

### **UN Matters**

June/July 2016

### MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

### **Carolyne Gatward**

Despite the winter chill, the June/July period has been a time of great activity for UNAAWA, and the Executive Committee has been busy recruiting volunteers to fill a range of positions to help meet the demands of our rapidly-expanding Association.

I would like to extend my congratulations to our new Environment Committee Chair Siobhan Jennings, Deputy Human Rights Chair Lucky Lyttle, Chief Editor Melanie Chatfield, Deputy Editor Miriam Fisher and Human Resources Officer Emily Oliveira. Congratulations also to those of you who have recently joined the various committees. It is wonderful to have so many enthusiastic people involved in the UNAAWA.

It has been some time between issues of the UN Matters newsletter so I am pleased to present this bumper edition with a special focus on refugees in recognition of World Refugee Week (15-21 June). Inside we also cover events such as our recent volunteer evening, the Environment Committee's water talk and Homelessness Week, as well as an interview with Mr Lyttle. We look forward to keeping you updated on UNAAWA's many important contributions to our community.

Please save the date for our forthcoming events:

- UN Day of Peace—Sunday, 25 September (Subiaco Palms Community Centre, Rokeby Road, 2pm-4pm)
- Discover UNAAWA—Wednesday, 28 September (UNAAWA office, 6pm)
- AGM—Sunday, 9 October (UNAAWA office, 2pm)
- UN Day—Friday, 21 October (Government House, 6.30pm). Book <u>here</u>.

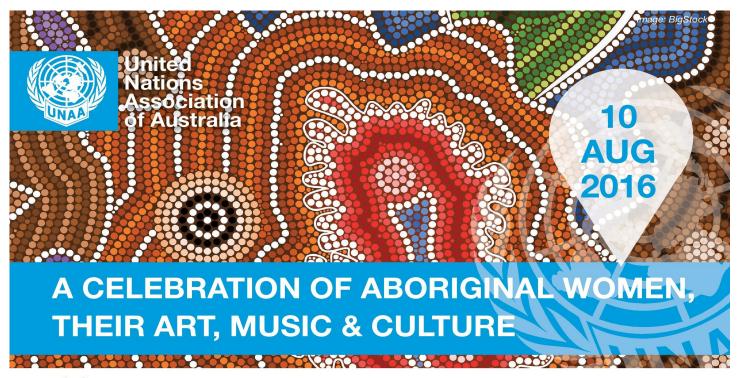
Details of our September event about UN careers will be announced shortly. You are always welcome to join our next Environment Committee (11 August, 6pm) or Human Rights Committee (25 August, 6pm) meetings at the office.

Check out our website for more information. We hope to see you soon!



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The Arts are an integral part of everyday life, both reflecting and shaping our sense of identity, our attitudes and our cultural values. Partnership with the arts community will foster new questions and new conversations on women's rights and gender equality and inspire cultural change and action at individual as well as at national and global levels". UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

Please join the United Nations Association of Australia, Western Australia (UNAAWA) Women's Committee, in partnership with the UNAAWA Human Rights Committee to celebrate the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. On this day we acknowledge the importance of art in moving beyond the boundaries of age, gender or cultural background.

To learn about the role of women in Aboriginal culture, we will hear inspiring stories from highly celebrated Aboriginal women, learn about their personal journey and explore the importance of art in Aboriginal storytelling. We will then hear songs from two of Perth's local Aboriginal language choirs, Koondarm and Madjitil Moorna. Finally, participants will participate in an interactive painting workshop. After learning the meaning behind traditional painting techniques and symbols, we will collaborate to create a community canvas which will be donated to Perth City Farm at the conclusion of the workshop. For a more detailed overview of the event, please see over.

People of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds are invited to participate.

WHEN: Wednesday 10 August 2016. 5:45pm arrival for 6pm start

WHERE: Perth City Farm, 1 City Farm Place, East Perth

COST: \$18 Public; \$13 Members

REGISTRATION: To register and view further event details, visit https://www.trybooking.com/MFSF

### PRESENTED BY



### **SUPPORTED BY**





### NEW DEPUTY CHAIR BRINGS INSIGHT TO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Earlier this year Lucky Lyttle was appointed Vice Chair of the UNAAWA Human Rights Committee. Having spent seven years in a UNHCR camp in Ghana Mr Lyttle knows first hand of the consequences of conflict, and is an enthusiastic advocate for peace.



**Lucky Lyttle** 

The camp housed about 1700 representatives from 13 war-torn countries across Africa, making it one of the most multicultural refugee camps in the world. Such diversity in one place was not without its challenges.

"It was a daily ritual for the children to fetch wood and water. Often the children would fight, and many times the cause was rooted in long-standing conflict between the different cultures," Mr Lyttle said.

Besides problems with youth, camp security had become an issue. After an incident in which a Togolese national had been kidnapped from the UNHCR camp, Mr Lyttle took action and spoke to the UN Chief in Accra.

He proposed two volunteers from each country be identified to form a neighbourhood watch team. The group would patrol the camp in shifts and help facilitate tolerance, safety and peace.

