Professional Development Workshop

CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN WORKING WITH PEOPLE FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

ONE-DAY WORKSHOP

Participant's Notes

Foreword

STARTTS is very pleased to make the 'Cultural competence in working with people from refugee backgrounds' workshop manual publically available. This incredible STARTTS resource was written and rolled out by Dr Belinda Green Ph.D., STARTTS Trainer in 2015. Since then it has been delivered to hundreds of workers, volunteers and students across the settlement, health, education, community and welfare sectors. The demand for this workshop has been high and the feedback has been outstanding.

The workshop was designed to fit into the widely used cultural competence paradigm, but took it much further by incorporating trauma-informed practice based on the refugee experience into the framework. Therefore the 'working with cultural competence with people from refugee backgrounds' framework considers the impact that torture and other traumatic experiences in the context of persecution, political conflict, organised violence and forced displacement, have on resettlement processes, understanding a new culture and finding a sense of belonging in Australian society. It also incorporates knowledge of the socio-political and cultural contexts of the main countries of origin and ethnicities of the major groups of people coming to Australia in recent years under the Humanitarian Program.

The design and delivery of this workshop was commended by the Executive Director of the Health and Social Policy Branch, NSW Health, and was highlighted in the 2016 NSW Health Multicultural Policies and Services Program Report.

Melanie Leemon
Training Coordinator
STARTTS
May 2018

Principal author

The principal author did the research, interviewing and writing of the content, which was reviewed and edited.

Belinda Green
Training Officer, STARTTS
PhD

Belinda has been STARTTS' Training Officer since 2010 where she is a part of the administration, design and delivery of STARTTS' state wide outreach education program. Belinda has also been responsible for STARTTS' train the trainer program in supporting over 200 staff to facilitate trainings, workshops and seminars in the area of refugee trauma health and recovery, community development and cultural competency. During her time at STARTTS, Belinda has contributed to a range of training resources in the above areas. She has also done professional counselling at STARTTS. Belinda has a PhD in social anthropology, a Master of Social Work, a first class honours degree in anthropology and a Bachelor of Media majoring in journalism. Prior to her work at STARTTS Belinda worked as an academic for 10 years and has taught and conducted research for a range of universities in Australia, India and Ethiopia. In the past she has conducted applied research amongst Scheduled Caste male youth in South India, migrant Muslim women from South Western Sydney and Urban First Nations People in Western Sydney. Belinda is an international speaker and has published a variety of journal articles, book chapters and other peer reviewed materials in the former areas.

Editor

The editor designed the overall concept and framework, and was the principal reviewer and editor.

Melanie Leemon
Training Coordinator, STARTTS
Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

Melanie has been STARTTS' Training Coordinator since 2008 when a dedicated training team was formed. She is responsible for the strategic direction and quality of training service delivery to resource and assist STARTTS staff and mainstream service providers to work more effectively with refugee trauma recovery. Melanie has written and designed numerous resources, manuals and educational materials for health and community workers, volunteers and consumers on issues related to refugee trauma, HIV/AIDS and hygiene and sanitation in Australia, Guatemala, Peru, Indonesia and India. Previous to coming to STARTTS she worked in international development for five years with MSF – Doctors with Borders, and a community based organisation called Ak' Tenamit in Guatemala. Melanie has a Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, a Master of Nutrition and Dietetics and a Bachelor of Medical Science. Melanie is committed to working with human rights and social justice issues, and has a passion for working in a cross-cultural context.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Time	Topic
9.00am	**Registrations**
9.30am	**Introduction** **1. Context: Cultural Competence and Refugees** Definition of Cultural Competence Importance of Cultural Competence with People from Refugee Backgrounds
10.15am	**2. Awareness: Culture, Identity and Meaning** Building Awareness What is Culture? What does Culture do? What is Identity?
11.25am	**Morning Tea**
11.40 am	Privilege and Power What is Representation? What is Stereotyping and Othering? Reflective Practice on Building Awareness **3. Knowledge: Refugee Trauma, Resettlement and Cultural Transition** Gaining Knowledge, Refugee Worldviews Experiences of Conflict, Postcolonialism and/or Occupation
1.15pm	**Lunch**
1.45pm	Socio-Political and Cultural Context of Country of Origin Impact of Persecution and Organised Violence on Culture and Identity Resettlement, Cultural Transition and Acculturation in the Context of the Complex Interaction Impacts on Cultural Transition on Worker Client Relations Reflective Practice on Gaining Knowledge
3.15pm	**Afternoon tea**
3.30pm	**4. Attitudes and Skills: Worker Attributes and Culturally Competent Communication** Attitudes and Skills, What are Key Attitudes of Cultural Competency? Communicating Effectively Creating Strong Professional Boundaries Vicarious Trauma, The Importance of Self Care Reflective Practice on Attitudes and Skills
4.30pm	**Close**

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

INTRODUCTION

The workshop is conducted by the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). STARTTS helps refugees recover from their experiences and build a new life in Australia. We also work with other organisations and individuals to help them work more effectively with refugees.

STARTTS opened in 1988 and is one of Australia's leading organisations for the treatment and rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors. STARTTS' head office is in Carramar. We also have offices in Liverpool, Auburn, Blacktown, Wollongong, Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and Wagga Wagga. We do outreach work at different centres around Sydney and some rural and regional areas.

This one day workshop will give participants a **greater awareness of the key components to cultural competency** when working with refugee survivors of torture and trauma.

Aims of the training

- To introduce you to a **model of cultural competence** and its relevance to working effectively with people from refugee background who have experienced trauma

- To give you **knowledge and strategies** on how to engage with people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds, and asylum seekers in a culturally competent manner

What will be covered in the training today?

The topics that will be covered today are:

1. **Context:** Cultural Competence and Refugees

2. **Awareness:** Culture and Identity

3. **Knowledge**: Refugee Trauma, Resettlement and Cultural Transition

4. **Attitudes and Skills:** Important Worker Attributes and Culturally Competent Communication

This training is for one day only and therefore can only cover the key concepts of cultural competency. We recognise that people come to this workshop with a wide range of knowledge and experiences, and we endeavour to make sure that it has something for everyone.

