Image: Bi-cultural health and Health in My Language team, Australian Red Cross, Tasmania

Australian Red Cross Public Submission to the Department of Home Affairs on the Multicultural Framework Review

September 2023

About us

Established in 1914 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1941, Australian Red Cross is auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field. We have a unique humanitarian mandate to respond to disasters, emergencies and those most in need. This means governments can benefit from a trusted, credible, independent and non-political partner with local-to-global networks, who will work to implement humanitarian goals in a way that maintains the trust of governments and Australian society as a whole.

Australian Red Cross is one of 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies that, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), make up the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (The Movement) - the world's largest and most experienced humanitarian network, harnessing the energy of 16 million volunteers working and living on local communities.

The Movement is guided at all times and in all places by seven Fundamental Principles: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality. These principles sum up our ethics and approaches and are at the core of our mission to prevent and alleviate suffering.

We remain neutral, and don't take sides, including in politics or conflict, enabling us to maintain the trust of all and to provide assistance in locations others are unable to go. Volunteering is in our DNA, and everything we do is supported by thousands of volunteers, helping respond to humanitarian needs and issues in their own communities. All our work is inspired by the principle of Humanity, seeking always to act where there is humanitarian need.

Here in Australia, our core areas of expertise include Emergency Services, Migration, International Humanitarian Law, International Programs and Community Programs.

Overview for 2022:

20,000+
members and volunteers and staff acting for humanity

131,000+
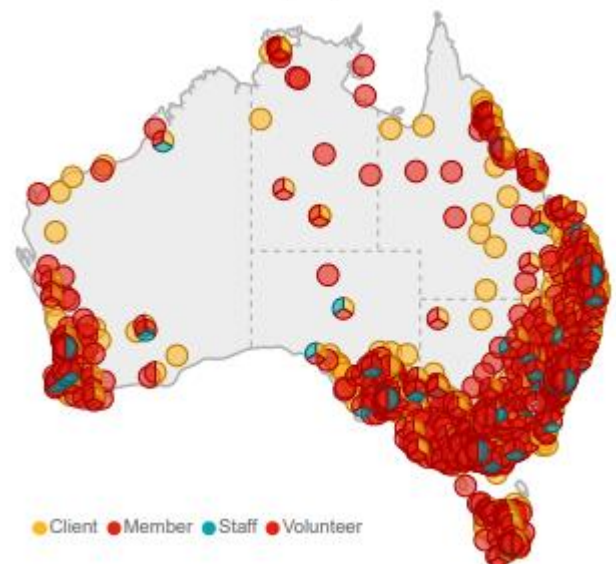Australians supported during 42 emergency activations

225,000+
hours of social support/connection provided to community members

37,500+
migrants supported to meet their urgent needs, through emergency relief payments

Location of Red Cross people and clients

Client Member Staff Volunteer

Executive summary

"People arrive on certain types of visas, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Just because we arrived on a different [non-humanitarian] visa doesn't mean there wasn't trauma. It would've meant so much if there was anything – 'welcome to Australia', at least some information to find out how the community works, how do I get involved in anything (e.g. volunteering). You eventually learn this on your own in time. It felt like it was just us, people couldn't understand my accent. I felt like there was a wall around us. There wasn't a community centre. There was no support for my brother or for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. My family were all in different stages of life, different circumstances. We were all trying to connect to this new place, without support networks, without any information."- Elizabeth, former international student[1]

Australian Red Cross evidence indicates that to create an inclusive, socially cohesive society, all people, including people with lived experience of migration, must be included in the processes of addressing, reducing and eliminating structural and systemic barriers to inclusion. Eliminating barriers to inclusion protects people from harm and contributes to individual and community strength and resilience, participation and social cohesion.

Building understanding of shared values, actively preventing or addressing discrimination and racism, enhancing social participation, and supporting people to understand and welcome new migrants are important pillars in the work of Australian Red Cross.

Drivers of exclusion such as racism, discrimination, and isolation can undermine multiculturalism and create barriers that prevent migrants from participating fully in society. The impact of exclusion is often compounded in disasters, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the 2022 floods, where many migrants are excluded from, for example, government safety nets or emergency assistance.

This submission draws on operational experience supporting migrants in transition[2] with particular emphasis on migrants with a temporary or no visa. To support the development of a Multicultural Framework, Australian Red Cross proposes five guiding principles. These principles are informed by the seven Fundamental Principles of the Movement, particularly the principles of Humanity, Impartiality and Neutrality.

Guiding principles

1. **Inclusion is both a process and an outcome:** Inclusion is about the way in which we work with and engage people, as much as it is about the outcome that people are included. Together the process and outcome underpin and contribute to a well-functioning multicultural society. Inclusion requires meaningfully involving and engaging excluded people in every element of society, and recognising, respecting and reflecting excluded people's lived experience in processes and programs. It focuses on facilitating access to opportunities for all by addressing, reducing and ending racism, discrimination, disconnection and exclusion.

