itinerary, Mei-Ling Ho, Alissa Nightingale, Suzie Warrick, Anne Marie Bennett, Amy Blacker, Amy Robertson from WBF and Lisa Waldron from the Westpac Foundation have all provided me valuable support all this while. Thank you all.

I am also very grateful to Violet Roumeliotis, CEO of Settlement Services International (SSI) and Dr Naresh Parajuli, President of the Association of Bhutanese in Australia (ABA) Sydney for not only being my referees but always being there for me for any advice and as sounding board.

As part of my Fellowship, I had the privilege of working with two excellent mentors. Janine Garner, a faculty member of Thought Leaders Business School taught me how to capture, package and deliver ideas in different delivery modes including training, mentoring and speaking. I was also able to develop my personal branding and enhance my communications skills through Accelerated PR and Media Mentoring and Coaching Program with Catriona Pollard at CP Communications. Well-accomplished leaders in their respective areas, both Janine and Catriona are very friendly and easy to work with and have significantly contributed to the establishment of my practice.

In preparation of my overseas trip, I started by contacting strangers, many of whom have now become my friends, colleagues and mentors that I look upon to. In particular, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude and thanks to:

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- Paedia Mixon, CEO, Suzane Baker, Development Director, Amie Crownover, Marketing & Communications Director and Anika Polson, Operations Coordinator of New American Pathways, Atlanta.
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- Sarah Amies, Director Immigration Program of the Lethbridge Family Services

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- Ester Vallero of Christchurch City Council
- Mr Jono Naylor, National List Member of Parliament (MP) in New Zealand.
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The overseas trip was very educative and a great learning experience. It was a privilege meeting fellow community members in different parts of the world and enjoying their hospitality. Meeting people from my or my wife's home town or *'sasurali gaon'* as we fondly call in Nepali, old acquaintances and most importantly fellow Bhutanese, it was truly nostalgic! I can't thank everyone enough for their warmth and kindness.

I am truly blessed to have such an adoring community spread across the world.

Introduction

Westpac is celebrating its 200 years anniversary in 2017. As part of its continued support of Australia, it has established the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation. Westpac wants to back people who have the drive to make a difference and is giving away 100 scholarships and fellowships every year, forever. Scholars from across the five scholarship categories will be leaders, innovators and pioneers - people from all walks of life who have the drive to shape the future prosperity and growth of Australia. The Westpac Social Change Fellowship supports innovators with a passion to create positive social change in Australia.

I was awarded Westpac Fellowship based on my initiative: **Strength-based Approach to Refugee Settlement** - a bottom-up, holistic approach. My Fellowship had two components: Personal development plan which included communications and thought leadership mentoring programs and relevant trainings and International travel to study refugee settlement in the United States, Canada, Norway and New Zealand.

For my personal development program, I had the privilege of working with two excellent mentors. Janine Garner, a faculty member of Thought Leaders Business School taught me how to capture, package and deliver ideas in different delivery modes including training, mentoring and speaking. I was also able to develop my personal branding and enhance my communications skills through Accelerated PR and Media Mentoring and Coaching Program with Catriona Pollard at CP Communications.

As part of the overseas study tour, I travelled to Norway, the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand during the first half of 2016 and met with community development and refugee settlement experts and relevant organisations. I also met with Bhutanese communities resettled under the humanitarian settlement program from the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal as well as a wide range of people involved in refugee settlement and had the opportunity to learn both operational and strategic aspects of refugee settlement. I was exposed to a diverse range of programs and gained knowledge on different ways to support refugee settlement.

The Need for Change

Australia is a prosperous nation. According to 2014 Global Wealth Report from Swiss Bank Credit Suisse, the average Australian adult is the richest in the world. The median Australian adult was worth more than $US225,000. This is well ahead of the Belgians at number 2 on $US173,000 followed by the Italians, French and British, all at around $US110,000. Only 6 per cent of Australians have wealth below $US10,000, compared with 29 per cent in the United States and 70 per cent for the world as a whole.

Well, this is comparatively impressive; however, leaving behind the 6 per cent of Australians is not acceptable.

The disparity and the need for change is further reinforced by the findings from a CEDA (Committee for Economic Development of Australia) study on ***Addressing Entrenched Disadvantage in Australia*** which notes that an estimated four to six percent of our society experience chronic or persistent poverty or deprivation. While there will always be disadvantage of one form or another, entrenched disadvantage excludes some Australians from taking active part and engaging in our economy and society in general.

The federal government currently spends over one-third of the revenue on welfare which demonstrates its commitment to assist those in need. However, the welfare expenditure is growing at over 2.6% and it

is clearly not sustainable. Welfare needs also increase during difficult economic times, meaning when it can be least afforded.

When migrants and refugees settle in a new country and a new environment, they face a number of initial settlement challenges. The way we approach these challenges will mean a community completely relying on outside help or on the other hand, a community which will harness its own resources.

If we think in terms of needs, problems and deficiencies such as lack of education and training or local experience and services are designed and delivered by outside experts, people will be positioned as passive, powerless and dependent on outside help and assistance.

On the other hand, we can start on the premises that people are resourceful and gifted and will be more likely to draw upon the skills from within the community to address issues and solve problems. Outside assistance and resources may still be required but the people are more engaged and capable of setting the agenda and shaping their futures.

There is clearly a need to help drive a shift in the way we think of helping those in need and rethink welfare and community development in which refugee settlement is very much a part of. While the focus of this report is refugee settlement, this is applicable to community development and welfare more broadly including the changing role of the community sector and corporate Australia.

The social sector, and in particular the settlement service providers are confronted with the challenge of doing more with less due to funding pressure while the demand for services continue to grow. Successful refugee settlement or more broadly for community development requires active engagement of citizens and to build interdependence and strengthen the social fabric. The challenge for the social sector is to move from a 'need-based' approach which involves identifying problems and needs and then recommending actions to solve those needs to a more sustainable 'strength-based' approach by tapping into the strengths and assets from within the community to engage and involve citizens.

Having worked closely with Westpac Bicentennial Foundation and my previous experience in the corporate sector, I see a clear opportunity for corporations such as Westpac to enhance the impact of their social investments as part of the corporate social responsibility. Today, while the corporate sector is looking for new as well as growth opportunities in existing businesses, the social sector is discovering its strength in the potential and power of everyday success stories that it helps create. Leveraging this inherent strength, organisations in the NFP sector are exploring collaboration opportunities particularly with the corporate sector which can bring to the partnership its financial strength as well as commercial discipline.

However, understanding the community sector and the environment it operates and having an effective community engagement plan is important to ensure that corporations aren't simply perpetuating the status-quo by supporting the NFP sector, rather helping drive a paradigm shift in human services delivery and more broadly in community development from a 'need-based' approach to a more sustainable 'strength-based' approach.

Key Learnings

I have pulled together the key learnings from the fellowship into three groups: General guiding principles that are relevant to governments, service providers and other organisations working on refugee and related areas; Recommendations for resettled communities and; Uniqueness and strengths of organisations that I visited. In addition, I have separately listed other general observations.

General Guiding Principles

The Fellowship has deepened my understanding of the refugee issue and more broadly community development and my future work will be guided by the following guiding principles. I believe, these principles are relevant to governments, service providers and other organisations working on refugee and related areas.

1. ***Defining refugees by their strengths and assets*** - Universally, the word 'Refugee' evokes a level of sympathy. While this helps to draw attention for necessary assistance in the initial survival phase, this often forms a barrier to better understanding the strengths and assets refugees bring to the settlement countries as well as their socio-economic and other contribution after they settle. ***Defining refugees by their strengths and assets would be future-oriented and inspiring while defining by their struggle is dwelling on the past and disempowering.***

2. ***Strength-based, holistic approach to refugee settlement*** – Currently, there is a focus on 'need analysis' to identify what people need and try to meet those needs. This can be disempowering and potentially lead to unintended consequence of dependency. Refugees bring with them resilience and perseverance in addition to a wide range of skills and strengths which should be utilised and form the basis of the settlement approach. At an individual level, it means undertaking a skills audit - what skills you have, identify skills that are transferable to a particular situation locally and explore ways to utilise them. The settlement process should also take into account all aspects of settlement journey and consider the impact of the interrelationships between those aspects. It should encompass different life stages, demographics, genders and people with different levels of education and skills.

3. ***Utilisation of lived refugee experience*** - By defining refugees through their strengths, people who have gone through the experience have the capacity to provide input in all aspects dealing with refugee issue. The lived refugee experience is clearly underutilised at present and this is one of the missing pieces in the refugee debate more broadly - whether it is in policy formulation, research or in refugee settlement.