📖 **GROUP ACTIVITY– WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?**

Please break into groups of 4 and discuss your understanding of 'cultural competence' and why it is important to your work?
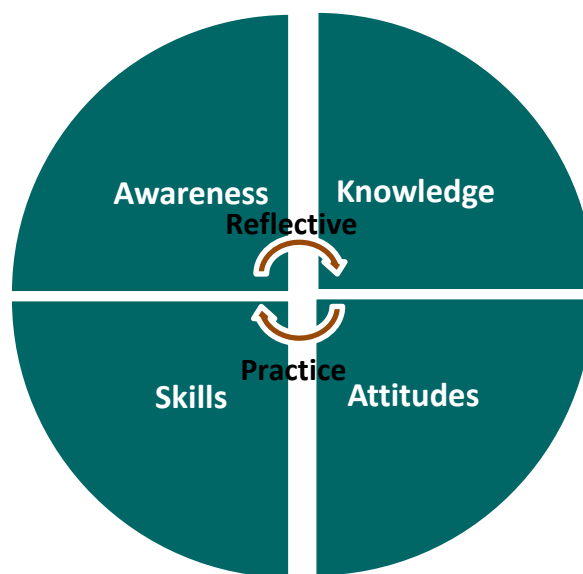
DEFINITION OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What is Cultural Competence?

- Having an **awareness** of the way culture and identity works.
- Having **knowledge** of the client's background and how this may impact on their experiences of trauma, resettlement and cultural transition.
- Developing a particular set of **worker attitudes and communication skills** which can respond sensitively to the client's needs and perspective.

Taken from ©ASeTTS 2012

Reflective Practice is an important part of cultural competence. Workers need to engage in an ongoing process of identifying and challenging their own cultural assumptions and actively develop sensitive strategies to respond to diversity and difference.

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

What Cultural Competence Isn't?

- Stereotyping
- Knowing about a particular group and using 'recipes' to work with all clients from that culture
- Over-emphasising the importance of culture to rationalise certain behaviours and actions which could harm us or the client
- Understanding our clients' culture but not our own

Why do we need to be culturally competent?

- To comply with Australian legislation (Anti-Discrimination Act and Human Rights, Equity and Social Inclusion)
- Australian employers stress the need for staff to be culturally competent in the workplace
- Every client-worker interaction involves an interaction of cultures no matter how similar the client and worker appear on the surface
- Safe and effective interpersonal communication is based on an exchange of familiar social and cultural cues
- Interacting with people from different cultures can be unsettling for the worker and this can cause reactions which may not be helpful
- Cultural competence encourages openness and respect to people's unique needs and realities

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY WITH PEOPLE FROM REFUGEE BACKGROUNDS

A **refugee** is a person who has been forced to leave their country because of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. They must be outside of their country of origin, and unable or unwilling to return.

An **asylum seeker** is a person who has left their country of origin and has applied for protection as a refugee to a government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

People seeking refugee status commonly experience trauma, deprivation and loss in the context of organised violence and human rights violations.

Developing cultural competency to work effectively with people from refugee backgrounds is important because:

Refugees in Australia are an incredibly diverse group

- Since the end of World War Two (WWII), over 700,000 people from refugee backgrounds have resettled in Australia.
- This population is diverse in terms of countries, ethnicities, religions, economic status, education etc.

Top 5 countries of origin for off-shore settlement 2015-2016	Top 5 countries of origin for on-shore asylum seekers applications 2015-2016
• Iraq • Syria • Myanmar • Afghanistan • South Sudan	• Iraq • Pakistan • Libya • Afghanistan • China

- All of the countries where the current intakes of refugees come from are highly multicultural.
- Refugees are often minorities in their own country and may not identify with the dominant culture of their country of origin.

DID YOU KNOW?

Afghanistan has 5 main ethnic groups (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen and Hazara). Pasto and Dari are the main languages with 11% speaking Uzbek and Turkmen. A further 30 other dialects are spoken by 4% of Afghanistan's 31 million people. Historically Pashtuns have been the dominant group. The majority of Afghans arriving to Australian since 2006 are Hazara people. Hazara are a minority of people who have been persecuted on the basis of their Shia religion and ethnicity. In more recent times the Taliban have been their persecutors.

Burma has over 135 ethnic groups and seven ethnic minority states in addition to seven divisions populated mainly by the Burmese majority. More than 100 languages are spoken in Burma, mainly from the Tibetan-Burmese language families.
The majority of people arriving in Australia are from minority groups including the Karen, Kachin and Rohingyan people.

Refugees are often dealing with trauma reactions

- Complex trauma is inherently interpersonal and is therefore concerned with culture, identity and context.
- How trauma survivors are responded to by professionals influences levels of healing and recovery. Without cultural competency we may deepen the clients' wounds by inducing secondary or tertiary traumatic stress.
- Cultural competency avoids reducing the survivor's experience to trauma alone which can lead to ideas of victimhood and 'othering'.
- Cultural competence may increase healing by connecting trauma survivors to their own resources including resilience.

Refugees are facing complex stressors and challenges

One way to conceptualise the complex nature of problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, at the individual, family and community level, is the complex interaction between the following factors:

- The impact of traumatic experiences (e.g. difficulty sleeping, PTSD, depression, etc.)

- Seeking protection in Australia/ resettlement challenges (e.g. learning a new language, finding employment, new parenting norms, new legal and education systems, racism, cultural dislocation etc.)

- Normal life cycle challenges (e.g. birth, death/illness, parenting skills, leisure, relationships, work etc.)

- The relationship between refugees and asylum seekers and the Australian environment (e.g. current policies on refugees, service provision etc.)

- International events (e.g. news from home, relatives left behind in the country of origin)

These factors can interact in powerful and complex ways and can cause feelings of being overwhelmed. The complex interface between these factors and the psychological, cultural, educational and religious attributes of the individual, family and community can be used to illustrate the complexity of the experience of refugee clients resettling in Australia or seeking protection (Aroche and Coello, 1994). How well refugees and asylum seekers cope with the complex interaction will depend on individual internal and protective factors such as those listed below.

Protective Factors (Internal)
- Balanced, well-regulated brain
- Positive outlook
- High self-esteem
- Sense of safety
- Sense of identity

Protective Factors (External)
- Supportive family
- Supportive school
- Friends
- Fun activities
- Status
- Resources
- Reference group
- Safe environment

Aroche and Coello, 1994

Attributes (Individual, family and community)
- Biological
- Psychological
- Cultural
- Educational
- Experiential

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Refugees are in a process of cultural transition

- Refugees are in a process of cultural transition which impacts on their sense of identity and belonging. People will respond to this process in different ways.
- Good service provision is critical during the stage of resettlement given the increased vulnerability for refugees during this time.
- Cultural transition is not a linear process and is impacted by other factors of the refugee experience (e.g. trauma).