2. **Migrants in transition are a part of multicultural Australia:** A socially cohesive multicultural Australia is inclusive of all people in Australia, regardless of visa status.

3. **People with lived experience of migration have unique insights and expertise:** A person with lived experience of migration has firsthand experience of the structures, services, systems and policies that affect them. A person with lived experience also has insights into and ideas about how structures, systems and services may be more accessible and effective; how they may foster inclusion and economic and social participation. When people with lived experience are centred in the programs and policies that impact on them, they have agency to advocate

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[1] Australian Red Cross (2023), Trust in humanitarian action: Migrants' perspectives, p.19
https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/publications/trust-in-humanitarian-action.pdf
[2] In particular, Australian Red Cross refers to migrants and refugees with specific vulnerabilities, whose survival, dignity, physical or mental health is under threat including those who due to their visa status, cannot access mainstream supports and services to enable them to participate in the broader community.

for themselves, to contribute to and connect with the larger communities in which they live and receive affirmation that their expertise has been listened to, understood and valued. Through ongoing evaluation, feedback and co-design, people can actively participate and determine their own support needs.

4. **Inclusive societies respond to the needs of people experiencing vulnerability:** Culturally safe, systemic support in times of crisis and disaster mitigates risks to health and safety of migrants experiencing vulnerability.

5. **Culturally valued methods of communication have the greatest impact:** Culturally valued and linguistically diverse methods of co-design, collaboration and communication demonstrate respect for and inclusion of migrants.

In this submission, Australian Red Cross observes that inclusion is both a process and an outcome, in which all parts of Australian society have a role. Australian Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review panel's deliberations on a framework that reflects policies, approaches and connections in support of a society in which all its members recognise and respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of its people, in their common humanity.

Recommendations:

Australian Red Cross recommends that a Multicultural Framework:

1. uses language that guides all stakeholders to:

   a. recognise, respect, and therefore involve people with lived experience in processes to address, reduce and end exclusion from economic, social and cultural life.
   b. include all people in Australia regardless of visa status.

2. guides governments and non-government organisations to invest in community initiatives to:

   a. build individual migrant and community capacity, to guide culturally valued communication and collaboration and co-design to identify and address needs.
   b. build welcoming and inclusive communities that support migrants to share and foster awareness in the broader community of migrants' experiences.

3. promotes culturally safe, systemic support in times of crisis, for and with people experiencing vulnerability, including people on temporary visas or without a visa by:

   a. acknowledging that systemic, structural barriers to inclusion may put at risk health and safety of migrants experiencing vulnerability.
   b. recognising disasters are likely to exacerbate exclusion and heighten risks.
   c. guiding collaboration by governments and civil society to create strategic coordinated solutions to exclusion.

4. guides governments and non-government organisations to:

   a. learn more about the communities they serve, including migrants regardless of visa status, and how their experiences, including separation from family, influence their ability, confidence and readiness to participate more fully in their communities.
   b. invest in building social and human resilience at the local level – equal to investment in infrastructure - and embed inclusive approaches to designing disaster readiness, response, and recovery systems, supported by effective communication strategies.

5. requires governments to develop cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional data sets, to measure, monitor and evaluate methods designed to foster inclusion and social cohesion and to uphold government and civil society accountability, including to migrants in transition.

1. Introduction

For over 100 years, Australian Red Cross has worked with diverse communities across Australia - and the world – to support people at all stages of migration, including those with temporary or no visas. The work of Australian Red Cross ensures that migrants who, regardless of how they arrived in Australia and irrespective of the visa they hold, have their humanitarian needs met, are protected from harm, and are supported to participate in a safe, fair, welcoming and inclusive society.

In 2020, the Australian Government and Australian Red Cross jointly pledged to build and strengthen welcoming communities. This pledge includes a commitment to *"work together to promote a socially cohesive Australia, by celebrating our shared values, the country's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, as well as the economic and social contributions of migrants, through ensuring we represent that diversity, and that we profile the voices of lived experience"*.[3]

Australian Red Cross welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Multicultural Framework Review (the Review). The discussion and case studies below draw from a strong track record and a humanitarian vision of a fully functioning multicultural Australia. Should the panel consider it valuable, Australian Red Cross is amenable to convening additional consultations with people with lived experience.

2. Discussion

2.1. Promote multiculturalism, social cohesion and inclusion

Everyone contributes to an inclusive multicultural society when they recognise, respect and meaningfully involve people with lived experience. There are many ways to promote multiculturalism, social cohesion and inclusion. Australian Red Cross highlights three ways below.