Furthermore, he established a Scout program to provide something constructive for the children to focus on. They secured uniforms and officially registered the group with the assistance of the UN.

"About 70 children participated and they really loved it. The group even won an award for singing," Mr Lyttle said. Not surprisingly, many people in the camp were significantly affected by the war.

"I was originally from Sierra Leone. Many of the people didn't make it. I knew what was happening and so I just kept busy positively. My personal ethics directed me strongly not to join neither the national army nor the rebel soldiers," he said.

He recalled helping out with arts and crafts, including beadwork, weaving and painting. "It gave people something to do, and our things were good. Often we could sell the pieces to tourists." The camp was surrounded by bamboo which the local Chief allowed people to cut down for shelter. However, this required them to walk 15km there and then carry it back.

"The forest was full of snakes and scorpions and every day there was an incident," Mr Lyttle said. "When it all ended, some people were able to return home. But there was a stigma attached to being a refugee." Many had been living that way for so long.

'Our monthly rations were three cups of rice, a cake of soap, a cup of salt and a pint of oil.'

"Most of the villagers depended on fishing for livelihood. Our monthly rations were three cups of rice, a cake of soap, a cup of salt and a pint of oil."

Mr Lyttle arrived in Australia 12 years ago, having been one of the last people to be resettled from the camp. It was common for people to migrate to Canada or America. However, little was known about Australia. "You are going to the lost world," friends said when they learned of his destination.

One of the first things Mr Lyttle needed to do was study English. He now holds a tertiary qualification in counselling, is currently studying for his degree in counter-terrorism security and intelligence from Edith Cowan University, is looking at forwarding his career by studying a Master in International Security with Macquarie University.

"My study pathway will end at a PhD in peace and conflict at the University of New England in Australia," Mr Lyttle said.

When asked to reflect on the impact of his experience he said: "We need to separate issues such as religion and disunity among ethnic groups. We need to tackle issues at their root cause to have any chance of addressing conflict."

### WHAT IS AUSTRALIA'S ROLE AS A REGIONAL LEADER?

**27 JULY** 

Kay Hallahan and I were part of a large and enthusiastic audience who attended a panel discussion titled 'What is Australia's Role as a Regional Leader?' at the University of Western Australia on 27 July.

The panel consisted of Michael Sheldrick from <u>Global Citizen</u> (previously Global Poverty Project) in New York, 2013 WA Australian of the Year Professor Bruce Robinson AM, former Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith and former Head of Australian Diplomatic Missions Dr Sue Boyd.

The discussion was facilitated by ABC's James McHale.

The talk focused on Australia's aid to regional countries and how this could inspire creative solutions to end extreme poverty by 2030, the first of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Professor Robinson stressed the health requirement for people to escape poverty, while Dr Boyd spoke on the need to educate and assist women to reach their potential.

Both Mr Sheldrick and Mr Smith discussed what could be done by citizens within Australia, making particular mention of the role played by Rotary in eliminating polio.

There was general agreement about the need to increase the amount of our foreign aid and to continue to use it to provide clever and creative solutions to poverty.

**Harvey Davies** 

### **HOMELESSNESS WEEK**

### 1-7 AUGUST

The theme of this year's National Homelessness Week is Homelessness Counts, wherein the community is encouraged to recognise people experiencing homelessness are valuable members of our community.

Held just prior to the Census, associated events help highlight the numbers of people experiencing homelessness and ensure they are adequately represented.

Homelessness Australia estimates more than 100,000 people in Australia are currently homeless.

Of these, about 25 per cent are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and 30 per cent were born overseas.

Housing plays a critical role in people's health and wellbeing, yet obtaining affordable and appropriate housing in Australia can be challenging.

High costs, limited availability and complex processes can put tenancy out of reach for disadvantaged people.

For those seeking a safe place to live as part of a resettlement program, there can be even more barriers.

A review of housing issues for refugees and asylum seekers in Australia published by the Refugee Council of Australia in 2013 highlighted additional obstacles, such as a lack of rental history, language barriers and challenges associated with accommodating large families.

Ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing is a Sustainable Development Goal and will be a focus of Habitat III, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development.

Scheduled for October 2016, the conference's key objective is to renew political commitment to sustainable urban development and reducing poverty.

Melanie Chatfield



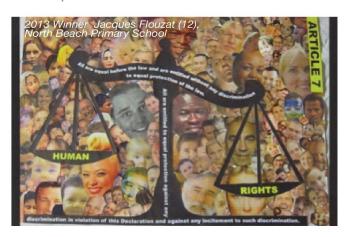
Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.

> Article 31, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

# 2016 YOLANDE FRANK ART AWARD The right to play!

## Students in Years 4 to 6 are invited to use any visual art media to convey the importance of the child's right to play.

UNAAWA has conducted these awards for the past seven years in memory of an outstanding long-time member Yolande Frank, who died in 2009. A survivor of the Holocaust, Yolande Frank had a passion to ensure that children understood about universal human rights.