📖 **GROUP ACTIVITY – FEELING UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR**

HAVE YOU EVER?

1. Have you ever lived overseas?
2. Have you ever been to a place where you felt out of place?
3. Do you have any relatives that live overseas?
4. Have you ever had to wait or faced other issues in accessing health care?
5. Have you ever had to pay a bribe?
6. Have you ever felt uncertain about your future because of someone or something else?
7. Have you ever not been able to work because of a certain circumstance or situation beyond your control?
8. Have you ever felt that you didn't have a choice?
9. Have you or your family ever felt threatened by others?
10. Have you ever feared for your own life?

Discuss some of the impacts that these experiences had on you?

Session 2
AWARENESS: CULTURE AND IDENTITY

BUILDING AWARENESS

Building an awareness of ourselves and the way we see others is a key aspect of cultural competency. This includes understanding how our worldview is formed through culture, identity and biases. In this session we will discuss the concept of culture, and explore how our own and others' identities are formed. We will also discuss how representation, stereotyping, privilege and biases operate.

Why do we need awareness for cultural competency?

- Building awareness allows us to acknowledge cultural differences and to develop an understanding of our own cultural values.

- This awareness will allow us to view ours and other's behaviours within a cultural context while having a choice to adapt our behaviour accordingly.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

'Culture' is a term of reference that has hundreds of meanings and usages. The term was first used by the pioneer English anthropologist Edward. B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture* published in 1871.

Culture is a set of shared learned behaviours

- These behaviors are transmitted from one generation to promote individual and group adaptation (socialisation)

Culture has universal parts

- Language (Verbal and Non-verbal)
- Classifications based on age and gender
- Family and Kin relations through marriage, descent relationships and child rearing units
- Sexuality is often regulated through a sexual division of labour
- Ascetics and Rituals (ideas of beauty, tastes, art and collective rituals)

- Morality and Ethics (value systems)
- Power and Hierarchy

Culture is external and internal

- External parts of culture include roles, institutions and artifacts
- Internal parts of culture include values, beliefs, attitudes, cognitive styles, epistemologies, and conscious patterns (Marsella 1988:10)

Culture has subcultures and micro communities

- Subcultures and micro communities can exist under the umbrella of one culture
- People can belong to multiple subcultures at once

WHAT DOES CULTURE DO?

Culture creates our WORLD VIEW

- Culture creates our identity and meaning making
- Culture informs our response and behaviour to other people, to supernatural forces or God(s) and to the natural environment

Culture changes

- Culture changes according to time, place and context
- Culture is dynamic and fluid

Culture has 7 functions

1. Communication
2. Perception
3. Identity
4. Value Systems
5. Motivation
6. Stratification (Hierarchy and Power relations)
7. Production and Consumption (what people need, use and value) (Mazrui 1996)

Culture is integrated through Cognitive Maps

- Cognitive maps are a way to explain how our social world and culture are integrated both on a neurological and physical basis.
- Cognitive maps are mental representations and are generated by our sensory system.
- They help us to store information about our world and our place in it.
- As we move through our environment (culturally, socially, physically and spatially) we use cognitive maps to provide information and interpret our environment.
- We use past information to compare and navigate present situations.
- When refugees are displaced from their environment their cognitive maps are disrupted.
- This can impact their sense of place, belonging and how they understand their cultural, social, physical and spatial environment and themselves.

WHAT IS IDENTITY?

Identity refers to three basic ideas:

→ Who am I?
→ Who are you?
→ How am I different to others and how does this affect the way that I see myself?
→ Identity is made up of the social and personal

Personal Identity

- Sets us apart as distinct individuals
- Is a set of values, ideas, philosophies and beliefs about ourselves that draws on culture, subcultures and other social groups (our worldview)
- Is based our past, present and future experience and ideas
- Is a constant process of negotiation with the outside world and may change over time

- Differs across and within culture and works together with self-esteem, self-knowledge and social categories to make up the Self
- Our personal identity is also informed by the social.

Social Identity

- **Is based on social categories and associated characteristics** attributed to an individual by society e.g. I am a woman (category of gender) and the characteristics of being a woman might include being caring and supportive

Social categories:

- **Are hierarchically ordered** i.e. some are valued over others e.g. Being a man in some societies is valued over being a woman
- **Multiple and overlapping** at any one time e.g. I am an Assyrian (ethnicity), Iraqi (nationality) woman (gender) doctor (occupation)
- **Are affected by where we are and who we are with** e.g. if I am in my workplace my social class and education level may have greater importance than when I am with my family where my generational status and if I have children might matter more

DID YOU KNOW?

Psychologist Pamela Hays (2001, 2008) developed the acronym 'ADDRESSING' to refer to important social categories.

These include:

- AGE
- DISABILITY (acquired)
- DISABILITY (developmental)
- RELIGION
- ETHNICTY
- SOCIAL CLASS
- SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- INDIGENOUS HERITAGE
- NATIONAL ORIGIN
- GENDER/SEX

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📖 **ACTIVITY**
 How would you define ethnicity, social class and gender?
List other relevant social identifiers not included in Hay's model.

In the next exercise let's take a closer look at our own personal identity/worldview.

📖 **ACTIVITY – WHO ARE WE?**

ANSWER 3 QUESTIONS FROM EACH CATEGORY

ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOR
How we greet each other.
What is considered impolite?
How we show respect and disrespect.
What is embarrassing?
What we eat and how we eat.
What we wear.
What we buy and how we behave in stores.
How often we touch each other and how we touch each other.
How closely we stand next to each other.
The holidays we celebrate and the way we celebrate.
How we use money, credit, and bartering.
What is risqué?
How we seek and use health services.
What we find humorous.
Seating placement in a room.

BELIEFS AND VALUES
What are worthwhile goals in life?
The nature of God and other religious beliefs..
Common sense.
Our perceived needs.
Whether privacy is desirable or undesirable.
Appropriate personal hygiene.
What is "right"; what is "wrong".
The role of trust.

TIME
How time is scheduled and used.
Whether schedules are important or unimportant.
The importance of maintaining tradition.
The importance of preparing for the future.
Whether old age is valuable or undesirable.
The importance of understanding one's history and passing it on.

COMMUNICATION
The language we speak.
What should be said; what should be left unsaid.
What is appropriate "small talk"?

Whom we speak to; to whom we should not speak.
Whether conversation should be formal or informal.
The meaning of hand gestures, facial expressions, and other nonverbal communication.
How often we smile, whom we smile at, and the meaning of a smile.
In which environments it is "safe" to speak one's mind; in which environments we must censor identity.
Our tone of voice, use of emotion, use of stories.