Connecting people in community through peer networks

Many migrants tell us they feel excluded from the economic, social and cultural life of Australia. In Trust in humanitarian action: migrants' perspectives (the Trust Report),[4] Australian Red Cross observed that migrants, irrespective of their reason for migration, can experience isolation.

> *"When we arrived in [regional town], we were very lonely and there was no friends and social activities. My visa status was a barrier for me as I missed out on some opportunities and supports."* – Ditya, former international student[5]

Connected Women is an example of an Australian Red Cross program that tackles isolation and contributes to building welcoming communities. It supports migrant women to connect with each other and the broader community, learn new skills and to thrive (see Case Study 1).

Creating awareness of the lived experience of migrants in community and schools

Investment in programs that support migrants to share and foster awareness in the broader community of their experiences is likely to result in migrants feeling included and able to build on their strengths. *In Search of Safety* is an Australian Red Cross program that supports refugees and people seeking asylum to share their experiences and foster awareness in the broader community, including in schools (see Case Study 2).

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[3] 19 March 2020, Pledge by Australia and Australian Red Cross, Building and Strengthening Welcoming Communities – Statutory Meetings (https:// rcrcconference.org/pledge/building-and-strengthening-welcomingcommunities/)
[4] Australian Red Cross, (2023). Trust in humanitarian action: Migrants' perspectives.
https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/publications/trust-in-humanitarian-action.pdf
[5] Ibid, p.15

Recognising the importance of restoring family links

Among the experiences migrants may share with other participants in these initiatives is the pain of separation from family. Australian Red Cross is aware of how family serves as a vital protective factor for migrants. The report, The <u>Effects of Family Separation on Forcibly Displaced People in Australia</u>[6] discusses the profound effect that forcible separation from family has on migrants' wellbeing, functioning and ability to settle into new lives and the impact on their wellbeing when families are reconnected, which Australian Red Cross supports via the Restoring Family Links program[7] (see Case Study 3). It is noteworthy that the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience also reflects that "*resilient communities …share the importance of social support systems, such as neighbourhoods, family and kinship networks, social cohesion, mutual interest groups, and mutual self-help groups.*"[8]

2.2. Design services to support multicultural Australia

Collaboration and co-design with migrants, inclusive of migrants in transition, will increase accessibility of programs and services and are more likely to lead governments and non-government organisations to create strategic, coordinated solutions to exclusion.

Whether in the delivery of humanitarian assistance or responding to crises, emergencies or disasters overseas or in Australia, Australian Red Cross experience shows that optimal, sustainable results are achieved when people experiencing vulnerability are empowered to lead their own recovery; when governments and non-government organisations use strength-based, localised, place-based approaches. Australian Red Cross adopts inclusive and accessible approaches to co-design of Australian Red Cross programs and services (see Case Study 4).

Further, services designed to support multicultural Australia are most likely to be effective when governments and non-government organisations invest in building individual migrant and community capacity to participate in:

> i) collaborative processes to identify needs; and

> ii) co-design of initiatives and services to meet those needs.

The *Australian Red Cross Work Right Hub* is the most recent example of co-design in which all stakeholders collaborated to produce an accessible, vital service, aimed at protecting migrants from harm and exclusion (see Case Study 5).

The *Health in My Language* and *Bi-cultural Health* programs are models of strength-based, place-based, programs that rely on the cultural and linguistic skills and experiences of educators from migrant and refugee backgrounds who understand the health care challenges that their communities face (see Case Study 6).

Australian Red Cross also has developed and adopted a *Lived Experience Framework,* which guides Australian Red Cross people to ensure that clients, staff and volunteers with first-hand or

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[6] Liddell B, Batch N, Bulnes-Diez M, Hellyer S, Kamte A, Wong J, Byrow Y, Nickerson A. 2020. The Effects of Family Separation on Forcibly Displaced People in Australia. Findings from a Pilot Research Project. Australian Red Cross, Carlton, Vic. https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/stories/unsw-red-cross-family-separation-report.pdf

[7] Australian Red Cross **Restoring Family Links**, a centralised, nationwide program works with the global Movement to trace family members, re-establish and maintain contact, reunite families and seek to clarify the fate and whereabouts of those who remain missing. Field officers and volunteers manage individual cases, staff the hotline where new enquiries are received, and conduct community outreach to raise awareness of the program and develop networks crucial to the work of searching for the missing and supporting families.

[8] Department of Home Affairs, National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, 2011, p.4

"lived" experience have a strong voice in how Australian Red Cross develops and delivers humanitarian assistance and conducts its advocacy (see Case Study 7).