### WHY BECOME INVOLVED?

- Teaching for human rights contributes to building student self-esteem and confidence the foundation of protective behaviours instruction, which is now mandatory in all WA schools.
- Teaching about human rights is part of the Years 4 to 6 Civics and Citizenship syllabus being
  implemented in WA schools. Teaching about the right to play builds understanding of the role of
  play in learning, the responsibilities entailed by this right and issues faced by children who do not
  enjoy this right.

### **HOW TO ENTER**

- Schools will select their leading entries (maximum of four) for submission by mail, delivery or online through the UNAAWA office, with a declaration by the Principal that it is the Year 4 to 6 student's or student group's own work and has been selected by the school.
- Entries may be completed by individuals or groups of students.
- Entries must be received by the UNAAWA office no later than 5pm Friday 26 August 2016.
- Entries will be judged according to their originality and effectiveness in conveying the importance of a child's right to play. The decision will be final and no correspondence will be entered into.

### **PRIZES**

Individual – Winner \$150 each for the school and the student, Highly Commended \$50 each for the school and the student, Group - \$150 for the school. Certificates will be presented to all prize winners.

Further information is available through the Yolande Frank Art Award section at www.unaa-wa.org.au. To find out more, email gcs@unaa-wa.org.au or phone 9221 7020.

### FIRST REFUGEE OLYMPIC TEAM

Ten refugees will make history in Rio de Janeiro next month as they form the first-ever refugee team to compete in an Olympic Games.

The team, made up of four female and six male athletes from Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, aim to raise awareness of the refugee plight while spreading a message of hope for resolution to the humanitarian crisis felt across the world.

Athletes will be competing in a number of categories, including swimming, athletics and martial arts, and heading the team is accomplished Kenyan runner Tegla Loroupe.

Ms Loroupe holds world records for 20, 25 and 30km races, was the first African woman to win the New York City Marathon, and has won marathons in many other cities in Europe, the United States and Asia.

Though team members have no home, flag or national anthem like other teams, they will be offered a home in the Olympic Village, with their preparation, travel and other expenses covered by Olympic Solidarity.

The International Olympic Committee intends to continue to host a refugee team in future Games.

### 2016 OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Rami Anis (M): Syria, swimming

Yiech Pur Biel (M): South Sudan, athletics, 800m

James Nyang Chiengjiek (M): South Sudan,

athletics, 400m

Yonas Kinde (M): Ethiopia, athletics, marathon

**Anjelina Nada Lohalith (F)**: South Sudan, athletics, 1500m

Rose Nathike Lokonyen (F): South Sudan, athletics, 800m

Paulo Amotun Lokoro (M): South Sudan, athletics, 1500m

**Yolande Bukasa Mabika (F)**: Democratic Republic of the Congo, judo, 70kg

Yusra Mardini (F): Syria, swimming

Popole Misenga (M): Democratic Republic of the

Congo, judo, 90kg

UNAAWA would like to congratulate members of the Refugee Olympic Team and wish them luck in their respective events. For more information on the team and to read each of the athletes' stories please visit the IOC Newsroom.

**Miriam Fisher** 

### **UNAAWA VOLUNTEER INFORMATION EVENING**

**27 JULY** 

Our Discover UNAAWA volunteer information evening was an outstanding success.

Twenty-nine people squeezed into our East Perth office to hear Human Resources Officer Emily Oliveira deliver, with the aid of a visual display, a comprehensive presentation on the UNAA, its role within Western Australian civil society and how our volunteers make a beneficial contribution in educating the community on the work of the United Nations.

A formal Q&A session was followed by light refreshments, and informal talks took place with Ms Oliveira and Executive Committee member Lindsay Dorman.

The evening proved there are a large number of people keen to become engaged with the UNAAWA and not only be a part of our programs, but also to look beyond and create committees that will work within other areas in which the United Nations plays such a vital role.

**Lindsay Dorman** 

### WATER: ITS IMPORTANCE LOCALLY AND ABROAD

**29 JUNE** 

The UNAAWA Environment Committee discusses environmental issues relevant to the Western Australian community in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The committee organises events to inform and educate on the progress and challenges of these goals on a local and international level. Water: Its Importance Locally and Abroad was the first event organised by the committee, with hopefully many more to follow. MADLEN JANNASCHK AND IAN K JONES report.

It was a pleasure to welcome the first speaker, University of Western Australia Professor and Director of the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities Anas Ghadouani. Professor Ghadouani delivered an engaging presentation, encouraging the audience to reflect not only on their use of water but also their way of living.

While technology to solve water problems exists and will be further developed, Professor Ghadouani emphasised that the largest challenges we face have a social background. In developing countries, access to sewage systems and clean water is often connected to social problems like poverty and gender inequality, which can be indirectly addressed with water solutions.

If fresh water was supplied to every household or in close proximity, many girls and young women would have a better chance to escape poverty through education.

Often it is the task of daughters to collect water from sources which can be several kilometers away. To do so, many girls drop out of school and are therefore less prepared for an independent future with their own income.

If fresh water was supplied to every household or in close proximity, many girls and young women would have a better chance to escape poverty through education.

But water challenges are not restricted to developing countries. With growing city populations, developed countries like Australia struggle to maintain a comprehensive water supply to all citizens.

Water increasingly becomes a scarce resource.