HUMAN RELATIONS
The role of the individual.
The role and structure of the family.
The roles of men and how men should behave.
The roles of women and how women behave.
The importance of individual competition.
Social class system.
Hierarchy in business relationships.
Interactions between strangers.
How to interact with a person in authority
(E.g. boss, police officer, teacher).
How to interact with a person who is serving us.
Relationships and obligations between parents and children and other family members.
Crowd or audience behaviour.

Taken from Aguilar, Leslie and Stokes, Linda. *Multicultural Customer Services: Providing Outstanding Service Across Cultures.* Chicago: Irwin Professional Publishing. (1996)

📖 **ACTIVITY**
 What do your answers tell you about your culture and identity including your social categories? Compare and contrast your perceptions with your partner

Individualist and Collectivist Identity

- People from refugee backgrounds resettling in Australia tend to come from collectivist cultures while in the dominant Australian culture people identify with an individualist culture.
- It is important to understand the differences between the two and to consider how this may impact service delivery.
- It is also important to remember that these classifications are not absolute or fixed.
- For instance many of us may identify with certain parts of both while different lived experiences including migration and resettlement may also lead to changes in our identification towards one or the other.
- It is better to think of people's experience existing on a continuum of possibilities.

Continuum of possibilities

Individualist	Collectivist
- Autonomy and independence are given greater value - Children learn to think in terms of "I" - Interests of the individual are paramount - Speaking one's mind is valued - Everyone has a right to privacy "Self-actualisation" is the developmental goal - Individual responsibility - Self-reliance - Rule-breaking leads to guilt and loss of self-respect	- Interdependence and Interests of the (in-)group are paramount - Identity based on the social network - Children learn to think in terms of "We" - Maintenance of social harmony is valued - Less expectation of privacy in the group - Mature inter-dependence is the developmental goal - Shared responsibility - Protection by, loyalty to the group - Rule-breaking leads to shame and loss of face for self and group **©Taken from Victorian Transcultural Psychiatric Unit**

How does individualist and collectivist identities affect service provision?

- Some people who come from a collectivist background may be less willing to uptake assistance from outside the family unit or their community.
- They may also avoid conflict or confrontation at all costs with people outside of their immediate sphere.
- People from a collectivist background may also have different understandings of social obligation and social roles.
- People from individualist cultures including workers may be less formal and more outcome orientated compared to their clients from refugee backgrounds. This means that service providers will need to be place greater emphasis on building trust and taking the time to build rapport with their clients while maintaining transparency about the service they are offering.

PRIVILEGE AND POWER

How does privilege and power work?

- Social categories are marked by a distinct set of qualities or characteristics and some are assigned value over others.
- Sometimes this value is referred to as the **'norm', 'the dominant group status' or 'privilege'.**
- These norms may not always be explicit or visible but will be found within the values of a particular culture and its representations of itself.
- These norms often determine who has the greatest power and access to resources in a society.
- Often people are a combination of dominant and non-dominant social categories
- These categories will change over a person's lifetime. For example a person may age or acquire a physical disability. Alternatively some people can acquire a college education, lose weight and marry which could positively alter their composition of dominant and non-dominant group status.

Why is privilege and power important to service provision?

- Understanding the ways in which these norms determine levels of access and power is important when working with clients from refugee backgrounds who have been minorities and have faced a lack of power and privilege in their home countries.
- These experiences may also be replicated in the Australian setting where aspects of clients' identity may not comply with the local dominant group status.
- Being able to identify power and privilege will help us to identify and respond to the possible constraints for clients in more egalitarian and empathetic ways.

> *"Without examining the operations of privilege, we are unable to see the circumstances that create constraints on other people's lives. We are unable to appreciate their daily efforts to work and live in the context of these constraints or to resist them" (Salome Raheim)*
>
> Taken from http://www.dulwichcentre.com.au/privilege.htm

According to clinical psychologist, Laura Brown (2008:26), dominant groups in the United States include the following social categories:

- ✓ US born
- ✓ English speaking
- ✓ Persons of European descent
- ✓ Biologically male
- ✓ Heterosexual
- ✓ Affiliated however loosely or historically with some variety of Protestant Christianity
- ✓ Married with children
- ✓ Middle class
- ✓ Aged 25-49
- ✓ College education or more
- ✓ No current disabilities
- ✓ Not fat
- ✓ Normal in their gender expression
- ✓ Adhering to conventional standards of attractiveness

📖 **ACTIVITY – UNDERSTANDING POWER**

1. Who do you admire and why?
2. What major events do you celebrate and why?
3. Where do you feel that you belong- in terms of places, groups and people?
4. What in your upbringing has most shaped you?
5. Which characteristic do you most dislike in other people?
6. What do you see as your U.S.P. - your unique selling point?
7. What do others most misunderstand about your personality?
8. Of the clothes you wear what best expresses who you are?

Reflect and discuss your answers in relation to the above dominant social categories.

DID YOU KNOW?

Are you high or low???

High culture refers to the idea that material and non-material aspects of our culture are superior in scope than others e.g. classical music over pop music.

Low culture refers to material and non-material aspects of culture that are deemed to be for the masses and seen as of inferior status.

There is a class dimension to this differentiation in that high culture often correlates with the cultural interests of the rich and powerful whereas low culture is associated with the relative poor and less powerful.

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📖 **ACTIVITY – UNDERSTANDING PRIVLEDGE**

Tick the statements which are true for you.

1. The leader of my country is also a person of my racial group. *(RACE)*

2. When going shopping, I can easily find clothes that fit my size and shape. (SIZE)

3. In public, I can kiss and hold hands with the person I am dating without fear of name calling, staring or violence. (SEXUALITY)

4. When I go shopping, I can be fairly certain that sales or security people will not follow me. *(RACE/APPEARANCE)*

5. Most of the religious and cultural holidays celebrated by my family are recognized with days off from work or school. *(RELIGION/CULTURE)*

6. When someone is trying to describe me, they do not mention my race. *(RACE)*

7. When I am angry or emotional, people do not dismiss my opinions as symptoms of "that time of the month or tell me to calm down". *(GENDER)*