4. ***Close-knit families and communities were key ingredients to successful settlements*** - There was a common trait in people who considered themselves successfully settled and happy. They were close-knit families, operating as a unit, making well thought-out decisions based on individual and the family's collective aspiration and well-being. There were also close community connections and people were integrating well in the local community and the wider society, which gave them a strong sense of belonging. Individuals and families who have been able to maintain a balance between individual pursuit and family / community collective interest are harnessing the best of both worlds – the east and the west. However, the shift from collective to individualism and the erosion of community and social capital is generally impacting the quality of life negatively.

5. ***Working collaboratively and driving community engagement*** **-** Local service providers could enhance the outcomes and successes of programs as well as strengthen their role by working more

collaboratively with key stakeholders including the new arrivals and their respective community organisations and other volunteers. Active engagement and involvement could form part of performance indicators for settlement service delivery.

6. ***Language and employment are common focus areas*** while ***Retaining religious and cultural practices are important*** – Although refugee settlement outcomes focus varies, learning the local language and getting into employment are common focus areas for all settlement countries. Similarly, every place that I visited, people spoke about how their religious and cultural practices helped them spiritually to cope in a new environment.

Recommendations for Resettled Communities

In view of my extensive interaction and discussions with newly settled refugee communities in different countries, I have pulled together the following recommendations which may help newly settling or resettled communities:

1. ***Building trust and developing relationships*** - Prior to resettlement, people are often exposed to or have dealt with different groups and organisations including political parties, human rights and other social organisations in refugee camps. Due to the difficult circumstances and the environment sometimes lead to the erosion of trust and people started becoming sceptical about belonging or associating with any community organisation in general. As such, community building in resettled countries needs to start with rebuilding trust and developing relationships.

2. ***Community organisation and organisational structures – Need for a bottom-up, collaborative approach.*** Having settled in a new country and a new environment, it requires a major shift in thinking and the way we approach settlement, community organisation and associated structure that are intended to serve the community. Community members should be involved in identifying the need and the benefit of having an organisation to provide a common platform for the community. It should be complementary and take into account the broader environment including the existence of social support and a wide range of service providers supported by the government and other funding bodies.

   Operationally, the traditional top-down, hierarchical approach doesn't suit community development. A 'building-block' approach supports a sustainable model through an ongoing process of adding on to what has been built so far. So even when a new team is elected to lead the organisation, it continues to draw on the expertise of the past committee members and other volunteers in the community and in particular, senior members who form the pivot for the community.

   Newly emerging community organisations may start the process of forming or reviewing their organisations by asking the following questions:
   - What sort of future we want as individuals and as a community?
   - How can we be proactive and start by utilising the resources – strengths and assets that we have within the community?
   - How can we build our own internal capacity?
   - How can we quickly move away from the social security support that the government provides which can in turn be diverted to more needy in the wider community?

- Having embraced a new country in a new environment, how can we be engaged, integrate and be active citizens so that we can start contributing back to the wider society?

3. ***Capacity Building*** - Building and enhancing internal capacity is key to sustainable development of a community. Relying only on external help means the system will collapse once the external input ceases. Developing and implementing projects by utilising the assets within the community allows people to build and hone their skills. At the same time it provides volunteering opportunity, people develop confidence and leadership skills, gain valuable local experience and much needed referee/references that the community organisation can provide for an individual to move into employment. There is a huge potential for community driven initiatives to be strengthened and enhanced by increasing the level of people's engagement as well as working collaboratively with service providers to fill any gaps, mainly aimed at community capacity building and empowerment.

4. ***Community Leadership – Shifting role from Telling to Asking***. In a community setting, leadership should recognise that everyone in the community has gifts and community members are kept at the centre of community building. Once basic needs are met, it is about what people have and not just what they need. Leaders play the role in building relationships and involving others and their role shifts from telling to asking since the aim is to involve and engage people and questions elicit stronger participation.

   In addition to the general leadership characteristics of Honesty and Integrity, Courage, Ability to care about others, Communication and a Sense of Humour, a successful community leader requires the ability to: Adapt to democratic culture and collective decision making; Work with and bring on-board key influencers within the community; Build rapport, connect with and work across generations; Put community interest first above personal including individual and family interest in dealing with community matters; Commit to continuous learning and Persevere.

5. ***Dealing with intercultural matters and help de-institutionalise 'issues'*** – Newly emerging communities have an important role to play in building relationships and developing better understanding with the wider community. By being proactive and working closely with local service providers and other stakeholders will help avoid 'institutionalisation' of problems. This includes community intervention before a 'child at risk' is removed from a family or an 'irritant child' in school is referred to a youth service provider.

6. ***Integration with the wider community*** – Community leadership is very important in strategically creating a balance between what it does internally promoting its tradition and culture and what it can learn from the wider community through active engagement and participation in external activities. While it is important to maintain one's own tradition and culture it is all the more important to learn about the people and the country and adapt to the new environment. It is about making the best of both worlds – retaining the best of what you bring in and learn the best practices from the wider community.

Uniqueness and Strengths of Organisations Visited

Overall, there was an environment of generosity and goodwill and the desire to help people fleeing persecution. This has been at times overshadowed by various global events and challenges faced by governments directly affected by refugee inflow. There is a huge opportunity to build on this generosity and goodwill to help address the global refugee issue.

Each of the organisations that I met had its own uniqueness underscoring the opportunity to learn from each other, the need to work collaboratively and build on each other's strengths. Below is a highlight of my observation based on my interaction with each organisation and individuals:

- **Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi):** ***Employment and equitable access to public service*** - Refugee settlement is considered a responsibility as a global citizen. The focus is on employment and rapid resettlement and also aim to provide equitable access to public service.
- **United Way of Calgary and Area:** ***Social innovation is a key focus area*** - In view of the increasing demand for services and need to do more with less, service providers are looking at innovative ways of delivering services and social innovation figured prominently in most of our discussions. United Way of Calgary and Area is one such leading organisation which has been working on driving social innovation and how to use innovative principles and processes to catalyse social change. It also practices more of a 'bottom-up' approach by implementing projects that engage local residents in taking action for their community.
- **Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh:** ***Growth through collaboration*** – A number of organisations I spoke to see themselves offering additional services through collaboration and partnership and not necessarily through organisational growth. Expressing his views on how he sees growth in the sector, Aryeh Sherman CEO of Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh says that: "Horizontal growth with a little bit of vertical growth is the best combination". He defines horizontal growth as working collaboratively with other organisations.
- **New American Pathways, Atlanta:** ***Continuum of services*** - Organisations are constantly exploring innovative ways to offer services and the New American Pathways prides itself in its unique 'pathway' to help refugees settle smoothly into the country. It provides what it calls a "continuum of services that supports new Americans on their individual pathways from arrival through citizenship". It offers five program areas that focus on jobs, education, cultural integration, individual and female empowerment, and building strong families.
- **International Rescue Committee (IRC):** ***Good story / strength based approach to advocacy*** – Organisations offering services to refugees are often challenged to come up with innovative ways to elicit support as well as deal with anti-refugee sentiments in the community. International Rescue Committee (IRC), Atlanta for instance uses a good story / strength based approach to advocacy to mobilise support and resources. These include use of refugee related data such as: Percentage of people working, amount of tax paid by them and growth in new houses built due to refugee settlement. Volunteers and interns are also very important part of IRC Atlanta. For every IRC Atlanta staff member, there are 10 volunteers/interns.
- **Lethbridge Family Services**: ***Long-term sustainable approach*** - Emphasising a long-term sustainable approach, Sarah Amies, Director Immigration Program says: "We are not interested in immediate employment; we want them to go out and learn - with the aim of long term sustainable employment". Sarah also stresses the organisation's empowerment approach to refugee settlement, stating that: "We are working ourselves out of our jobs, assisting people to be independent".
- **Catholic Charities in Atlanta:** ***High quality documentation and employing people with lived refugee experience*** **-** The organisation prides itself in having very high quality documentation. Heavy case load is seen as a major operational challenge. I also noted that the organisation employs people with lived refugee experience in service delivery

and had the opportunity to listen to their unique experience being a recipient of services and now delivering services to other new arrivals**.**

- **New Zealand Red Cross:** ***Building community resilience and independence*** - Building community resilience **i**s one of its key priority areas and the organisation emphasises that communities need to be actively involved and engaged and also be accountable. Taking a strength-based approach, the emphasis is on self-help strategies and working towards independence. Finding employment is a key part of the resettlement process since it gives former refugees financial independence and also offers them the opportunity to use their skills and contribute back to their community.
- **Christ Church City Council, NZ:** ***Multicultural policy & strengthening communities*** - Enabling people, strengthening individual communities and support them to maintain their own tradition and culture as well as promote cross cultural interaction.
- **Mr Jono Naylor, National List MP, NZ:** ***Use of volunteers together with service providers to support refugees*** **-** Mr Naylor favours the use of volunteers together with service providers to support refugees during their initial settlement. He suggests that former refugees and their respective community organisations which are more established can assist the new arrivals which can mean better love and care since it is provided voluntarily. However, he cautioned against creating ghettos, where people from the same background start living in one area, not integrating with the wider community and slowly gets isolated from the rest. He says that such situations often lead to social, religious or other unwanted tensions in the community.