Awaiting innovation of new technologies to remediate issues associated with water supply cannot be the solution. We already have technological solutions such as desalination plants, waste water treatment, pipelines, technology and maintenance knowhow.

There is an increased awareness and demand for green living and development of homes that not only tackle selfsufficiency through solar power or even wind turbines, but homes that use recyclable water management technology.

The widespread push for independent, individual water filtering and treatment per household may occur within 30 years, during which time the financial cost of maintenance and upkeep on a civic level may become unsustainable.

While technology can help to source more potable water or save water, a sustainable difference will only be made with a change in behaviour – notably in using less water.

Education can improve water literacy by explaining where fresh water comes from and where it goes. Awareness should also be raised about the water used to manufacture the products we consume, not just what comes out of the tap.

How much water comes from desalinisation and ground water, and what does it take to clean waste water? Should we buy water-intensive fruits and vegetables like tomatoes in winter? How much water is used to dye clothes? Do we really need 5L of water to cook spaghetti? These are just a few examples of the questions Professor Ghadouani raised with the audience, encouraging everyone to reflect on their personal habits and consumption of water and water-embodied products.

# The 1.2-million people who live within this flooding area have developed techniques to adapt to the changing water levels, such as building houses on stilts and using different transport methods during the season.

As every little bit helps, a starting point for saving the scarce resource could perhaps be Martha Stewart's recipe for <a href="One-Pan Pasta">One-Pan Pasta</a>, a dish cooked without wasting any water.

The second speaker was Water Corporation engineer Katrina Bukauskas, who provided insight into water challenges in Cambodia and South-East Asia based on her experiences with Engineers Without Borders.

Cambodia is nestled between Thailand and Laos in the North, and Vietnam in the South. The country has a unique water system based on the Mekong River and the Lake Tonle Sap, located in the heart of the country. The Tonle Sap River connects both the Lake and Mekong.

Each year when the water levels in the Mekong River drop, water floods out of the lake into the river, and when the Tonle Sap River changes its flow direction upon the Mekong rising between July and October, the water flows back into the central lake.

The lake swells to about four times its size, flooding large parts of the country.

The 1.2-million people who live within this flooding area have developed techniques to adapt to the changing water levels, such as building houses on stilts and using different transport methods during the season.

Population growth and climate change are increasing concerns, exposing Cambodia's population to fatal weather events and rising sea levels. This is in addition to a lack of wastewater management and fresh water supply.

During a drought in 2014, 1.5million people in Cambodia were affected and 104 died. Eighteen of the 21 provinces had to rely on additional fresh water being supplied by tank lorries. The Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia found seven of the 21 provinces of Cambodia are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, flooding and risks of cyclones and landslides.

These changes are already having an impact on the country.

During a drought in 2014, 1.5-million people in Cambodia were affected and 104 died.

Eighteen of the 21 provinces had to rely on additional fresh water being supplied by tank lorries.

This year, it is estimated 2.5-million people have been affected by drought.

In addition, Cambodia's water management lacks efficiency and functionality, with 25 per cent of the population without improved water and 50 per cent without improved sanitation.

Besides the technical obstacles to resolving these problems, there are other social and institutional hurdles.

There is a lack of acknowledgement and awareness at governmental, federal and local level, little allocation of human and capital resources, and a reactionary rather than a holistic approach to problems.

The limited amount of data currently available also makes comprehensive planning difficult.

Nevertheless, the Cambodian Government has taken up the challenge to overcome these problems and set the ambitious target of supplying clean water and sufficient sanitation to 100 per cent of the population by 2030 in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Organisations such as Engineers Without Borders will do their best in supporting Cambodia to reach this target.

Madlen Jannaschk and Ian K Jones

### **SWAN RIVER RUN: RUN FOR REFUGEES**

**24 JULY** 



Women's 14km winner Lauren Shelley (left) with fellow runners. Pictures: Damian Scigalski

There was an impressive turnout for the 2016 Swan River Run held in Perth on 24 July. Almost 4000 braved the brisk winter chill to walk, run or wheel their way along the 5km and 14km routes from Langley Park to the beautiful grounds of the University of Western Australia.

The rains stayed away for the duration of the event, and participants were treated to ideal conditions with Kings Park on one side and the mirror-like Swan River reflecting clear skies on the other. DJ stations and live bands dotted along the route provided entertainment, while water station volunteers offered much-appreciated relief and encouragement.

Thirteen Team UNAAWA members laced up their sneakers to run for refugees, joining Women's Committee convenor Katryna Douglas in supporting Team UNHCR. The team's theme for the event was a quote by Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon: "Refugees are people like anyone else, like you and me. They led ordinary lives before becoming displaced, and their dream is to be able to live normally again ... let us recall our common humanity, celebrate tolerance and diversity and open our hearts to refugees everywhere."



Team singlets. Picture: UNAAWA Women's Committee



Ms Douglas was pleased with the turnout. "It was very meaningful to be out in the crowds promoting tolerance and diversity by wearing the Australia for UNHCR singlets and sending the message that together, we can all stand with refugees," she said.