2.3. Eliminate systemic barriers to inclusion that put migrants' safety, security and dignity at risk

In <u>COVID-19 impacts us all,</u>[9] Australian Red Cross outlined a suite of responses to meet the humanitarian needs of people who, because of their visa status, are ineligible for mainstream income and social supports such as Centrelink and Medicare.[10] The responses, co-designed with people with lived experience and provided by Australian Red Cross, comprise a safety net of emergency financial relief, assistance to secure employment, referral to legal, health and accommodation services, and casework support for people with complex needs, including families experiencing domestic violence.

The primary objective of the Australian Red Cross *Safety Net* program is to mitigate systemic exclusion from mainstream support and to ensure people experiencing vulnerability do not 'fall through the gaps'. In doing so, particularly, but not only in times of disaster, a safety net helps to reduce isolation, improve social inclusion, and increase community participation.

The current Safety Net program, which comprises cash-based assistance with links to employment support, resulted from consultation and co-design with participants in the program. Participants told us the program would give them greater dignity were it to provide practical support such as cash rather than vouchers or transport tickets, respecting their agency and decisions about how to meet their needs; and help them to be ready for and to find work to gain financial independence. Recipients of cash assistance spend the money in the communities where they live and thus support local economies. Provision of cash assistance is considered international best practice.[11]

The absence of a government-supported safety net compounds other barriers to inclusion and participation, such as visa conditions which limit work rights or a fear of authorities. Migrants who appear or sound different experience discrimination and consistently face significant challenges to being respected and accepted in Australian labour market, education and housing systems.[12]

Ongoing barriers to inclusion suggest that direct and structural racism and discrimination remain a significant part of the Australian economy and government systems. Additional systemic barriers become more obvious in times of emergency or disaster. The case study of Isabela[13] demonstrates the value of a safety net – a culturally safe, systemic support for people experiencing vulnerability, including people on temporary visas or without a visa (see Case Study 8).

2.4. Reduce and eliminate barriers to inclusion - it is everybody's responsibility

To reduce and eliminate barriers to inclusion, it is vital that government and non-government organisations know and capture data on who faces barriers, who is overcoming them, and how, and that they, with community, co-measure, co-monitor and co-evaluate the impact of efforts to eliminate any barriers.

To build that knowledge it is important that service providers, program managers and program staff meet, establish trust with, and listen to formal and informal community leaders and their communities; to learn about and map programs, services and networks migrants use and choose

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[9] Australian Red Cross, (2021). COVID-Impacts us all, p.8 <u>https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/publications/australian-red-cross-covid-19-tempvisa-report-web.pdf</u>
[10] This includes people in Australia on a temporary visa or without a visa, or a permanent visa subject to the Newly Arrived Waiting Period.
[11] See <u>5 ways that cash assistance has transformed humanitarian response to refugees in Turkey | IFRC</u>
[12] See Parkinson m., Howe J. and Azarias J., 2023, Review of the Migration System, Department of Home Affairs, Attachment B, p. 185; Maalsen S., Wolfson P., Rogers D., Nelson J. and Buckle C., 2021, Understanding discrimination effects in private rental housing, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Ltd, pp40-41; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2022, National Anti-racism Framework Scoping Report, p.63-66
[13] Their name has been changed to protect their identity.

to participate in; and to understand how migrants envisage participating in the economic, social and cultural life of their communities.

Investing in reducing risks to safety in times of disaster

The Australian Red Cross report, Emergency Resilience in CALD communities[14] notes how a lack of awareness on the part of service providers about who is in their catchment area, as well as English-language proficiency and cultural differences can present significant obstacles to appropriate responses during emergencies. Australian Red Cross experience is that culturally safe, systemic support in times of crisis and disaster mitigates risks to health and safety of migrants experiencing vulnerability.

> *"I remember when the flood arrived, it was nighttime and I was sleeping, but I heard the neighbours around my place, but me I stayed in the house, I was scared, the neighbours were running around and knocking on the doors to see if people were safe, but we were trying to hide because I did not know what was going on outside. With our family we tried to hide at nighttime, I was not courageous enough to open my door and ask my neighbours for help even though they were knocking and running around. The wider community felt more confident, but the next morning I approached them and participated with the community to help others. There is a cultural difference. I felt people who do not speak English tend to be more isolated. (…) The wider community, although they have good hearts to help everyone, there is not enough time to explain [the emergency situation] and appropriate measures]. [There is no] time to approach someone who is slow [to understand because of limited English proficiency]. I'm not condemning the wider community because they are doing what they can, but I think there is miscommunication from both sides."[15]*

This person's experience is an example of systems, programs and services that are yet to acknowledge, draw on and respond to Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity.

To overcome barriers to inclusion such as those reflected in the quote above, Australian Red Cross collaborates with community and local and state government agencies to build knowledge on the part of migrants, about disaster preparedness, response and recovery, and knowledge on the part of agencies, about the communities they serve. See Case Study 9, which describes such an initiative in Perth.