Other General Observations

1. **Resettled Bhutanese refugees very grateful to the host countries and committed to start a new life** - the overarching message that I received from the resettled Bhutanese community was: "We want to learn the local language and/or develop necessary skills, utilise our skills as appropriate depending on individual situation, so that we will be able to work and give back to the wider community which has so generously welcomed us". Having spent extended period of time in refugee camps, upon resettlement people were generally very committed and keen to start a new life despite the challenges. It meant learning the local language, acquiring new skills and getting a job or starting a business.

2. **Common interest and care for the whole** - Every community and the leadership that I met were passionate about doing something for the community. There was this inner desire which is a great foundation for engagement and involvement and work collectively for the care for the whole and greater good of the community and the society. However, this was in many ways at odds with western societies where the scale has tipped in favour of individual rights in an environment of withering public space.

3. **Overwhelming aspiration for home ownership** - Families are generally very driven and committed to buy their own home. The aspiration to own their own home has been a major motivating factor for people to learn the local language, acquire skills and seek employment or start a business so that they can borrow to buy their own home.

4. **Prior existence of Bhutanese community members has very positive impact** - The prior existence of Bhutanese community members in places where refugees have been settled has had a very positive impact on the success of settlement. Having settled earlier, they were able to provide guidance, advice and assist the new arrivals in their settlement journey.

5. **Successful settlement** – Successful settlement meant different things to different people. However, generally learning the local language, getting into employment and buying a house were considered important for a successful settlement. There was also a common trait in people who considered themselves successfully settled and happy. They were close-knit families, operating as a unit, making well thought-out decisions based on individual and the family's collective aspiration and well-being. There were also close community connections and people were integrating well in the local community and the wider society, which gave them a strong sense of belonging.

6. **Inspiring success stories** - Every resettlement that I visited has produced a number of very inspiring success stories. Because of time constraint and my limited interaction with the wider community, I won't be able to capture all the major highlights. However, based on my interaction, the following stood out:
    a. **Norway**: For Bhutanese refugees, settlement in Norway was quite challenging including the language and fairly harsh climate. However, a number of people, particularly youths had not only learnt the language but also acquired skills and qualifications and gone on to find employment fairly quickly. Ramesh Gautam, an Energy Engineering student at University of Tromsø was a stand-out. In addition to his studies, he was teaching in a local high school. Ramesh was one of the most active volunteers in the community, well-regarded and respected in the community and in particular providing mentoring and guidance to youth and seen as a role model. With a keen interest in literature and

journalism since his childhood, he is also well-known in the wider Bhutanese diaspora as a writer, journalist and blogger.

I was also most inspired to meet some women who had lost their husbands back in the refugee camp or while in Bhutan and resettled as single mothers had gone even further by having bought their own homes.

b. **Pittsburgh, USA:** The community as a whole seem to be doing pretty well with a very committed and dedicated leadership team led by Rup Narayan Pokhrel. In addition to individual successes including high number of business ownership, the Bhutanese community is well regarded by service providers and other stakeholders including the local government. Its involvement in the local government annual planning process is a demonstration of its standing in the wider community. The initial settlement was also made easier by the presence of people like Kishor Pradhan who had settled in Pittsburgh much earlier.

c. **Atlanta, USA:** Another thriving Bhutanese community. There are a number of initiatives, driven and managed by different groups from within the community. Although there was a feeling of '***we could be more united and work more collaboratively***', in my view, the necessary infrastructure was already there and it just needed to be leveraged by each initiative / group. A number of people were working with settlement service providers which included Yeshey Pelzom and Bahadur Subba on managerial roles. Active civic participation was important in successful resettlement and Birendra Dhakal had shown the leadership by standing for local elections.

d. **Halifax, Canada:** Although only in their early twenties, I was most impressed with Rupesh Dhungana and Kharga Bahadur Bhandari for their leadership and their focus on the welfare of the community as a whole. Personally they have achieved significantly including graduating recently with Bachelor degrees. In addition, I found their leadership in the community as highly commendable. When I asked them what their priority was when they first arrived in Halifax, it was the welfare of senior members of the community in addition to their own studies and career. Through their initiative, a number of community activities and informal get-together are now organised including those specific for senior members of the community to help them deal with the issue of isolation.

e. **Lethbridge, Canada:** Women in general seem to be doing very well with high employment rate and around 80% of working age women reported to have acquired driving license.

The prior existence of Bhutanese community members including Hemlal Timsina, Usha Tamang, Mandhoj Tamang and their families have had a very positive influence in the community. The new arrivals received initial settlement support by way of guidance with day to day needs as well as education, training and employment. The Timsina and Tamang families are held in high regard and are seen pivotal to cohesion and harmony and resulting in a close-knit community.

f. **Christ Church and Palmerston North, New Zealand:** Resettled Bhutanese communities in Christ Church and Palmerston North have settled quite well and were well-regarded by the wider community including the local councils and elected officials. The

community leadership in both places were very committed and enthusiastic to learn and lead.

Noteworthy in both these places were people who had learnt the language, acquired driving license, gone on to find employment and bought their own homes. Similar to other countries, there were a number of people working with service providers including those offering English language classes.

7. **Bhutanese refugee settlement considered more successful compared to other communities** - In every resettlement place that I visited, relevant government departments, settlement service providers and other stakeholders generally consider Bhutanese refugee settlement as more successful compared to other communities. The Bhutanese community is also seen as more organised and working cohesively as a community. Views from people that I interacted suggest that this can be partly attributed to the very well-organised refugee camps in Nepal, where people volunteered for the general good, helped each other and learnt to live in harmony.

8. **Initial settlement challenges and adapting with the shift from community care to service economy – receiving services from service providers**
   Starting with acceptance - coming to terms with the reality of living in a foreign land with completely different environment, people are faced with the initial challenges of settling in a completely new environment. There are likely issues of isolation particularly for the elderly, need for positive engagement particularly for youth, and generally learning language, developing skills necessary to get into the workforce and transitioning to employment.

   For the newly arrived refugees who generally come from a community based support system, the availability of a wide range of 'services' and 'service providers' is at times overwhelming. The availability and the need to access services outside the community setting has in many instances led to the erosion of family discipline since individuals feel that they can access the 'services' they require in the market rather than work on building relationships, listen to family elders and opt for care from the family or the community.

9. **Role reversal and change in family dynamics** - Traditionally parents have provided for and had to a large extent, control of the family and generally a level of discipline. The family as a whole was an important structure with individuals adding to the collective – it was an inside out approach. Children would be guided by parents and generally consulted or took permission from parents for any major decisions. This was no more the case in many families when children, upon reaching the official 'adult' age opted to make their own decisions with little or no regard to the views of their parents.

   There was in many instances total collapse of family discipline with children coming and going as they willed; mothers cooking daily meals and waiting for children only to be told that they have already eaten outside and resulting in food wasted. The situation was too much to bear for many parents since many of them had sacrificed everything to provide the very best they could afford for their children.

10. **Socio-economic status realignment** - when people settled in different countries and different places, their individual and family circumstances change significantly. Socio-economic status in Bhutan and generally the developing world are quite entrenched and normally take a long time to change. However, it is not the same in developed countries where refugees are

settled. People who started working early or families that had more working members progressed quickly and enhanced their economic as well as social status irrespective of their standing back home or in the refugee camp. It was particularly interesting and encouraging to note that people were able to overcome the entrenched caste-based socio-economic discrimination and disparities of the past.

11. **Erosion of community and social capital is negatively impacting the quality of life** - It has been observed that the shift from collective to individualism and the erosion of community and social capital is negatively impacting the quality of life.

12. **Community Organisations and structures –** Every resettled Bhutanese community that I visited had set up one or more organisation(s) aimed at 'serving' the community. Community initiatives have been generally based on the skills and strengths available within the respective community groups. Each community was resettling in its own unique way and ***knowledge was being developed in the living situations***. Given the success stories emerging from every settlement, it was clear that community work and community development generally cannot be practiced from a prescriptive framework.