"There is a long way to go, but the more we celebrate and embrace our fellow human beings in positive ways - such as a community run - the brighter the message becomes, lighting the way for tolerance, acceptance, inclusiveness and a peaceful society. Small acts can create big ripples, which lead to real impact and change and we can all play a part. So thanks to everyone for being involved."

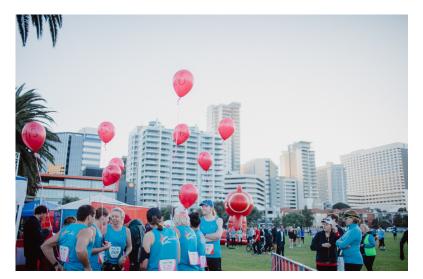
We would like to congratulate first woman across the line Lauren Shelley with a time of 52:54 and first man Nathan Hartigan with 42:08. In the 5km event, Rachel McCormick came in first at 18:40 and Marc See at 15:45. Nige Young won the elite wheelchair category with 21:41, with Justine Dawson not far behind in second place with a time of 26:14.

If you didn't get a chance to join in on the run but still wish to be involved, please sign the #WithRefugees Petition here.

### **Miriam Fisher**







'It was very meaningful to be out in the crowds promoting tolerance and diversity by wearing the Australia for UNHCR singlets and sending the message that together, we can all stand with refugees.'





### **EVENT TO WELCOME REFUGEES**

### **18 JUNE**

On 18 June, in celebration of the United Nations World Refugee Day, UNAAWA's Women's Committee proudly supported the Amnesty Refugee Group WA, Students for Refugees and First Home Project for a Welcome to Perth Dinner.

The United Nations recognises how tolerance and diversity within communities can be achieved when people open their hearts to refugees.

The free event provided family activities and a delicious meal of halal biryani rice and vegetable curry to participants. Its objective was to promote Australia as a welcoming and safe place for people seeking asylum.

To begin with attendees enjoyed time outdoors on the oval at Trinity College in East Perth.

Men, women and children contributed to a collective community canvas, using both their hands and brushes to paint a bright piece of artwork. Children also received delightful face paintings of their choice.

The atmosphere was friendly and welcoming with people from all backgrounds, strangers and friends alike, chatting together and laughing on picnic rugs in the sunshine.

As the sun went down, people made their way back indoors and were greeted by the amazing aromas of food being cooked by generous volunteers.



Welcome to Perth Dinner. Pictures: UNAAWA Women's Committee







Before dinner was served participants gathered to hear event organisers speak about tolerance and cultural diversity.

Sophie Stewart from Students for Refugees discussed opportunities for people new to Australia to access important services, including free swimming lessons that would allow participants to safely enjoy Australia's iconic beach culture.

Claire Birch from Amnesty Refugee Group WA thanked participants for attending the event and discussed the importance of supporting initiatives to promote social harmony.

UNAAWA Women's Committee member Diana Batchelor congratulated the organisers on the event's success and talked about UNAAWA's latest effort to promote refugee rights, a Charity Run for Refugees on 24 July at Langley Park, with all donations going to Australia for UNHCR.

Participants left at the end of the night with new friends, satisfied appetites and a sense of Australia's welcoming spirit.

With a raft of organisations and services supporting their cause, it is hoped the marginalisation of refugees in Australia will soon become an issue of the past.

### Diana Batchelor and Katryna Douglas



### SPECIAL FEATURE: LIFE IN A BHUTANESE REFUGEE CAMP

In 2010 MIRIAM FISHER visited the Sanischare Bhutanese refugee camp in eastern Nepal and wrote the following article, which gives a glimpse into the lives of those awaiting resettlement. At the time of writing a third of the 108,000 refugees living in seven camps in the country had been resettled, and by the start of 2015 fewer than 18,000 remained. More than 5500 have been resettled in Australia.



Saag garden in Sanischare camp. Pictures: Miriam Fisher

Huddled in the dark heat of a makeshift bamboo hut in Sanischare refugee camp in the Jhapa District of eastern

Nepal, 50 Bhutanese refugees fix their frightened eyes on the young Nepalese woman standing in front of them, translating questions and answers with international experts.

As some have expressed reluctant interest to resettle in one of a handful of willing countries, this doesn't always allay the very real fears each one of them has when faced with the prospect of making a permanent shift to a foreign land. In this case - Australia.

"Will I be treated differently?" asks one wide-eyed man quietly.

Although he will not elaborate on the true depth of his personal trauma, like many of the other refugees in the camp, this man was a victim of the 1990 conflict in southern Bhutan in which many horrifically lost their lives. The conflict followed the country's first census two years prior, which induced the expulsion of Nepalese origin Bhutanese citizens – the Lhotshampa people – in a form of ethnic cleansing.

What began as peaceful protests against the country's move resulted in mass rioting, leaving more than 40,000 Lhotshampans homeless and destitute, forced to flee the country they called their home and return to Nepal.



Refugees at their huts.

In 2007 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration and a group of resettlement countries joined forces to commence relocation of the displaced people to eight resettlement countries.

For many of the starting population of about 108,000 refugees scattered throughout seven camps in eastern Nepal, it has been a long wait for stability and the chance at a new life, free from conflict and poor living conditions.