Investing in community resilience, inclusive of cultural and linguistic diversity

Research also shows the economic costs of the impacts of disaster on health, wellbeing, employment, education, and safety are equivalent to the costs of restoring physical assets.[16] It logically follows that investing in reducing the psycho-social impacts of disaster would be more efficient than exclusively investing in hard measures such as infrastructure. Investing in reducing this type of harm also is likely to reduce both the potential for misalignment of policy settings and service delivery by the three layers of government and exacerbating vulnerability.

Both governments and non-government organisations have a responsibility to invest in people- and community-centred approaches to preparedness for, responses to and recovery from disasters. Together they can acknowledge community members' inherent strengths and their existing capacities to maximise opportunities to build individual and community resilience, inclusive of diverse language and cultural groups.

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[14] Australian Red Cross (2021), Emergency Resilience in CALD Communities, A Chandonnet, p.103.
https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/arc-cald-resilience.pdf
[15] Ibid, p.103
[16] Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience and Safer Communities, 2021, Special report: Update to the economic costs of natural disasters in Australia

2.5. Communicate with community members from migrant backgrounds using various and diverse methods

Australian Red Cross and the Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab[17] research confirms and provides lessons for governments and service providers alike, that communication with community members from migrant backgrounds must use a variety of media – digital, face-to-face or telephone support, and written, and should include migrants in the design and delivery of digital-based services to help tackle digital exclusion.[18]

The Global Migration Lab report, Locked Down and Left Out[19] highlighted a range of barriers to migrants seeking assistance (e.g. to be tested for COVID or to receive a vaccine). Many of these barriers stemmed from less-than-optimal communication by governments with communities and with frontline responders. In Australia, despite policies ensuring free COVID-19 testing and related treatment, 30% of migrants were afraid to be tested or to seek treatment due to their visa status - including fear that accessing support would affect their current or future visa or would lead to being reported to authorities.[20] Some migrants report being erroneously turned away from testing or treatment or told they were ineligible.

The Australian Red Cross Community Connector Advisor in Queensland is an example of how Australian Red Cross strategically used culturally appropriate and community-valued communication methods to reach and engage migrants, particularly migrants in transition, in protecting their own health and that of other people living in Queensland (see Case Study 10).

As in the other examples provided in this submission, Australian Red Cross put migrants at the centre of our processes and communicated *with* migrants – including those experiencing vulnerability – and stakeholders, relying on listening, storytelling, testing ideas and building concepts and connection together.

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[17] See https://www.redcross.org.au/globalmigrationlab/
[18] Arias Cubas M., Hoagland N., Mudaliar S. (2022), Migrants' perspectives: Building trust in humanitarian action, Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab, p.21. https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/global-migration-lab/gml-migpers_buildtrust_english.pdf
[19] Hoagland N., Randrianarisoa A., (2021), Locked down and left out, Red Cross Red Crescent Global Migration Lab, Australia, p.19; 2000 temporary visa holders surveyed. https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/migration-services/en-rcrc-global-migration-lab-locked-down-left-out-covid19.pdf
[20] Ibid, p.20.

3. Case studies

Case Study 1: Connected Women – Building welcoming communities through strength-based, localised, place-based practices

Connected Women supports migrant women to make connections, learn new skills, and thrive. It aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of socially isolated migrant women by building confidence and skills through social connection, and increased social, economic and civic participation.

Connected Women brings women together, including from First Nations and other communities, to create friendships and to promote cross-cultural understanding and mutual respect. Ultimately, this program serves to strengthen social bonds and create a more cohesive and inclusive community for all.

Migrant women experiencing vulnerabilities are supported to build their capacity in the governance of Connected Women so they can facilitate a safe space to connect with each other. Connected Women participants have increased knowledge and capabilities to address challenges around employment and set up their own businesses. Women are empowered to be independent and create opportunities for themselves with increased confidence, expanding and enhancing their cultural and social networks, and relationships.

> Elorita's story
>
> Elorita, who grew up in Nigeria, knew no one when she moved to Katherine in the Northern Territory with her partner and two young children. In a small, remote town with no public transport or childcare, Elorita, who didn't have a driver's licence, struggled to get around, let alone find a job.
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> Then she discovered Connected Women. "*It's changed my life drastically ... They made me feel so welcome. I felt part of a community … I have learnt the true meaning of diversity and being selfless … I have gained good friends who I call my family.*
>
> "*I was able to secure a job as a project administrator and got my driver's licence. Connected Women helped me, encouraging me, 'You can do it.'*"
>
> Elorita also discovered talents she didn't know she had when she volunteered to help with the Connected Women food truck, a fundraising social venture. "*I got the opportunity to showcase my Nigerian delicacies. I never knew I got the skills to cook for the public. Now I'm getting orders from people, 'Can you make me puff puff?', 'Can you make me chin chin?" It's amazing.*"
>
> Elorita says whenever she goes to a Connected Women event, "*the energy is way out of this world".*
>
> "*The people are so welcoming, the smiles. There's just positivity in the air. Whenever I am stressed with the children, work, with everything, but when I'm with these ladies, I feel free, so happy. I feel the love; it's so intense in the air.*"