    However, community organisations were facing challenges with operating and managing themselves resulting in emergence of additional organisations when differences arose within existing ones. Community organisations were generally set up in the traditional top-down, hierarchical approach practiced back home or in the refugee camps and didn't suit the purpose and clearly needed a rethink.

    Refer to recommendations for additional view on community organisations and structures.

International Travel – Report

I left Sydney on Thursday 7 April 2016 for the first leg of my overseas trip covering Norway, Canada and the United States. It was immediately after the conclusion of the Westpac Scholars Summit held in Sydney from 5-6 April. The second leg of my trip was to New Zealand which I undertook separately later in June 2016.

In preparation for my overseas trip, I had identified and organised meetings with relevant stakeholders involved in refugee settlement in respective places that I was visiting. These included key service providers and their senior executives as well as resettled Bhutanese community members and organisations.

Norway

View from the window: I arrived in Stavanger in Norway on Friday 8 April and left the country on Wednesday 13 April 2016. During my stay in Norway, I met government officials and resettled Bhutanese community members. I also spoke over the phone to a number of people settled in other parts of Norway where I couldn't visit. I along with Ramesh Gautam made efforts to meet with officials from local municipalities but they were not forthcoming and we could not meet them.

Meeting with the Bhutanese communities in Stavanger, Tysver and Haugesund

- I first visited Stavanger where Ramesh Gautam and his family comprising of five people lived.

It was very interesting to note that they were the only Bhutanese family living in Stavanger and their choice was well thought-out based on individual and the family's collective aspiration and well-being. It was a medium-term arrangement around studies and career, raising a child and employment with the long-term goal in mind. I noticed that the very close-knit nature of the family and their ability to make friends with people in the neighbourhood due to their welcoming attitude made up for the lack of fellow Bhutanese community in their locality.

- I then visited Tysver, a neighbouring municipality to Stavanger where a number of Bhutanese refugee families had resettled. I met over 30 people in a community organised gathering where people shared their experiences. Overall, it was very positive and heard about a number of success stories - such as that of a single mother with three children who was barely literate when she arrived in Norway six years ago. All her three children are now doing very well with the son studying engineering. She herself has learnt Norwegian language, trained herself, got a job and has bought her own home! Many of the families there had bought their own homes.

- While in Tysver I was able to attend a religious gathering and joined a prayer meeting.
- I also visited two families separately - both single mothers in Haugesund, another neighbouring suburb. One of the women, who originally came from a neighbouring district

as I in Bhutan, was very inspiring in the way she has developed a sense of belonging to the local community. Although barely literate when she arrived in Norway, she has now learnt the Norwegian language and is learning to drive. Most importantly, the quality of friendships and network that she has developed particularly through her church group is commendable. This is despite the hardship of being separated from her three young daughters who were taken away by the Department of social services allegedly due to the mother's 'inability' to take care of the children in compliance with local standards.

Meeting with Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)

Met with Ms Ragnhild Aasvang, Senior Advisor, the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) in Bergen. (http://www.nyinorge.no/en/Ny-i-Norge-velg-sprak/New-in-Norway/Useful-information/Public-agencies/The-Norwegian-Directorate-of-Integration-and-Diversity/)

The meeting was very fruitful. Ms Ragnhild Aasvang was very friendly and helpful and briefed about Norway's approach to refugee settlement, their focus on employment and rapid resettlement and their goal of providing equitable access to public service. It provided me an opportunity to learn about the Norwegian refugee settlement system.

On the sidelines, I also briefly met and exchanged views with Kofi Amankwah, Policy Director in the same department.

Some of the key question that I asked during the discussion with Ms Aasvang included: The reasons why Norway resettles refugees; the resettlement approach in terms of who is settled, where they are settled and how they are settled including who is involved and what support they get; expected long-term outcome and what is considered integration.

Refugee settlement is considered a responsibility as a global citizen. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) is charged with implementing integration and diversity policies and works in cooperation with municipalities, government agencies, immigrant organisations and groups and the private sector.

Municipalities in Norway settle refugees in cooperation with IMDi. They have a duty to ensure that refugees and members of their families who have been granted family reunification receive individual tuition in Norwegian language and social studies, and also to ensure that they are prepared for the labour market.

- The experience shared by people living in far north Alta, which has extreme weather conditions was particularly very useful in terms of how they were building further on their resilience and looking forward to building new lives in their new homeland.
- I also spent time talking to local people and enquiring about their 'communities'. People I spoke to overwhelmingly were very much attached and had a great sense of belonging to the local community. Most interesting was a high school student who was quite angry about the construction of the hotel that I was staying in. An American citizen, she had lived in the area for over six years. Her father was posted there at the NATO office and she was living with her parents. It was a newly built hotel with a unique architecture but I was told it destroyed the trees that adorned the local community and is more of a 'white elephant'. The

sentiment was shared by other local community members as well and I learnt that it was built despite opposition from the local community.

- I had a very good discussion with everyone I met and there was a lot of learning from both sides. Ms Ragnhild Aasvang from IMDi as well as the resettled Bhutanese community was very keen and enthusiastic about embracing the strength based approach to refugee settlement and community development that we have adopted in Sydney.
- While maintaining the informality of the community gatherings, I introduced some common themes for discussion including: Trading our problems for possibilities; Focus on Gifts; Associational life and Power to act and the power to identify and solve problems for ourselves; the means to create a future for ourselves distinct from the past and a wider sense of belonging as citizens; the community's well-being – it is about the quality of relationships and the cohesion that exists among its citizens; valuing our interdependence and sense of belonging.
- Throughout my stay in the country, Ramesh Gautam, a very successful Bhutanese Norwegian who was resettled in 2009 in Norway under the humanitarian settlement program for the Bhutanese refugees in UNHCR-run camps in Nepal kindly assisted me and accompanied me most times. I am very grateful to him and for his family's generosity.

USA

I visited Pittsburgh and Atlanta in the United States. In both these places I met service providers involved in the delivery of humanitarian services as well as local Bhutanese community members and organisations.

Pittsburgh: Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh
(http://www.jfcspgh.org/)

I met with President and CEO Aryeh Sherman and other senior executives Leslie Aizenman and Jordan Golin with whom I discussed the organisation's approach and experience in refugee settlement. In the words of Mr Sherman, the organisation's work is focussed around "issues related to workforce, diversity, ageing and critical needs of people in our community". He proudly adds that: "We are a Jewish organisation but we serve people from all different backgrounds and religion". They all shared their very rich insight and experiences of providing human services.

I was kindly invited for lunch by Mr Sherman and later Leslie Aizenman welcomed me to join her team meeting – what a nice team of people to work with! They were all very welcoming and I felt like very much part of team. It was all the more a very proud moment for me to see fellow Bhutanese working for JFCS and sitting around the table. Senior managers and staff were all high praises for their fellow colleagues from Bhutan.

Everyone spoke very passionately about the work that they were involved with. I noticed many similarities with the issues that the team deals with such as housing and domestic violence.

Given my interest to learn more about social innovation and different approaches adopted by different organisations to drive it, I interviewed Mr Sherman to capture his views on this and related topics.

Expressing his views on how he sees growth in the sector, Mr Sherman says that: "Horizontal growth with a little bit of vertical growth is the best combination". He defines horizontal growth as working collaboratively with other organisations. Mr Sherman and the team were very interested in my work with refugees and in particular about the strength based approach to refugee settlement and community development.

Bhutanese community in Pittsburgh
(https://www.facebook.com/BhutaneseCAP)

I met the leadership team including Kishor Pradhan, Upendra Dahal, Rup Narayan Pokhrel, Khara (KN) Timsina, Bishnu Timsina, Ashok Gurung and Barbara and members of the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh (BCAP) and had a detail discussion of how the organisation is assisting in the resettlement of fellow Bhutanese refugees and also how the community members themselves are being involved in the settlement process.

BCAP is providing the leadership needed and is actively involved in a number of programs initiated from within the community. These included:

- Funeral fund – where each family voluntarily contributes a certain amount annually and receives support for funeral expenses when someone from the family passes away. Bhutanese community organisations from other States have reportedly approached BCAP for advice with a view to set up similar fund in their own state.
- BCAP has also negotiated a discounted rate for the community from the local funeral service provider.
- Community engagement – The organisation facilitates and encourages community engagement by organising community events such as the Annual cultural program generally held around October / November.
- Youth are also actively engaged through student group such as taking seniors on a trip to Washington DC
- Organising English language and civic education classes for community members.