8. When expressing my opinion, I am not automatically assumed to be a spokesperson of my race. *(RACE)*

9. I can easily buy greeting cards that represent my relationship with my significant other. *(SEXUALITY)*

10. I can easily find hair products and people who know how to style my hair. *(RACE)*

11. In my family, it is seen as normal to obtain a university degree. *(CLASS)*

12. If I am going out to dinner with friends, I do not worry if the building will be accessible to me. *(ABILITY)*

13. I can be certain that when I attend an event there will be people of my race there. *(RACE)*

14. People do not make assumptions about my work ethic or intelligence based upon the size of my body. *(SIZE)*

15. When I strongly state my opinion, people see it as assertive rather than aggressive. *(RACE/GENDER)*

16. When I am with others of my race, people do not think that we are segregating ourselves. *(RACE)*

17. I can feel comfortable speaking about my culture without feeling that I'll be judged. *(RACE/ETHNICITY)*

18. I can usually afford (without much hardship) to do the things that my friends want to do for entertainment. *(CLASS)*

19. When filling out forms for school or work, I easily identify with the box that I have to check. *(GENDER/RACE)*

20. I can choose the style of dress that I feel comfortable in and most reflects my identity, and I know that I will not be stared at in public. *(GENDER/APPEARANCE)*

21. If pulled over by a police officer, I can be sure that I have not been singled out because of my race. *(RACE)*

22. My professionalism is never questioned because of my age. *(AGE)*

23. I do not worry about walking alone at night. *(GENDER)*

24. People do not make assumptions about my intelligence based upon my style of speech. *(RACE)*

25. When attending class or other events, I do not have to worry about having an interpreter present to understand or to participate. *(ABILITY/LANGUAGE)*

26. I can book an airline flight, go to a movie, ride in a car and not worry about whether there will be a seat that can accommodate me. *(SIZE/ABILITY)*

27. People assume I was admitted to school or hired based upon my credentials, rather than my race or gender. *(RACE/GENDER)*

28. As a child, I could use the "flesh-coloured" crayons to colour my family and have it match our skin colour. *(RACE)*

Taken from:
http://lir.bgsu.wikispaces.net/file/view/Diversity+Activities+Resource+Guide.pdf

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PROCESS QUESTIONS:

How did you feel doing this activity?

What does it feel like to have or not to have certain privileges?

Why is recognizing 'privilege' important to our work?

WHAT IS REPRESENTATION?

- People, places and things are often paired with images, concepts, or symbols, rules and norms. E.g. Australian National identity is paired with the Australian flag, the ANZAC Legend, BBQ's, egalitarianism and a laid back attitude.

How does representation work?

- Representations produce knowledge and ideas about people, places and things e.g. some recent representations of Australia and Australians include ideas of racism and wealth.
- Representations exist everywhere and may influence the ways we see ourselves, others and the world around us.
- Representations are often reinforced through repetition.
- Representation is a two way process i.e. your clients will have representation of you according to your race, nationality, gender etc. and you will have a representation of your clients.

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Why is representation important to service provision?

- Representations of refugees and the countries they have come from are important to our understanding of our clients.
- For instance the term 'refugee' has been represented in particular ways within Australia and therefore may have particular inferences or meanings to us and to our clients.
- Some media representations and the politicisation of the issue of entry into Australia by asylum seekers particularly those coming by boat have led to reductive and persistent negative stereotypes.
- These include certain ideas that depict asylum seekers and their actions as illegitimate, illegal and deceptive. These representations can negatively influence public perception and can cause adverse reactions for workers.
- We also need to be careful not to reduce the survivors' experience to the notion of trauma itself – be careful not to fall into the trap of merely victimising our clients. This could lead to closing off possibilities of resilience while alienating the clients and reinforcing ideas of abnormality in our clients.
- Many of the countries where refugees are coming from are often represented as places of war, violence and poverty. It is important to understand that some of these representations are not always useful in recognizing the strengths and capacities of our clients.

WHAT IS STEREOTYPING AND OTHERING?

Even though the process of identity is complex and dynamic there is a tendency for people to view others in oversimplified ways. This is often referred to as 'stereotyping' or 'othering'.

> Stereotyping is:
>
> The belief that certain **categories of people shared an inherent and fixed 'essence'** that is not subject to context or historical change.

Stereotyping has a neurological basis

- Our brains are hardwired to notice difference, help us survive and not to be overwhelmed.
- Our brains are often involved in a rapid processing of social categories and their associated characteristics to tell us if there may be a potential threat or not.
- The fact is we can't help it!

Stereotyping can help us to decide how to interact with others

- Each classification has associations and scripts that we use to interpret what they are saying, decide if they are good or bad, and choose how to respond to them (or not).
- It can reinforce particular biases about that culture.

Othering' means:

- Seeing certain groups of people or individuals as possessing qualities that mark them as **different from the way we view 'ourselves'**

Stereotyping and othering can be both negative and positive

- It is positive in that it can make the world less overwhelming and help us to cope.
- Even though it is normal, it can be difficult for many of us to admit to having any bias or prejudices towards others. This is especially the case when ideas of professionalism include remaining unbiased and impartial.
- It is negative because it draws our awareness away from the inherent diversity of people and our shared human existence.

EXAMPLES OF STEREOTYPING AND OTHERING

- All people from refugee backgrounds come from poor backgrounds
- All Middle Eastern men are violent misogynists
- People who have difficulty in English are less educated, experienced or hard of hearing

DID YOU KNOW?

According to Hollinsworth (2012:4):

"We (those positioned as dominant racially or culturally) often do not experience our own cultural backgrounds as so powerful in determining our own decisions and thoughts. In reflecting on our own behaviour, we refer to our individual autonomy and choices supposedly based on rational theories and factual information".

Refugee clients who have experienced trauma can be highly attuned to cues about bias and the conflicted feelings that may arise for the worker (Brown 2008).

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON BUILDING AWARENESS

The following set of questions are designed for you to regularly reflect on

- Do I know what makes up and characterises culture?
- What is my culture and worldview?
- How do I see my identity and what parts of my identity are most important to me?
- How might this impact my work?
- What makes up my client's worldview and identities?
- How is it different from mine (actions, gestures, beliefs, values etc.)? How does this make me feel?
- What representations do I have about the particular part of the world my client comes from?
- What are the inbuilt biases do I hold about this area of the world and client?
- Do I judge people unfavourably when they are different to me?
- Am I able to recognise and understand my emotions and non-verbal cues especially when I react strongly to the client?
- Am I being affected by one experience of a client which is creating stereotypes or resistance towards others?
- Do I have privileges compared to my clients? How does this make me feel?
- How might this be impacting on my relationship with the client?
- Am I being impacted by any wider representations of refugees and asylum seekers I am encountering? How and how does this make me feel?
- Am I looking for the strengths as well as the difficulties of my client? Make a balance sheet.