Case Study 2: In Search of Safety (ISOS) – Building welcoming communities through fostering understanding

In Search of Safety is an Australian Red Cross social inclusion initiative, through which we work with communities to build an environment where all people feel like they belong. In Search of Safety is a free, interactive incursion for primary and secondary students.

Volunteers and people with lived experience of forced displacement deliver interactive knowledge-based workshops exploring forced migration. Students are challenged to examine common misunderstandings about the movement of people in the world. ISOS aims to develop participants' knowledge of and appreciation for language, ethnic and religious diversity, and to use critical thinking skills to discuss migration-related matters in an informed and evidence-based manner. It aims to develop understanding, empathy, and heightened humanitarianism.

Speakers with lived experience of forced displacement receive training to develop presentation skills and are remunerated as experts.

> "*The interactive presentation was very insightful and informative. Both staff and students were truly impressed with the delivery. This program highlights the importance of gaining a deep understanding of migration, promotes inclusivity of all and allows students to become more sensitive to others. The Red Cross incursion should be a compulsory experience for all Year 6 students, as the messages conveyed are significant and powerful. I would definitely recommend this program to other schools and look forward to scheduling bookings in coming years.*" WA participant.

In 2022-23, in a program that reached over 10,000 students, teachers and other community members in three states, feedback from participants showed, on average, a 38% increase in knowledge of migrant experiences. Participants indicated they had increased empathy for motivations and humanity of people made vulnerable by migration.

> *"Asylum seekers are just like normal people but have issues in their country. They need a better life so we should help them. They are people as well and they should have the same rights as us."* - Primary School Student.

Case Study 3: How forcible separation affects people living in Australia and the Restoring Family Links Program[21]

The Effects of Family Separation on Forcibly Displaced People in Australia project found, despite the enormous toll on affected people, many still hold hope for the future. They show resourcefulness and resilience in finding and reuniting with missing loved ones.

> "*I'm partly safer here, but inside - I'm not safe inside. The reason because my future, I'm always afraid for the future of my family…*" (Participant in the research project)

> "*Six years without living with my family. But I'm thinking about the future of my kids. My daughter was 5 months only when I came here now she 7 years. My son 1 year, now he's 8 years, so now I'm just fighting for their future."* (Refugee participant in the research project, living in Australia)

The causes of family separation are many: from conflict to persecution, man-made or environmental disasters. Many people can live for years without knowing the fate of missing family.

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[21] From Liddell B, Batch N, Bulnes-Diez M, Hellyer S, Kamte A, Wong J, Byrow Y, Nickerson A. 2020. The Effects of Family Separation on Forcibly Displaced People in Australia. Findings from a Pilot Research Project. Australian Red Cross, Carlton, Vic. https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/stories/unsw-red-cross-family-separation-report.pdf

Worry is the predominant feature of people's lives when forcibly separated from family. People fear for the physical security and financial stability of family still living in difficult situations.

These concerns significantly interfere with many people's psychological wellbeing, their capacity to concentrate, sleep, study or work and can impact their ability to settle into a new life in Australia.

Connecting with a missing family member can return happiness, hope and a sense of restoration and new life.

> *"I think it's like getting out of the darkness and to the bright.*" (Refugee participant in the research project, after connecting with family)

The joy of finding missing loved ones does not always end worries and fears. When families continue to be separated, the relief at reconnecting is interwoven with ongoing fears and a sense of responsibility for the safety of separated family members.

Refugees living safely in Australia often become financially stretched as they support their family overseas, working multiple jobs and sending any spare income to family. They can feel responsible for arranging to bring separated family members to Australia.

> *"I am responsible for money. If I don't send them money then they can't survive. Emotionally if I don't give her hope she can't survive."* (Refugee participant in the research project)

Families shape identity, give meaning and provide both security and practical support. Based on long experience in delivering the Restoring Family Links program, Australian Red Cross recognises the need for safe spaces for migrants grappling with the challenges of how to maintain family connection in difficult circumstances and why family unity is so important.