I also visited a number of other people individually and in small groups and discussed the resettlement experience. Uma Gautam, kindly volunteered and took me around to visit a cross-section of resettled Bhutanese people. People we visited included Madhav Dhital and family. Madhav is a registered nurse, who along with four other colleagues has set up a business offering aged care services mainly focussed on the Bhutanese community in Pittsburgh. Uma herself is a bright and successfully settled Bhutanese youth who was very active in the community, assisting people in their initial settlement journey.

A few Bhutanese refugee families had settled in Pittsburgh prior to the humanitarian resettlement program that began in 2008. Since one of those families had started a grocery business, a number of new arrivals followed suit. The city now boasts a number of grocery shops and a few restaurants owned by Bhutanese families.

Based on the feedback I got from community members, the organisation seems to be doing quite well in terms of supporting new arrivals in their settlement journey. I also found that BCAP and the community are well regarded and respected by service providers as well as the local government. In view of its active role in the community, the Bhutanese is even consulted by the local government in Pittsburgh city planning.

Atlanta, Georgia

I met service providers involved in the delivery of humanitarian services as well as local Bhutanese community members and organisations.

Catholic Charities in Atlanta, Georgia

(https://catholiccharitiesatlanta.org/)

Catholic Charities offers a wide range of services including settlement services. I met with Bahadur Subba, Program Manager along with case managers Pashupati Regmi and Branka and on 25 April 2016. Mr Subba and Mr Regmi are former refugees from Bhutan. It was a privilege for me to be able to discuss settlement matters with someone with lived experience and now involved in service delivery. Personally, it was all the more a very proud moment for me to meet fellow former countrymen who had settled successfully and made a career in a well-recognised organisation such as Catholic Charities.

Discussed operational matters since they were all involved in day to day service delivery.

- The organisation receives Federal government funding for its refugee settlement program. Out of a total of US$1,850, fifty percent is allocated for direct client support and the other half for the organisation to meet operational and management expenses.
- For larger families it is quite comfortable but it is bit of a stretch for smaller ones. Single / Smaller families are offered combined accommodation for the initial period.
- Household goods and furniture for the new arrivals is mostly donated / second hand items.
- People need to find work with assistance from service provider before the money runs out.
- Generally in the United States, the focus is to get people into employment straight away. Employment is the main success criteria of settlement
- The organisation considers itself as having very high quality documentation
- Heavy case load is seen as a major operational challenge.

International Rescue Committee (IRC), Atlanta, Georgia USA

(https://www.rescue.org/united-states/atlanta-ga)

Met with Yeshey Pelzom, Settlement Manager and Justin Howell, Development Manager on 25 April 2016.

Ms Pelzom briefed me about the organisation and its work including its role in supporting the resettlement Bhutanese refugees in Atlanta. She also introduced me to a number of staff and showed me around the office. The 'Bhutanese' identity was very visible with the office decoration interspersed with traditional Bhutanese handicrafts on display.

I also separately met with Justin Howell, Development Manager who was very knowledgeable and was very forthcoming in sharing his rich experience.

IRC offers services in 26 cities across the United States. 70% of its funding is from the government and the rest from other sources including foundations. Out of the total government funding, 95% is federal funding and the rest from state government.

Since its establishment in 1979, IRC Atlanta has resettled over 26,009 refugees from 55 countries including Bhutan. In 2015, it resettled 1,025 refugees, 15% of whom were from Bhutan. There is a strong focus on employment and the organisation prides itself in placing over 50% of the newly-arrived refugees in full-time jobs within 6 months of their arrival in Atlanta in 2015. IRC Atlanta's services include: Resettlement, Health and Wellness, Education and Learning, Economic Empowerment, Immigration Services and Citizenship Preparation.

Volunteers and interns are very important part of IRC Atlanta. For every IRC Atlanta staff member, there are 10 volunteers/interns.

IRC Atlanta uses a good story / strength based approach to advocacy to mobilise support and resources. These include data such as: Percentage of people working, amount of tax paid by them, growth in new houses built due to refugee settlement are some of the data they use.

Mr Subba and Mr Regmi as well as Ms Pelzom are former refugees from Bhutan. It was a privilege for me to be able to discuss settlement matters with someone with lived experience and now involved in service delivery. Personally, it was all the more a very proud moment for me to meet fellow former countrymen who had settled successfully and made their careers in well-recognised organisations such as the Catholic Charities and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Additionally, it was quite an emotional experience for me to meet Ms Pelzom since she is the daughter of one of my favourite teachers in college in Bhutan and knew her since she was a young girl.

New American Pathways, Atlanta
(http://newamericanpathways.org/)

New American Pathways provides what it calls a "continuum of services that supports new Americans on their individual pathways from arrival through citizenship". It offers five program areas that focus on jobs, education, cultural integration, individual and female empowerment, and building strong families.

I met with Suzane Baker and Amie Crownover, Development Director and Marketing & Communications Director respectively. I was scheduled to meet with Paedia Mixon, CEO, New American Pathways Atlanta on 22 April 2016 straight after arriving from Halifax. Due to traffic problem, I couldn't make it to the meeting that afternoon and couldn't meet Paedia since she was out of station for the next few days. Paedia is a recognized leader in the refugee service community. Under her leadership, New American Pathways' resettlement program has been recognized nationally as one of the most successful in the country, placing more than 90% of refugees in jobs within their first six months of resettling in the U.S.

Although I couldn't meet the CEO, two senior managers, Suzane and Amie were kind enough to make time not only to meet and discuss with me but also to show me around the office and introduce me to other staff. Both Suzane and Amie were very passionate about the work they do and also proud of the organisation they work for.

I was also able to video interview Amie who spoke about the organisation's unique 'pathway' to help refugees settle smoothly into the country. They were also very interested in my work with refugees and in particular about the strength based approach to refugee settlement and community development.

It was again a matter of pride to know that a number of resettled Bhutanese were working for the organisation and were all doing very well. Everyone spoke very highly and affectionately about the Bhutanese staff working for the organisation. The photographs of high performing staff hanging on the office walls reflected the success story of Bhutanese refugee settlement in Atlanta.

Bhutanese Community of Georgia, Atlanta

The Bhutanese community in Georgia organised a community get-together at a local Hindu temple which was attended by over 30 people including leaders in the community. This provided me an opportunity to meet people in a group and learn about their experience and the settlement journey. There was keen interest to hear about settlements in other countries so I took the opportunity to share how the Bhutanese community was settling in Australia. I also spoke about our strength-based approach to refugee settlement and community development which was very well received.

Leela Kuikel, President of the Bhutanese American Organization-Philadelphia and Tika Acharya, President of the Bhutanese Community of New Hampshire (BCNH), who were both vising the state and attended the get-together. This allowed me learn about the settlement experience of their respective states as well.

I also visited a number of other people individually and in small groups and discussed the resettlement experience. One of the resettled Bhutanese families had organised an important Hindu religious discourse and I was fortunate to attend and meet a large number of people from the community who had come to the event.

Thanks to Mrs Manikala Basnet and Roma Basnet, both very active volunteers in the community who contacted key people in the state and helped organise the community gathering. Mrs Basnet is the wife of late R.B.Basnet, the President of Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP), an opposition party operating in exile in Nepal. Mrs Basnet resettled in the United States after her husband passed away in Nepal.

Devika and her husband Til Mapchan, originally from my home district Chirang in Bhutan, kindly volunteered and took me around to visit a cross-section of resettled Bhutanese people including Birendra Dhakal and family. Birendra and his wife Benu were both civil servants in Bhutan before they were forced to flee the country for fear of persecution. Birendra actively volunteers in the

community and is one of the first resettled Bhutanese people to try his hand in politics by standing for local elections. Although he wasn't successful, he has become a role model and a great source of encouragement to others who are inclined to enter politics. Similarly, I met a number of other resettled individuals who are doing very well professionally.

At the community gathering, I was told that there were around 17 Bhutanese organisations in Atlanta and the people present expressed a sense of disappointment with the large number. Despite this, I felt that there was a common desire in people to work more closely as a close-knit Bhutanese community. The rich experience in Atlanta reinforced my learnings so far on the need to take a different approach to setting up and managing community organisations. Rather than the traditional top-down approach that the community has operated in the past both in exile in Nepal and more so in Bhutan under an authoritarian regime, there is perhaps a need for a bottom-up and a more collaborative approach. This will be discussed in detail separately under key observations and recommendations.

Canada

Halifax

Champions for Change Forum

I attended Champions for Change Forum in Halifax from 18-21 April 2016 which was organised by the Tamarack Institute, the Collective Impact Forum, and Backbone organizations from across North America and internationally. The forum brought together people who are working on similar issues and create conditions that enable solutions to complex problems to emerge.