The United States accepts the majority of refugees, with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Denmark, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom taking in the remainder. Sanischare camp's question and answer information sessions are just one step in the process of ensuring smooth resettlement for the refugees.

Having spent the last 18 years in camps, Devi Prasad Acharya has been put forward by UNHCR to resettle in Australia. He has mixed emotions about the prospect of learning to live in an entirely different country with his wife.

Refugees complete their basic schooling in the camps, from pre-primary through to grade 10. While many pursue higher secondary and university-level education in Nepal and India, many wish to make use of higher education opportunities in Australia.

"When the third country resettlement process started I applied for resettlement. I am interested to go to Australia. I don't have much information about it, but what I feel is the country will be much better staying and for work. I don't have any preference of work. Whatever I get in Australia I will work. I have to work whatever job I will get," he says with a sense of pride mixed with fear of failure.

"So I have confusion in my mind because I am going to a new place and a new country, but I am leaving all these things behind for the better future of my children and for the better future of my family."

Mr Acharya's obvious sense of trepidation is understandable and he is not alone. Thousands have failed to lodge declarations of interest in resettlement. Fear of the unknown is a major factor in their hesitation.

In an effort to relieve their fears, the camp has measures in place to ensure potential migrants feel more at ease with the idea.



Once a refugee indicates interest in resettlement, UNHCR conducts a preliminary interview to assess each individual case. Before a country is assigned, many factors must be examined, including whether a refugee has family members in any of the resettlement countries.

Family support is crucial to the success of every relocation. In addition, the medical needs of individual refugees play an important role in the final decision.

Once UNHCR has made a decision to refer a refugee or a refugee family to Australia, it provides the case detail to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi. DIAC officers then interview the refugees in person in the nearby city of Damak.

Information sessions are held and questions encouraged, the most common being, "How long will it take?"

Refugees bound for Australia participate in a fiveday pre-departure Australian Cultural Orientation Program that provides them with an introduction



Q&A session with Australian Ambassador to Nepal Susan Grace and DIAC staff.

to the basics of Australian culture and society. Many refugees are simple farmers for whom the thought of shopping in a supermarket, using an oven, driving a car or even catching a train is beyond comprehension.

The cultural differences between Bhutan and Nepal, and between the two and Australia, are huge. About half the camp's population are Hindu and a third Buddhist. Although equality, irrespective of gender, Hindu caste, or culture, in the camps is encouraged, many traditional customs and beliefs remain firmly entrenched in their psyche.

"I am a married woman," a young woman shyly speaks up following gentle prompting by the camp's Resettlement Officer UNHCR's Michael Wells.

"Can I further my studies in Australia?"

Luckily the woman has aspirations to become a nurse.

Visiting the camp, Australian Ambassador to Nepal Susan Grace offers some advice.



**Elderly Recreation Centre.** 

"There is a shortage of nurses in Australia so if you study hard you are guaranteed a job. Nursing is a very respected profession in Australia and the salary is good," she says.

"Some men also become nurses in Australia. Not just women."

The group chuckle among themselves as camp staff translates Ambassador Grace's statement to Nepali.

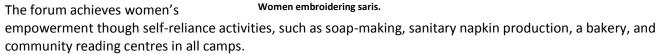
"Australia is an equal country and I would encourage women especially to learn English, to work hard and be active members of society. And I think that's the most important thing you should take away from these sessions - the need to learn English. Thankfully you have the facilities here at the camp to do so," Ms Grace stresses.

Sadly, gender-based violence is still an issue in greater Nepal and even the camps themselves, so the need for women's empowerment is particularly strong.

Within the camp, the Bhutanese Refugee Women's Forum is a non-profit organisation run by volunteers.

Established in 1995, the forum helps build women's skill sets, and also provides literacy programs in an effort to encourage social and economic equality among groups in the camp.

Adopting these skills and this mentality will later prove vital in each woman's ability to adapt and become active members of society on resettlement.



The forum provides vocational training in areas including care giving, driving, hairdressing and basic carpentry, and promotes social awareness through educational programs on issues such as girl trafficking, domestic abuse and HIV/AIDS awareness. It also provides a micro-loan program for families that do not receive adequate support to fulfil their needs.

The standard of living is high among refugees and the camp is considered one of the best in the world. Nestled within a jungle of lush green banana trees thrives the labyrinthine community. Each family lives in a minimal yet adequate bamboo hut, complete with solar cookers and other amenities.

The World Food Program provides basic food rations for each registered member to ensure daily dietary requirements are met. It also provides the means through which each household can grow fruit and vegetables for their own consumption, and to barter with or sell. It is the post-monsoon season and each hut boasts its own vibrant saag (leafy green) garden, a staple in south Asian cuisine.

Like the Nepalese, the standard Bhutanese diet consists of two daily servings of dal bhat – a simple yet delicious meal of rice, lentil soup and curried vegetables.



Women weaving sanitary napkins.







Devi Prasad Acharya.

Small shops and businesses, weaving rooms and special interest centres, such as the Elderly Recreation Centre, dot the complex. English language classes are run within the compound and each camp provides a simple clinic with a doctor to ensure the medical needs of the community are met.