Case Study 4: Australian Red Cross program-design practices to build inclusion

Australian Red Cross uses inclusive and accessible practices to design and develop programs and services that include:

- inviting local community members to propose themes for consultation.
- in-person and electronically facilitated community meetings, around community-suggested themes and scheduled around convenience of community members i.e., to accommodate work, childcare, and other personal commitments of community members.
- providing opportunities for individual community members, who may lack confidence to speak in large groups and/or to government representatives, to participate in small, facilitated 'caucus' groups, through which issues may be communicated in larger fora.
- employing bilingual facilitators and interpreters and providing information in languages and formats people are most likely to understand.
- meeting costs of:
  - transport to meeting venues arranged for community members without access to private transport and/or who live in areas poorly serviced by public transport;
  - participants' time for sharing their experiences, knowledge and perspectives on the issue or proposed program;
- seeking informed consent from individual participants in co-design and consultation processes to publicly use their stories and any photos taken of them to document those processes
- providing feedback to participants in consultations and co-design processes about how their input contributed to the outcomes.

Case Study 5: the Work Right Hub – an example of co-design and effective communication

The Work Right Hub is a digital response to a need for a tool to empower migrants and communities to prevent and combat labour exploitation by strengthening their capacity to identify signs of exploitation, understand how to access advice and support, and take measures to prevent future exploitation.

To help inform the development of and co-design the Hub, Australian Red Cross invited people from migrant backgrounds and stakeholders working with migrants to take part in a series of online consultations. As future target audiences of the Hub, it was important to consult both groups to determine what information, tools and resources were going to be useful to include on the Hub, as well as explore any design and development considerations. To ensure understanding of the diverse needs of target audiences, Australian Red Cross hosted consultation sessions across metropolitan and regional areas of Australia to capture diverse views on the Hub design.

Over 150 people from migrant backgrounds and over 320 people from over 125 different organisations, agencies and groups, participated in a total of 18 consultations about and/or co-design of the Hub. Migrant communities represented in the consultations included Tigrinya, Iraqi, Hazara, Kachin, Chin, Oromo, Burundian, Eritrean, Syrian, Congolese, Nepali, Malaysian and Vietnamese communities. Stakeholders included a range of state and local government agencies, unions, service providers, community organisations and academia.

Since its launch in March 2023, the Hub has attracted over 15,000 visitors. In the same period, a social media campaign reached nearly 300,000 people, demonstrating a desire for accurate information about fair work practices and conditions, and how to obtain assistance.

Work Right Hub multimedia resources were enhanced and adapted following user testing which prompted feedback such as:

> *"It's really nice, it's easy to understand and navigate for example in finding help." "It's very easy to understand and find support" "I like the flow of information." "Need pictures for people who can't read the language" "I like symbols, icons and pictures would help make it easier to follow." "It was easy but if it was in the language I was looking for would have been great if I am not educated."*

Since being launched, analysis of which groups are using the Hub and how reveals that people are choosing to access the information in their language – with one non-English language version of the decision tree being viewed four times more often than the English version; and another two languages – two times more often. The decision tree is designed to help migrants and frontline responders to differentiate between poor working conditions and modern slavery and to find avenues of support depending on the type of exploitation identified. Analysis also shows that people are not navigating the site from only one place, rather they are looking at different questions / areas / concerns.

Case Study 6: Health in My Language and Bi-cultural health programs – Strength-based, localised, place-based practices

Health in My Language (HiML) is national program, managed by Australian Red Cross in Tasmania and South Australia. Bi-cultural health (BCHP) is an Australian Red Cross program in Tasmania.

Both HiML and Bi-cultural health assist newly arrived migrants gain access to relevant, culturally safe, and appropriate health services. They support people to develop their skills and knowledge about the health care system and where to find information to address and make informed choices about their health needs, including COVID-19 vaccination. Bi-cultural health support includes providing information and assistance to people affected by female genital mutilation or cutting. The

aim of the program is to help this group make informed decisions about the practice in the context of Tasmanian society and law, and to refer them to relevant health services.

Australian Red Cross also offers training to health providers in Tasmania to help them understand the health, access and equity issues migrants face, and make them aware of cultural sensitivities involved in providing care to this group.

Both programs provide health information through a team of Bilingual Health Educators from migrant and refugee backgrounds who understand the health care challenges that their communities face.