I met and discussed the major challenges communities across the world are facing today with a number of social sector thought leaders including Paul Born, Liz Weaver and Sylvia Cheuy from the Tamarack Institute, John Kania, Jennifer Splansky Juster and Veronica Borgonovi from FSG (Foundation Strategy Group).

Highlights included:

- Recognition that communities are dealing with increasingly complex issues such as poverty, homelessness and marginalised groups requiring collective efforts to address them – ***Collaborative actions for a Collective impact is now a necessity rather than a choice***
- Community engagement and involvement are fundamental to building social capital and addressing major challenges from within. However, this raises the question of Community itself – and the need to rebuild a disengaged community or where they have fallen apart
- 7 habits of effective communities: Reach for it; Go with who you got; Hold the centre; Keep the circle open; Avoid the blame game; Choose measurable outcomes; Develop a sense of urgency and keep going
- Better utilising the social sector's one of the biggest assets – the stories that it generates on a day to day basis and effective story telling
- Shifting collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future. The passion of participants and the stories of change and success they shared demonstrated the power of communities to generate change.

Meeting with resettled Bhutanese Community members in Halifax

Aiming for the stars!

On the sidelines of Champions for Change Forum, I first met with two very smart young men, Rupesh Dhungana and Kharga Bahadur Bhandari, who had resettled in Halifax as part of the Bhutanese refugee resettlement program from the camps in Nepal which began in 2008. I visited their families and enquired about their resettlement experience. They were also very interested in knowing more about how we were settling in Australia, challenges we face and how we overcome.

Although only in their early twenties, I was most impressed with the leadership provided by Rupesh and Kharga. When I asked them what their priority was when they first arrived in Halifax, Canada, it was their studies and the welfare of senior members of the community. Through their initiative, a number of community activities and informal get-together are now organised including those specific for senior members of the community to help them deal with the issue of isolation.

Kharga has recently graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering while Rupesh has completed a Bachelor degree to fulfil his dream of becoming a criminologist.

Calgary

Meeting with United Way of Calgary and Area (UWCA) on Wednesday 27 April 2016

http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/about-uwca

United Way invests in local programs and collaborations that drive social change in three key areas of poverty, kids, and communities. With 90% of all funds raised invested in communities by keeping a tight control on fund raising cost to 10%, the organisation prides itself in maintaining fundraising ratio to be among the lowest of all Canadian charities.

I was scheduled to meet with Talia Bell, Manager of Evaluation and Operations and other staff at 9am. I reached the building just on time but United Way office was located on higher levels and I had to take the lift. For some reason, the lift operated very slowly and after a long wait it finally arrived. The lift was packed but I squeezed in along with few others. It was Wednesday morning and felt like a mid-week fatigue – everyone was gloomy and no one was talking to anyone. As soon as the lift closed, a gentleman who had got into the lift with me, started talking and cracked a joke. Suddenly the mood in the lift was different, everyone introducing each other and exchanging pleasantries. When the lift stopped and opened at the right floor, I got out and rushed to the reception and then to the meeting room as directed. All this while, I was thinking of this 'lift man' who had changed the mood in the lift and made my day and perhaps for everyone who was in the lift then. It was a demonstration that happiness is a choice and the 'lift man' just proved it.

After a few minutes in the meeting room, a man with a big smile walks in. It is the 'lift man' again with the same welcoming look on his face. He was none other than Cesar Cala, a United Way of Calgary and Area veteran who seemed to embody positivity wherever he went - what a wonderful man, what a great asset to have for any organisation or for the community in general!

Talia Bell, Manager of Evaluation and Operations along with Mariam Elghahuagi, Cesar Cala and Bodil Dronkers took part in the discussion. This was then followed by a meeting with a number of service providers that UWCA works with or supports. The organisations represented included: Calgary Immigrant Education Society, Immigrant Services Calgary, Centre for Newcomers, Ethno-Cultural Council of Calgary (ECCC) and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS).

The participants were also interested in my work with refugees as well as refugee and migrant settlement programs generally in Australia. In view of their interest, I spoke about my involvement in community work and explained the "Bottom up holistic approach" to refugee settlement and community development. I also provided copies of the model that I have developed based on my experience with the Bhutanese community in Sydney.

Highlights from the discussion:

- Based on the work that it does and way it works with and supports other organisations, I found that United Way of Calgary and Area is truly on a mission to "improve lives and build extraordinary communities by engaging local residents in taking action for their community"
- Discussion focussed around social innovation and UWCA's role in driving innovation
- United Way of Calgary and Area has been exploring the idea of social innovation and how to use innovative principles and processes to catalyse social change
- UWCA's definition of Social innovation: New ideas that work to resolve social problems for the benefit of society, not for individuals alone
- Based on five UWCA led projects, lessons learned on social innovation include:
    1. Create time and space to "begin quietly"
    2. Embrace and enable failure
    3. Fund a strong support infrastructure
    4. Invest the time to build a foundation of trust and understanding; prioritise it
    5. Clarify roles of participants early, and often
    6. Make reflection a standard, ongoing practice
    7. Be clear upfront about expectation of participants
    8. Always work with the end in mind
- A range of topics were covered in the discussion including: Neighbourhood strategy; Creating shared community spaces and building capacities and community development
- In UWCA's experience working with a wide range of organisations, they find that Boards are very risk averse; organisations are very service driven and outcome focussed and do not focus adequately on community capacity building
- During the broader discussion with other service providers, participants talked about one stop shop for immigrants, e-learning experience, digital outreach, how they are connecting with clients including online services such as online booking and access to libraries particularly for people who can't attend due to various reasons. Participants also emphasised that access alone doesn't engage people
- The Genesis Centre of Community Wellness, a 225,000 square foot C$120 million multi-purpose complex was cited as a great example of a hub which was a venue for sport and recreation and also a place that caters to the diverse interests of the communities in Northeast Calgary. It housed a YMCA, a branch of the Calgary Public Library, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, community gathering places and a human (social) services centre called 1,000 Voices Operated by the North East Centre of Community Society (NECCS). It is a site where residents can access services and where they can host their own community

enhancement activities. United Way of Calgary and Area was involved in the development of the Community and Human Services Area under the NECCS. This area will be called **1000 Voices, A Community Place at the Genesis Centre**.

- It was pleasing to hear from some participants that they think Australian organisations are more innovative.

What I observed at the United Way of Calgary and Area was that the organisation's mission flowed through all the staff that I met.

Lethbridge

Meeting with Lethbridge Family Services, 29 April 2016

https://lfsfamily.ca/immigrant_services/index.php

Met with Sarah Amies, Director Immigration Program. I was also schedule to meet the CEO Sandra Mintz but she could not make it since she was called on to another important engagement. Purna Adhikari, President of the Canadian Bhutanese Society was also able to join the meeting. Lethbridge Family Services provides community-based support to individuals and families to facilitate human potential, choice and independence. Its services include: Counselling, Outreach and Education; Disability Services; **Home Services**; and Immigrant Services. Immigrant Services is devoted to helping recently immigrated newcomers settle into the community.

Highlights from the discussion:

- Sarah spoke about Canada's role in settling Syrian refugees and informed that so far 160 people had been settled since January 2016
- Refugees are supported through programs such as Refugee Assistance Program and Integrated Services Program which are largely supported by the federal government
- Lethbridge Family Services provides its Immigrant Services though Settlement Services, Youth Services, Community Connections and other additional services such as interpretation and translation services.
- People who are linguistically or culturally challenged can access support services for very long. There is also social support system for people who do not get pension – people who haven't worked for a minimum of 10 years
- Bhutanese refugees found it quite challenging in the beginning including emotional and mental health issues. Better qualified middle aged men settled pretty well but those with no qualification struggled
- Education: At the elementary school level, children go straight to standard schools; junior high levels have part ESL classes plus learning with peers; High school level children have access to intense ESL classes; Focus on trade qualifications and fewer students going to universities
- Employment: Lethbridge is supported by agriculture and not much by oil and gas compared to Alberta generally. Newly arrived refugees initially take up survival jobs. Bhutanese people are generally working in food processing (Sunrise poultry being a major employer), however some people are having health issues and are dropping off. There is summer work in agriculture through initiatives such as Local immigration partnership (LIPS)
- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), an umbrella organization, is mandated to build sectorial capacity by providing member agencies that serve newcomers access to professional development opportunities such as through settlement practitioners

training, to act as a liaison with stakeholders, and provide a centre for knowledge, expertise, and leadership
- Private organisations can also apply for government funding now

Emphasising a long-term sustainable approach, Sarah says that: "We are not interested in immediate employment, we want them to go out and learn - with the aim of long term sustainable employment". Sarah also stresses the organisation's empowerment approach to refugee settlement, stating that: "We are working ourselves out of our jobs, assisting people to be independent".