GAINING KNOWLEDGE

Building on from the last session where we have developed an awareness of cultural difference and diversity and the need for self-reflection, this session will introduce the next aspect to cultural competency; knowledge. Developing knowledge about our clients' worldviews is an important part of cultural competence.

Why do we need knowledge for cultural competence?

- Knowledge about the socio/political and cultural contexts of newly arrived people from refugee backgrounds is important to overcoming negative representations and stereotypes.
- It is also important to build knowledge about our clients' background to improve our engagement and to provide effective and appropriate service provision.

REFUGEE WORLDVIEWS

As seen in session 2 people's worldview including people from refugee backgrounds is influenced by processes of culture, identity, and biases. For those refugees coming to Australia, worldviews are also impacted by:

1. Experiences of Conflict, Postcolonialism and/or Occupation

2. Socio-Political and Cultural Context of Countries of Origin

3. Impact of Persecution and Organised Violence on Culture and Identity

4. Resettlement, Cultural Transition and Acculturation

EXPERIENCES OF CONFLICT, POSTCOLONIALISM AND/OR OCCUPATION

Although there is a vast range of diversities amongst refugee population arriving from particular countries, most of these nation states have been impacted by conflict(s), post-colonialism and/or occupation. As a result of these forces, personal and social identities and social relations are affected in particular ways.

Some of the common themes for societies affected by conflict:

- ✓ A history of **colonisation or foreign occupation**

- ✓ A **negative role** played by neighboring states and **external powers**

- ✓ The **rule of law compromised**

- ✓ **Low levels** of state **transparency and accountability**

- ✓ **High levels** of state and 'everyday' **corruption**

- ✓ **Low levels** or absence of **social services and welfare provision**

- ✓ **Outmigration** and **brain drain**

- ✓ Presence of **foreign aid, accumulated debt** and/or the imposition of economic/political **sanctions**

- ✓ Forms of **systematic state sponsored violence**

DID YOU KNOW?

Systematic state sponsored violence involves terrorizing the whole population through systematic actions carried out by forces of the state such as the military and security forces.

Organised violence as state terrorism leads to a breakdown in relationships, community fragmentation, prevention of initiative and ability to organise alongside a pervasive mistrust in authorities as well as other community members.

There are a number of ways in which social relations are impacted by the former processes. Some of the common traits include:

- Fragmentation of national identity
- Multifaceted cleavages and inequalities among the population based on ethnicity, tribalism, religion, political affiliation etc.
- Self and communally generated social support networks
- Gender roles based on complementarity i.e. men and women have distinct and specific roles to play which complement each other
- Power relations based on pre-mediated hierarchies over and above merit
- Strict divide between public and private self-e.g. emphasis on face relations

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Although there is a vast range of diversity and difference amongst refugee population arriving from particular countries, it is useful to have some general knowledge about each country of origin of the main refugee arrivals in NSW. This knowledge will advance workers' cultural competency and support service provision

Workers do not need to know everything about all client groups. Having a few key points to start with is useful in having some context to the unique reality of our clients.

It is important to understand that refugees are often minorities in terms of access to power. Coupled with this many of the societies they have come have suffered from periods of conflict.

Some of the main countries of origin where people are coming from include:

- Afghanistan
- Syria
- Iraq
- South Sudan
- Sri Lanka

(See Appendix 1 for extended country profiles)

Afghanistan

Some important points that workers should know when working with people from refugee backgrounds from Afghanistan include:

- Afghanistan is a highly complex society comprising of Pashtuns (42%), Tajiks (27%), Hazara (9%), Uzbek (9%), Aimak (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baluch (2%) and others (4%)
- Culturally Afghanistan is predominantly Muslim and collectivist.
- Due to its strategic significance and complexity Afghanistan has been in a state of war and unrest for 4 decades and has been the leading country of origin for refugees
- These wars have involved a number of foreign powers including America, the Soviet Union, and Pakistan who have played a role in the civil unrest amongst different groups including the Mujahedeen, the Northern Alliance and the Taliban.
- Power in Afghanistan is centralised around the Sunni majority and primarily amongst the Pashtuns ethnic group (with the Tajiks also enjoying a power base in Kabul)
- Refugees coming to Australia are primarily from the Hazara ethnic group who are Shia Muslims.
- Historically Hazaras have faced ongoing persecution based on their religion and ethnicity.

Iraq

Some important points that workers should know when working with people from refugee backgrounds from Iraq include:

- Iraq is an ancient part of the world with many layers of peoples from a vast range of ethnicities, religions and social groupings e.g. tribes.
- Arabic is the national language and 97% of the country are Muslim, divided into approximately 65% Shia and 32-37% Sunni with the remaining 3% Christian Mandaean, Shabak, Yazidi and others.
- After the fall of Saddam and the US led occupation, ethnic, tribal and sectarian divisions erupted in the country, particularly between Sunni and Shia. This resulted in sectarian violence by militant groups targeting religious minorities including the Mandaean and Assyrian.
- Iraq continues to be one of the world's largest sources of refugees.
- Over 60% of Iraqi people in Australia have arrived since 1996 in the aftermath of the Gulf War through family reunion, humanitarian and refugee programs.
- This population includes mostly minority groups including Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Mandaeans, Turks, Turkmen and Jews. There are also some Arabs.

Sri Lanka

Some important points that workers should know when working with people from refugee backgrounds from Sri Lanka include:

- Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) was colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Dutch in the mid-17th century and the British in the mid-18th century which has left a mark on its people. Sri Lanka became an independent republic in 1948.
- The official language is Sinhala even though over a quarter of population speak other languages with a particular concentration of Tamil speakers.
- 70% of the population are Buddhist, Hindu 12.5%, Muslim 10%, and Christian 7.5%.
- From the onset the Sri Lankan state has been accused of human rights violations with a particular sore point being the systematic discrimination of Tamils
- This eventually led to a civil war beginning in 1983 between the government and separatist guerrilla group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).
- Most of the unrest and fighting occurred in the North Eastern part of Sri Lanka which is a Tamil dominated region. This has meant that many Tamil civilians had bore the brunt of the brutality by both government and LTTE forces.
- In 2009 the war officially ended with thousands of Tamil civilians killed and many others displaced from their homeland.
- Even though 'peace' has been declared critics claim that there has been a lack of genuine reconciliation including rehabilitation of the Tamil people and accountability for allegations that members of the Sri Lankan army committed war crimes.