The clinic runs malnutrition programs, health education, a counselling service for those with sexually transmitted diseases, and also distributes free condoms.

But while facilities are well above par in the camp, as a longterm solution the situation is less than ideal for those wishing to settle down with their families and achieve selfsufficiency.

"Life in the camp ... it's quite problematic. I have to rely on grants provided by different agencies," says Mr Acharya.

"I have completed the interview but it is not fixed yet when I will be departing. I am hoping it will come soon."

Once refugees arrive in Australia the Government provides intensive resettlement assistance for the first six months. This assistance helps them find long-term accommodation, and gain access to mainstream services such as healthcare, income assistance until they find employment, as well as free public education for school-aged children.

Short-term torture and trauma counselling is given if required, as well as an allowance to learn English.

Through the Australian Government's efforts, refugees are encouraged to become part of the local community with an ultimate view to gaining citizenship in Australia.

But while interaction with Australian people is encouraged, as is their retention of Bhutanese culture and tradition, and garnering support from longer-term migrants within the local Bhutanese community.

"There are many community welfare centres in Australia which allow other members to talk and exchange ideas. What we found in Australia is that the Bhutanese community is strong. They help each other," visiting DIAC Second Secretary (Immigration) Kerry McKinnon says.

To date, more than 2000 refugees have been resettled in Australia. The remainder are either in the process or remain undecided about leaving their bamboo homes and tight-knit community in the steamy Terai region of Nepal.

Although it is a difficult prospect to imagine life in another country, once the initial shock of resettlement has worn off refugees generally find themselves happy with their move and send messages back to family and friends of the new lives they have made for themselves.

Back in the dark heat of the makeshift bamboo hut in Nepal's Sanischare refugee camp the question and answer session continues.

Fears are gradually allayed and the group becomes more jovial, their big smiles gleaming in the darkness of the information centre.

"I have heard so many things about Australia and its facilities and I am happy about that," a young father stands up and speaks to his fellow Lhotshampans.

"I am happy for my children."

**Miriam Fisher** 

### PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP GIVES REFUGEES A CHANCE

Millions of people forced to flee from persecution, war or severe human rights abuses continue to be displaced, separated from families and unable to return home.

While governments have an undeniable responsibility to protect and support refugees, private citizens and organisations are increasingly putting their hands up to help.

Appeals to increase settlement quotas and adopt private sponsorship programs have risen, particularly in Europe and the United Kingdom, in response to the Syrian crisis.

Sponsorship programs exist in a few countries, with Canada leading the way since the establishment of its Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in 1978.

More recently, in 2013 the Canadian Government commenced a three-way partnership that matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency with private sponsors in Canada.

As part of this program, the Canadian Government provides up to six months of income support and health care, while private sponsors provide an additional six months of financial help and up to a year of social and emotional support.

Studies show privately-sponsored refugees may be more likely to succeed and tend to integrate faster as a result of the additional opportunities to build social capital inherent in private sponsorship programs.

The Australian Government launched a community sponsorship pilot initiative in 2012.

At the time, the scheme drew criticism for its large upfront visa application fees, lack of incentives to assist refugees towards self-sufficiency and the fact those brought to Australia under the program counted towards the existing refugee quota.

In 2015, the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection sought feedback on a renewed model to "harness the willingness and capacity of families and communities in Australia to make a heavier social and financial investment in the end-to-end resettlement process".

Private sponsorship potentially provides the Government with a lower-cost option and empowers citizens to be part of a solution.

A recent report published by the Migration Policy Institute Europe highlights the need for programs to operate in parallel to government-led resettlement efforts and ideally expand the number of refugee places available.

Given the sheer numbers of people disadvantaged by situations beyond their control, significant scope remains to improve our response to the global humanitarian and resettlement needs of vulnerable people both in Australia and abroad.

For further information, please visit www.immi.gov.au www.migrationpolicy.org.

**Melanie Chatfield** 

Studies show privately-sponsored refugees may be more likely to succeed and tend to integrate faster as a result of the additional opportunities to build social capital inherent in private sponsorship programs.

## TOWN OF VICTORIA PARK REFUGEE WELCOME ZONE: INTERVIEW WITH DEPUTY MAYOR BRIAN OLIVER

With its thriving restaurant and cafe strip and multicultural community, Victoria Park is a vibrant melting pot of cultures and cuisines that has long embraced diversity.

In October 2014, the Town of Victoria Park signed the Refugee Welcome Zone Declaration, sealing its commitment to continuing the Town's legacy of inclusion.

More than 2000 people attended the milestone event, which was marked by the release of two white doves and a walk of solidarity around John MacMillan Park.

The nationwide Refugee Welcome Zone initiative began in June 2002 as part of Refugee Week.

Driven by a sense of compassion and respect for humanitarian arrivals, it represents the embracement of religious and cultural diversity with an aim to build social cohesion within the community.

Victoria Park Councillor Brian Oliver first submitted a Notice of Motion for the Town to become a welcome zone in September 2014.