Meeting with resettled Bhutanese Community members in Lethbridge
Canadian Bhutanese Society http://www.cbsalberta.org/

There was a very good response for a community gathering which was kindly coordinated by Purna Adhikari, President of the Canadian Bhutanese Society. Most of the executive committee members as well as senior members including Mandhoj Tamang and founding President Hemlal Timsina attended the discussion. Lethbridge is now one of the largest Bhutanese population centres in Canada and it was pleasing to see a number of people from my hometown in Bhutan.

Highlights included:
- Lethbridge is turning out to be one of the most sought after places for resettled Bhutanese mainly due to employment opportunities and a close-knit community environment; it has also seen some internal migration from other cities in Canada
- Most people are working. However, many people who initially took up survival jobs are now returning to studies to enhance their qualifications and explore better job prospects
- Women in general have come forward a lot with high employment rate and around 80% reported to have learnt driving. The need to drive to work has been one of the major factors for women to acquire driving license.
- Challenges: Alcohol problem particularly with youth and domestic violence remain some of the major challenges in the community
- Host community influence - The prior existence of Bhutanese community members including Hemlal Timsina, Mandhoj Tamang and their families have had a very positive influence. The new arrivals received initial settlement support by way of guidance with day to days needs to education, training and employment. The two families are held in high regard and still seems to be pivotal to cohesion and harmony and resulting in a close-knit community.

I also visited a number of other people individually and in small groups and discussed the resettlement experience. As in other places that visited, there was a lot of interest from the local resettled Bhutanese community to know about the Bhutanese community in Australia as well as other countries that I visited. In response, I shared about my involvement in community work and explained the "Bottom up holistic approach" to refugee settlement and community development. I also provided copies of the model that I have developed based on my experience with the Bhutanese community in Sydney.

"We are not interested in immediate employment, we want them to go out and learn - with the aim of long term sustainable employment". Sarah Amies, Director of Immigration Program, Lethbridge Family Services**,** emphasising a long-term sustainable approach to refugee settlement**.**

New Zealand

View from the window: I visited New Zealand from 12 – 18 June 2016, spending 3 days in Christ Church and the remaining four days in Palmerston North before returning home to Sydney on 18 June. I arrived in Christchurch on Sunday 12 June 2016 and was received at the airport by Basudev Mishra, immediate past Chairperson of Bhutanese Society of Christchurch.

Meeting with Christchurch City Council, 13 June 2016
Along with Basudev Mishra, I met Christchurch City Council official Ester Vallero
Highlights included:

- Housing and health services in the city are fully stretched and there are no more refugee resettlement in Christchurch; Started resettling refugees in Danedon now
- Challenges of previous settlements: English service, mental health
- Council works closely with service providers such as Refugee council; Christ Church Refugee Resettlement Services; Red Cross Employment to Pathways;
- Successful settlement service providers have a community development focus and have closer engagement and good working relationship with community groups, and in particular refugee communities.
- Key to success: Work collaboratively across the community; funding, spaces,
- To encourage cooperative and collaborative working environment, Council facilitates a meeting every six weeks where service providers and interested community organisations can participate.
- Council also manages strengthening communities' fund, which is aimed at supporting community organisations and groups to build internal capacities.
- The Council has a Multicultural policy - enabling people and looks at strengthening individual communities and support them to maintain their own tradition and culture as well as promote cross cultural interaction.
- For successful resettlement of refugees, highest priority would be civic engagement so that people are actively involved and diverse views are taken into account in the decision making process.

Meeting with resettled Bhutanese community members in Christchurch

The community had organised a get-together on 14 June in the evening. It was one of the most interesting interactions I had since unlike other places that I visited, I knew only a very few people and perhaps they were not clear about the purpose of the get-together. Initially, I sensed a bit of unease with people not opening up to speak and share their views. However, the environment quickly turned very friendly and everyone started jostling to know more when I shared my story of how I had left Bhutan and spent the next six years volunteering in the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal. When we get to know each other better, there were people from my village or my wife's village and the conversation went non-stop for almost three hours.

People shared the challenges of initial settlement including how to run a community organization, how senior members of the community can provide guidance and support irrespective of being formally in the leadership role or not. While acknowledging these challenges, the overarching message I got was the desire to 'do something' whether it is learning English language, acquiring driving license, studying or finding employment. There was also a common desire to work together more closely as a community and see how they can help each other. The intent was very strong and I left the gathering with the confidence that the community will settle well in their new homeland.

I also visited a number of other people individually and in small groups and discussed the resettlement experience. In particular, I met elderly people as a mark of respect and others who were experiencing or going through difficult times. These included a family who had a tragic accident and had lost a mother and a daughter and were survived by the husband and other children. I could sense the loss the family was going through while at the same time it was heartening to see them surrounded by family and friends. I learnt that people were travelling long distances to visit the family and console them and extend whatever support they could provide. I felt very proud to be part of such a caring community. What I witnessed in this instance reinforced my learning about the importance of community and care for each other.

During my stay in Christ Church, I also visited adult English classes that the resettled Bhutanese people were attending. Many of them shared their challenges but generally found them very enthusiastic about learning the language. Among others, the following two stories made me very proud to be part of this very resourceful community:

- Goma Mishra, who earlier attended the language classes had developed her language skills to the extent that she was now working as bilingual teacher aide in the same institute. One of her former classmates captured the pride of the success that the community felt when she said: "Goma and I started together in the same class but now she comes to teach us", further adding "I am very proud of Goma and draw inspiration and motivation from what she has achieved in a short period of time".
- Amar Biswa, who had arrived in the country few years back with no English language skills had stated driving and the pride of the success clearly reflected in his excitement.

In addition, Basudev and I also met with Canterbury Refugee Council and discussed their role in refugee settlement as well policy development.

- We were informed that the Refugee Council works in collaboration with other organisations and advocates on refugee issues. Besides working on policy matters, it also offers direct services

- The Council currently runs Strengthening Refugee Voices (SRV) project which involves community consultation, engaging and involving refugee communities and sharing information
- Afghani, Somali and Ethiopian are the three largest refugee communities in Christ Church
- Lack of consistent funding is a major constraint.

Thanks to the wonderful community members and in particular Akash Dukpa and Basudev Mishra for the hospitality and coordinating my visit in Christchurch.

Palmerston North

I arrived in Palmerston North on Wednesday 15 June 2016. I was very touched to see Sudarshan Adhikari, Deven Rai, Chitra Sapkota and Gangaram Adhikari, President, General Secretary and senior members respectively of the Bhutanese Society of New Zealand (Palmerston North & Feilding) at the airport with flowers in hand to welcome me. From the airport I was taken straight to Gangaram's house where his cheerful and a very welcoming family had prepared delicious traditional lunch. What a great start to the final destination of my overseas study tour!

Meeting with NZ Red Cross

In Palmerston North, I along with Sudarshan Adhikari, Deven Rai and Chitra Sapkota took part in an extensive discussion with NZ Red Cross. The Red Cross team members participating in the discussion included Sonja de Lange, Humanitarian Services Manager, Rachael Kidd, Client Services National Lead, Michelle Thompson and Ansie. My most sincere appreciation and thanks to Rachel Kidd, who drove early in the morning for over two hours all the way from Wellington. I had also planned to meet with Rachel O' Connor, National Programmes Development Manager but couldn't do so since she was then travelling overseas for work commitment.

The Red Cross team briefed us on their work particularly on refugee settlement services which are aimed at empowering new Kiwis as they rebuild their lives in their new country of settlement.

New Zealand Red Cross is the primary provider of community refugee resettlement programs in the country. The resettlement program is supported by initiatives such as Pathways to Settlement and Pathways to Employment. Finding employment is a key part of the resettlement process since it gives former refugees financial independence and also offers them the opportunity to use their skills and contribute back to their community. As part of the settlement program, the new arrivals are generally supported for 12 months during which they are connected with mainstream services and communities. However, those with higher needs continue to receive support beyond the 12 months period as required.

Building community resilience is one of the key priority areas and the organisation emphasises that communities need to be actively involved and engaged and also be accountable. Taking a strength-based approach, the emphasis is on self-help strategies and working towards independence.

Other programs offered by the organisation include: Meals on Wheels, Community Transport, Restoring Family Links services, First Aid courses, Education programs, Disaster management services, awareness campaigns and other community programs. In addition, New Zealand Red Cross does overseas aid works as well.