South Sudan

Some important points that workers should know when working with people from refugee backgrounds from South Sudan include:

- As a result of foreign powers asserting control over Sudan an Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was established in 1899 with the Arabic Muslim North and the Christian/animist south ruled as two distinct regions. Although the north was modernised, the south was largely left to itself over the following decades.
- An estimated 56 ethnic groups and almost 600 sub-groups make up the South's population; the largest being the Dinka and Nuer peoples.
- In 1956 the country was united but power and control was centralised in the North.
- The south, which already had social and political grievances, feared that it would be dominated by the Arabic and Islamic north. Decades of civil war, drought, and economic disadvantage ensued for the South with acute loss and deprivation for millions of its people.
- South Sudan finally achieved independence in 2011 however the situation has deteriorated as various rebel militia groups operate in its territory and wreak havoc on the civilian population depending on tribal affiliation. Economic conditions have also deteriorated.
- Main arrivals to Australia come from the Dinka and Nuer tribes.

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

What about Islam?

Given that many recent refugee arrivals to Australia identify as Muslim, it is important that workers have some basic information about Islam.

- Islam is a monotheist religion with two distinct branches known as Sunni and Shia and multiple sub divisions.
- Both Sunni and Shia Muslims share the most fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith below. To be a Muslim means to submit to the will of God (Allah).
- There are five so called pillars of Islam – prayer (*Salat*), fasting during the month of Ramadan (*Sawm*), visiting or making pilgrimage to the holy site of Mecca (*Hajj*), Charity (*Zakat)* and proclaiming testimony in the oneness of God (*Shahada).*
- Sources of the Islamic legal code or practice come from the following sources- the Holy Qur'an (Koran), Hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammad), *Sunnah* (practice of the prophet Muhammad) *Shariah* or Divine Law (Ways of worship, Family issues, Ethical and Moral Principles, business transactions, societal issues and civil and criminal matters).
- The Holy Quran is said to be direct word of God and was revealed to the illiterate Prophet Mohamed through a series of revelations.
- 85% of Muslims are Sunni with countries in the Gulf region alongside parts of South and South East Asia including Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh constituting sizeable populations.
- Minorities of Shia people exist in these areas but the largest concentrations of Shias are located in Iran, Southern Iraq, Azerbaijan and Bahrain with other sizeable populations in Lebanon and Yemen.
- The differences between these two main sub-groups within Islam initially stemmed from a dispute over the leadership after the Prophet's death. Shia believes that leadership should have passed directly to his cousin/son-in-law, Ali bin Abu Talib as opposed to Abu Bakr who was elected from Mohamed's followers.
- The history of Sunni-Shia relations has often involved violence, dating back to the earliest development of the two competing sects.

IMPACT OF PERSECUTION AND ORGANISED VIOLENCE ON CULTURE AND IDENTITY

In reference to refugee trauma, people are often faced with traumatic forms of persecution and organised violence which deliberately target multiple aspects of their culture and identity.

> **EXAMPLES**
>
> In Afghanistan the Hazara have been persecuted on the basis of being Shia in a Sunni majority, for ethnic and racial differences from other groups and the perception that they collaborated with the communists during Soviet occupation.
>
> In Iraq Assyrians speak Aramaic and practice Christianity. Due to their Christian faith they came under persecution and random imprisonment from Saddam Hussein and their persecution intensified after his fall.
>
> In Sri Lanka Tamils have faced persecution due to their religious and ethnic identity and push for an independent state.

Below is some more information about the ways identity can be impacted by trauma experiences.

Traumatic experiences can impact the shaping of identity

- Especially if experienced early in life. The interpersonal nature of refugee trauma can play havoc with the attachment system particularly for children in their formative years give that trauma undermines the essence of trust in other people and in one's capacity to cope with an adverse environment.
- People can have a difficulty creating a coherent identity out of the multiple and often conflicting social categories.

Traumatic experiences can challenge previous forms identity

- Some people may suffer a loss in their class status through the process of migration and resettlement. This can leave people with a perception that regardless of how much they have in their new country it is never enough.
- Ideas of women bearing the responsibility of familial and social harmony could lead to a difficulty in leaving abusive relationships or tolerating domestic violence.
- When a person's religious identity becomes a minority in their new country this can lead to a reactionary rigidity.

Traumatic experiences can create new and difficult identities

- Ideas of being broken, spoiled, dirty or damaged.
- Masculine norms that value risk taking behaviours, control and respect can lead to 'acting out' or abusing certain substances. This might include being victims or perpetrators of violence, sporting accidents, gambling problems, alcoholism etc.
- Norms prescribed for women including compliance, acquiescence and non-assertion may lead to women trauma survivors feeling unable to express feelings of anger towards the traumatic event or perpetrator.
- Traumatic experiences can lead to a process of neutering or de-gendering. For example a woman who has facial scarring from being tortured may be seen as less attractive.

DID YOU KNOW?

"For many survivors the trauma sends into hiding the person that they knew and a new self-composed of old identities as transformed by trauma come to stand in that person's stead".

(Laura Brown 2008:51)

DID YOU KNOW?

Culture and identity also influences how individuals and communities express traumatic reactions.

While reactions to trauma seem to be common throughout all cultures and based in the physiology of human beings, people's outward expression of distress will be strongly affected by culture and context.

This can include the possibility of a greater normalization, acceptance and integration of pain with loss and grief acting as a vital part of identity and the social fabric of society.

Therefore trauma affects identity and in turn identity affects the experience and understanding of trauma.

RESETTLEMENT, CULTURAL TRANSITION AND ACCULTURATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COMPLEX INTERACTION

There are multiple stressors for refugees resettling in Australia which can lead to people feeling overwhelmed, confused and frustrated. Refugees are exposed to acute change and transition as a result of their forced migration and acculturation process in coming to Australia. These processes are complex, ongoing and can further people's distress, sense of loss and vulnerability. These experiences and events may lead to people's sense of meaning and worldview being compromised.