> *"One woman who attended a session on navigating Australian health system fell ill after a few days of the session and couldn't get in touch with her GP. Using the information provided at the HiML session, she contacted a newly opened Urgent Care Clinic and was able to get help free of any costs. The next day she texted the health educator saying 'you saved my life and my bank balance.'" (Recounted by the Program Manager)*

> *"Bi-cultural health workers play the role of peer educators which build a firm bridge between health services and the community. I believe, I have the responsibilities to give back to my community in anyways I can. The knowledge and skills I gain from working with the Australian Red Cross enable me to educate my community members on how to deal with their health problems. Therefore, I am happy to be part of the Australian Red Cross family where I can help people who are vulnerable and in need." (Zahra, Bi-cultural Health Worker, Tasmania)*

> *"I work with the Nepalese speaking community. My team and I are doing our community engagement with different stakeholders around Tasmania. We use email, phone call, face-face meetings and social media to engage community members. I have also used my sporting connections and am going to sporting venues to deliver sessions to players." (Sanjeev, Bi-cultural health worker, Tasmania)*

Case Study 7: Fostering inclusion through a Lived Experience Framework

To foster inclusion, Australian Red Cross has developed a Lived Experience Framework which guides Australian Red Cross people to ensure that clients, staff and volunteers with first-hand or "lived" experience of migration have a strong voice in how Australian Red Cross develops and delivers humanitarian assistance and conducts its advocacy. The framework guides Australian Red Cross people to:

a) use meaningful support strategies for Australian Red Cross people with lived experience.

b) ensure pathways are in place to amplify lived experience voice and representation in our communications and advocacy; and

c) create circumstances where people with lived experience actively participate in and determine their needs and solutions, reflected in program, service and research design and development.

Australian Red Cross is committed to build skills of staff, volunteers and members to effectively use the guidance of this framework and to develop a common standard across the organisation.

Case Study 8: How a safety net affords migrants experiencing vulnerability safety, dignity and independence

Isabela,* from South America, had lived in Australia for two years when she was referred by the Australian Red Cross Temporary Visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence pilot program to an Australian Red Cross employment program, Connect.Match.Support. (C.M.S).

Isabela is a single mother of two children who had recently escaped domestic violence. She had limited English language skills and had never worked in Australia, which were barriers to finding work. C.M.S. employment liaison staff assisted Isabela to enrol in TAFE English-language classes that would develop her skills, while she sought work to support herself and her children.

The C.M.S. staff assisted her to:

- Update and translate to English her resume and cover letter;
- Connect with conversational English classes at a local community centre until she was eligible for TAFE;
- Contact a local small business that had advised Australian Red Cross they had a vacancy for a casual worker to do quality control in their company. C.M.S. staff had previously worked with the business owner to ensure that they understood the program and participant cohort, and that they abided by Fair Work regulations.

Following a trial shift, the employer offered Isabela a job, which she happily accepted. Australian Red Cross supported her to complete onboarding documents. Isabela treated it as an opportunity to gain work experience in the Australian context and to practise English as she pursued her longer-term goal to return to the banking sector (in which she worked in her home country), or to pursue work in childcare.

Case Study 9: Building community preparedness and disaster resilience in Perth through cross-sectoral cooperation

Newly arrived migrants and refugees are not always familiar with hazards and risks associated with disasters in the Australian context. In an initiative of the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees (CARAD),[22] Australian Red Cross, the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and WA Department of Health collaborated to deliver six face to face and two online education sessions located in both northern and southern suburbs of Perth.

The aim of the Disaster Resilience workshops, designed for culturally and linguistically diverse community members, was to increase resilience and coping mechanisms by building capacity and increasing trauma informed and culturally safe information and awareness. Interpreters were available to assist participants throughout the workshops.

179 CALD community members attended the face-to-face sessions. 40 people attended the online Zoom workshops which included details on preparedness tools, websites, and the Get Prepared App.[23]

These events led to strengthened relationships between community members and agencies and the development of future resilience projects and presentations.

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[22] supported by the WA Department of Local Government, Sport and cultural Industries Office of Multicultural Interests,
[23] See https://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/prepare/get-prepared-app/

Case Study 10: The Community Connector Advisor – Government, non-government and community collaboration in disaster response.

The Community Connector Advisor (CCA) was a state government-funded initiative with the aim to ensure all members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Queensland had equitable access to appropriate health information and services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Using a disaster risk reduction framework, the CCA worked with more than 80 community organisations and their extensive networks in the CALD sector across Queensland. The diverse organisations and networks were formed around cultural communities, service delivery, people from refugee backgrounds, international students, people on other temporary visas or without a visa, and people seeking asylum, and themselves became part of an extensive, inclusive and dense network focused on COVID-19.

The CCA created a south-east Queensland-wide social media group of people –- trusted by their communities –- who communicated with cultural communities across the state. They rapidly communicated urgent COVID-19 related updates and amplified accurate information to the sector and associated stakeholders, including about the efficacy and importance of vaccinations against COVID-19, and enhanced the capacity of community organisations to pursue innovative actions to protect the health and safety of community members.

> *"As government agencies and service providers worked more closely with the communities they served, they provided better targeted and more readily understood information. As a facilitator, the CCA also contributed to the state government's ability to identify emerging recovery needs using regular liaison and feedback networks and, in turn fostered collaboration to develop responses to the expressed needs."* Australian Red Cross Manager of the CCA program.

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