The Red Cross team has offered to meet with the local Bhutanese community representatives on a monthly basis. It can potentially lead to a pilot project starting with a strength survey in the community and perhaps skills audit at individual level. Some of the ideas for collaboration that we have shared with the Red Cross team include:

1. Vegetable farming
2. Sheep farming
3. Other skills areas (that our community members have):
   - Artist: Eg., Art project across communities promoting intercultural exchanges;
   - Teachers (who were teaching back in Nepal but are not able to do so in NZ): Undertaking an skills audit to explore and identity transferable skills and help match these skills with available jobs and/or upskill if required;
   - Driving: Assisting the current driving instructor in Palmerston North to get formal accreditation so that he can set up his own business. This can then perhaps be replicated by interested people in other locations or other community groups.

The Red Cross team expressed interest in my work with refugees as well as refugee and migrant settlement programs generally in Australia. In response, I explained the Australian settlement system and various programs available to support refugee and migrant settlement as well as the role of service providers such as Settlement Services International (SSI) and SydWest Multicultural Services. I also spoke about my involvement in community work and explained the "Bottom up holistic approach" to refugee settlement and community development. Copies of the settlement model that I have developed based on my experience with the Bhutanese community in Sydney, was made available to the participants.

After the meeting, we were shown around the offices and introduced to the staff, who were all very friendly and welcoming. I was also taken to their local bookshop, the proceeds of which go to support vulnerable people in the community.

The Refugee Week celebration in Palmerston North

This was a major highlight of my visit to New Zealand. Along with other community members I was invited to join the celebration. It was an honour and privilege to be invited to address the audience as a guest from Australia where I shared my own journey and experience as a refugee. I also took the opportunity to briefly introduce the 'strength-based' approach to refugee settlement that we have adopted within the Bhutanese community in Sydney which generated a lot of interest from the audience.

Among others, the gathering was addressed by Iain-Less-Galloway, NZ Member of Parliament and Sonja-De-Lange, Humanitarian Services Manager, NZ Red Cross.

In addition to an entertainment through excellent cultural performances by different refugee community groups, a splendid multicultural meal with a wide variety wrapped up the celebration.

Other engagements in Palmerston North included:

- **Meeting with the Bhutanese community in Palmerston North**

The Bhutanese Society of New Zealand (Palmerston North & Feilding) had organsied a get-together with the local Bhutanese community. Similar to other places that I visited, I was introduced and invited to brief the gathering about the purpose of my visit. We then had an exchange of information, getting to know each other better and shared setlement experiences including my observation from the places that I had visited as part of my overseas study tour. In addition to the general settlement challenges such as the new environment, language and navigating the local system and services, some other challenges faced by the newly emerging Bhutanese community included:

  - Career guidance and identifying appropriate subjects to study or a course for training
  - Acquiring driving license
  - Finding employment

Highlight of the evening was acknowledgement of seniors. It was a privilege to join the leadership team to felicitate and honour the senior members of the community for their contribution and ongoing guidance. It is a tradition that the resettled Bhutanese communities across continents including ourselves in Sydney continue to follow and we hope the future generations will continue.

I also visited a number of other people individually and in small groups and discussed the resettlement experience. These included:

  - A gentleman who had gone to the same college as I and was a few years junior to me. A trained teacher by profession, he was still in the process of finding a career that suited his education, experience and skills in the local context. When I enquired about a beautiful artwork hanging on the wall in his living room, I found that he was a very talented artist too
  - Another gentleman, who was also a trained teacher by profession, spoke passionately about his desire to work and contribute to the wider community.
  - As teachers they both had contributed significantly to the education of children in the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal
  - As in other places that I visited, I also met with elderly people who were all thrilled to reminisce and talk about their past while in Bhutan as well as the life in the camps in Nepal.

- **Visit to the English Language Partners at Palmerston North, Thursday 16 June 2016**

I visited the English Language Partners where a significant number of students were from the Bhutanese community. While learning the language, they were also learning about other cultures and getting an appreciation of the wider New Zealand society. It was quite special day when I visited them since they were not engaged in their regular English language classes but were preparing to participate at the Refugee Week celebration the next day. They were

practising songs, dances and a skit based on their lives in the refugee camps. I recognised a number of people who I had met either in the refugee camps in Nepal or back in Bhutan before we fled the country.

What was most interesting was the confidence I saw in people, many of whom were barely literate and came from very remote places in Bhutan. Having left the confines of refugee camps, travelled overseas and having met people from different cultures and different background, they were now confident enough to give it a go. As one person said, "if others can do it, perhaps I can do it as well".

I also felt very proud to see our own people Chuda Ghimirey and Bishnu Dulal working for the service provider, English Language Partners.

- **Nepali Language Classes**

Nepali language, mother tongue of most of the resettled Bhutanese is dear to everyone. There is a common desire within the community that the future generations do not forget our language. With this in mind, people have taken the initiative and started Nepali language classes. The classes are managed by people from within the community on a voluntary basis.

The enthusiasm I saw in both teachers and the students, who are mostly young children as well as their parents, gave me confidence that the community will continue this initiative in years to come.

- **Visiting families in Palmerston North and Feilding**

The members of the Palmerston North and Feilding community leadership team accompanied me to visit a number of Bhutanese families in the local area and also to Feilding where we visited a very enterprising man Olak Bista and family. Soon after his resettlement in Feilding, he had met and discussed local and initial resettlement issues with the Mayor and had taken a number of initiatives including support for driving lessons.

I also met Hari, a proud gentleman in his 60s who had successfully acquired his driving license in the recent past. Seen in the picture here is Hari on my right and his instructor Gangaram Adhikari on the left. Gangaram, who volunteered as a driving instructor with the local Red Cross not too long after his arrival in the country had played a key role in helping community members acquire driving license. Many people owed their success to Gangaram, who had patiently and generously volunteered to assist them with driving lessons.

Thanks to Sudarshan, Deven, Indra, Gangaram and the leadership team for the hospitality and coordinating my visit in Palmerston North.

The overarching message I received from fellow community members both from Christchurch and Palmerston North was: "We want to learn the language and/or develop necessary skills/utilise my skills (as appropriate depending on individual situation) so that we will be able to work and give back to the wider New Zealand society which has so generously welcomed us". I could also see that every single individual is endowed with inherent strength and skills and everyone aspires to utilise this potential.

Everyone I met was very grateful to the generosity of the people and government of New Zealand for resettling them and giving them an opportunity to start their lives all over again. Most importantly, everyone that I met was passionate about doing something for the community. There was this inner desire which is a great foundation for engagement and involvement and work collectively for the greater good of the community.

Discussion with Mr Jono Naylor, National List MP

In addition to my visit to New Zealand, I also had a discussion over the phone with Mr Jono Naylor, National List MP on 10 June 2016 since the MP would not be available during my visit to the country. A significant number of Bhutanese families have been resettled in Mr Naylor's constituency and he has had close interaction with the community since the resettlement began in 2008.

Although it seems obvious, I started the conversation with Mr Naylor by asking reasons why New Zealand resettles refugees. He said that New Zealand was fortunate to be in such as position, to be able to assist those in need. It had the ability to play a part in settling refugees. In essence, he said, the country was playing its part as a global citizen.

Other highlights from the discussion mainly around his observation about Bhutanese and other refugee settlement in New Zealand included:

- All the resettled refugees that he has met are very grateful for the generosity of New Zealand in settling them
- Favoured the use of volunteers together with service providers to support refugees during their initial settlement. Voluntary support through community organisations and individuals meant better love and care since it is out of their choice
- Former refugees and their respective community organisations which are more established can assist the new arrivals. However, he cautioned against creating ghettos, where people from the same background start living in one area, not integrating with the wider community and slowly gets isolated from the rest. Such situations often lead to social, religious or other unwanted tensions in the community
- Flexible approach to resettlement support based on individual situation rather than one-size-fits-all specific time-bound support. Generally there is intense support when refugees first arrive and then stops after the government mandated time period. This sometimes leads to people falling through the system and creates more long-term problems
- Learning the language and getting into employment are integral to successful settlement and transition as part of New Zealanders. People with limited language skills remain dependent and are generally longer on social security benefits
- Younger ones who grow up in the country are found to be similar to Kiwi youths
- In closing, Mr Naylor said he was very impressed with the Bhutanese community with their proactive approach. Having personally guided and helped many, he said: "They don't sit around and wait for government to provide everything; rather they go out and knock doors". The MP is of the view that the resettled Bhutanese community have comparatively done very well, perhaps owing to generally better English language skills.