Victoria Park Refugee Welcome Zone. Pictures: Town of Victoria Park

"I believe declaring the Town of Victoria Park a Refugee Welcome Zone is one vehicle to promote and celebrate harmony, cohesion and respect for humanity in our Town," he said.

"Such a declaration can help those who believe in a community of welcome and inclusion to further understand and raise awareness about the issues affecting refugees, while fostering a culture of mutual respect and promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity."

'I believe declaring the Town of Victoria Park a Refugee Welcome Zone is one vehicle to promote and celebrate harmony, cohesion and respect for humanity in our Town.'



Now Deputy Mayor, Cr Oliver believes the Town can play a "pivotal role" in effecting change in policy as well as public perception.

"By having the Town of Victoria Park declared a Refugee Welcome Zone, I hope it can be a catalyst for conversation to our newest residents that Victoria Park is a welcoming community," he said.

Since the Town registered as a welcome zone, 55 other councils across Australia have joined the initiative.

There are currently 143 welcome zones, including eight in Western Australia.

For more information, please visit the <u>Refugee Council</u>.

Miriam Fisher

### GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS ADDRESSED AT WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

### **23-24 MAY (TURKEY)**

Humanity at the heart of global decision-making was the theme of the inaugural World Humanitarian Summit recently held in Istanbul, Turkey on 23-24 May. For the first time in United Nations' history, 9000 participants from 173 Member States, including 55 Heads of States, gathered to address the alarming reality human suffering is currently at its highest level since World War II.

Compared to almost a decade ago, there has been a 47 per cent increase in political conflicts and a 62 per cent surge in the number of conflict-displaced people around the world. Recognising the need to take action, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, along with participants of the Summit, has called for a "new and coherent approach" to confront the world's conflicts, stressing that humanitarian assistance alone is no longer enough.

By the close of the Summit, five key goals were identified: prevent and end conflict, respect the rules of war, leave no one behind, work differently to end need and invest in humanity. Of particular interest were the initiatives to "leave no one behind", referring to the refugee crisis.

# Of particular interest were the initiatives to 'leave no one behind', referring to the refugee crisis.

Internally displaced people, many of whom end up as refugees then asylum seekers, have now reached 60 million worldwide. One of the initiatives to address large movements of refugees was to create livelihood and education opportunities for displaced people with the help of predictable, multi-year funding.

The need for an international legal framework to protect displaced individuals as a result of natural disasters was also cited as a key action item, as well as improved programs to empower women and girls to stand up for their rights in times of crisis.

The Summit also resolved to tackle the issue of education, launching the Education Cannot Wait: A Fund for Education in Emergencies pledge to provide children in crises quality education by 2030. The goal of reducing internally displaced people by 50 per cent by 2030 was also set.

It is hoped participants of the Summit will remain committed to these goals and initiatives to reduce suffering for

people around the world. "The Summit has been a wake-up call for action for humanity. It has generated global momentum and political will to move forward on the agenda for Humanity," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said.

"Now is the time to act. We must honour our commitments and champion them, pursuing this agenda collectively and with resolve and urgency over the coming months and years."

An update on the status of refugees will be provided at the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees on 19 September, 2016.

Alissa Warne



### **UNAA NATIONAL FORUM**

### 5-6 SEPTEMBER

The National Forum on the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls will be held on 5-6 September 2016 at Novotel, Collins St, Melbourne.

This 1.5 day forum will include expert keynote speakers and a range of thematic discussions in which delegates will be encouraged to share their professional and personal insights to workshop a multi-sectoral action plan to advance economic empowerment of women and girls.

### Panel Topics:

- 1. Women's economic empowerment in contexts of family violence
- 2. Ending workplace discrimination and closing the pay gap
- 3. Economic insecurity: strategies to address the impacts on children
- 4. Economic empowerment of culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls
- 5. Superannuation and the economic empowerment of older women.

Registration fees are \$235 or \$175 Concession/UNAA Member. Click <a href="here">here</a> for more information.

### **UNAA MEDIA PEACE AWARDS 2016**

### 24 OCTOBER

Entries for the UNAA Peace Awards are now open!

The Awards recognise the role of the media in promoting social justice and humanitarian issues as well as generating awareness within communities leading to public debate and policy change.

Journalists, editors and producers whose work promotes humanitarian and social justice issues are encouraged to enter. Entries are open until Friday, 2 September.

For more information including category criteria, entry guides and forms, please visit the <a href="UNAA Victoria website">UNAA Victoria website</a>, ring 03 9620 3955 or email awards@unaavictoria.org.au.



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### UN OBSERVANCES

### **AUG / SEPT 2016**

### 9 August

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

### 12 August

International Youth Day

### 19 August

World Humanitarian Day

### 23 August

International Day for Remembrance of Slave Trade and Its Abolition

### 29 August

International Day against Nuclear Tests

### 30 August

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

### **5 September**

International Day of Charity

### 8 September

International Literacy Day

### 12 September

**UN Day for South-South Cooperation** 

### 15 September

International Day of Democracy

### 16 September

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer

### 21 September

International Day of Peace

### 26 September

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

### 27 September

World Tourism Day

### 28 September

World Rabies Day

### 29 September

World Maritime Day