Aroche and Coello, 1994
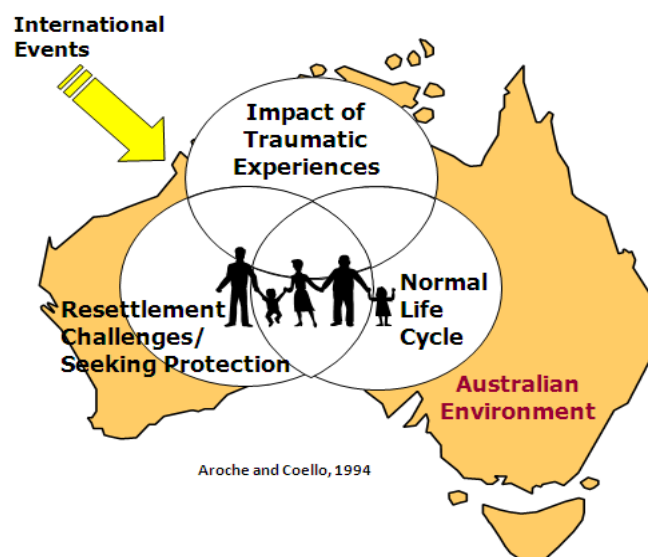
Cultural Transition

- Cultural transition refers to the ongoing process of change that can occur to a person and their identity when they permanently relocate to a different cultural settling.
- Many people from a refugee background exist in a "liminal identity state" where transition and change is a constant.
- The process of migration is disruptive and unsettling. Everything changes around you, and the cognitive maps that served you well to predict what would happen next, to navigate the physical and social environment no longer fit the landscape. People from refugee backgrounds are trying to grapple with this in the face of their traumatic reactions, an Australian environment that may not always be supportive alongside concerns for loved ones still in danger or left behind.
- Ideas of cognitive dissonance and place attachment can help us understand this experience further.

Cognitive Dissonance

- A part of the brain's cortex function is to help us anticipate what is likely to happen in our immediate environment based on repetition and familiarity with what's around us. Cognitive dissonance results when there is a loss of this familiarity predictability as a result of being in new environment.

- Given the complexities of resettlement interwoven with dealing with traumatic reactions where loss of memory and concentration may result it is little wonder then one of the most common complaints of migrants and refugees in their initial time in a new country is that they feel "stupid" and "out of control".

Place Attachment

- Place attachment refers to the process of having a sense of connection, security, familiarity and positive expectation towards our surroundings.

- We gain place attachments from many different aspects of our environment.

- This includes the people around us reflecting back who we are by race, ethnicity etc, the geography of a place including the weather, physiognomy, sign posts, streets etc and all of the unwritten rules and idiosyncrasies that we call culture.

- Given that refugee's place attachment has been irrevocably disrupted, they may have a nostalgic longing, sense of loss and complex grief for their homeland. They may compare their homeland with their new environment and this may add to their sense of dislocation and alienation.

- Developing place attachment can be very difficult and/or can take a very long time to acquire if at all. This is especially the case if people are feeling unwelcomed and marginalized by Australia society and government policies.

Enculturation and Acculturation

The concepts of enculturation and acculturation are also useful in understanding the ways in which we integrate culture into our lived experience and what can happen when cultural transition takes place.

Enculturation refers to:

- the process we all undergo when we are children. We learn from our parents, our family, our school and others the requirements of our surrounding culture. We then take on the values and behaviours appropriate or necessary in that culture. This process is also referred to as 'socialisation'.

Acculturation refers to:

- the process of cultural and psychological change at a later stage when our original culture or process of enculturation comes into contact with a new cultural setting.

A Model of Acculturation

There are different ways that people will respond to the acculturation process. As a result of their past experiences intertwined with resettlement challenges and other factors some people may feel a lack of control or unsafe in Australia. They could also feel a sense of persecution around aspects of their identity here in Australia due to direct discrimination or misunderstanding about the places they come from.

The following model will help us examine some of these responses. It is Important to bear in mind that people may not adopt a rigid version found in this model. Again there is a continuum of possibilities and this could also change over time.

Integration

Assimilation   **Acculturation**   **Rejection**

Marginalization
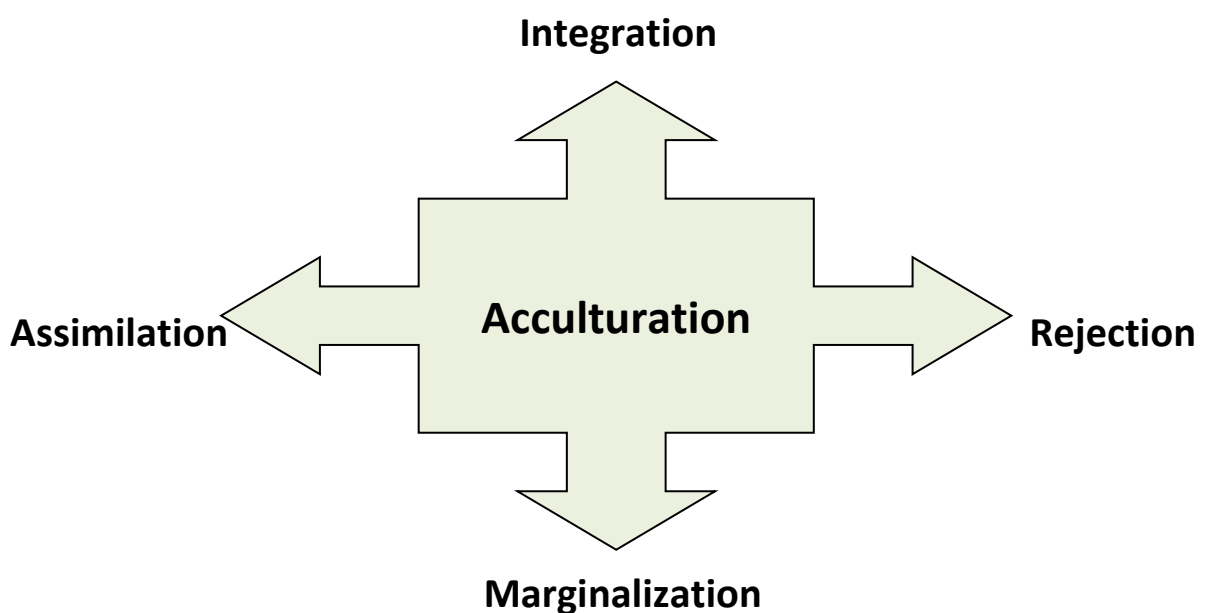
Assimilation

- People moving towards the new culture.
- Some people may seek safety and a sense of belonging through adopting the new culture.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Some refugee young people willingly adopt dominant cultural values of Australia based on the influence of their peer group and reject their own culture. This could lead to intergenerational conflict.

Rejection

- People turning towards their culture of origin or particular aspects becoming more pronounced in the new country.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Some people may become more devout in their religion whereas they weren't over religious in their country of origin.

Integration

- A synthesis or merging of both cultures.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> People who identify themselves as Australian Vietnamese or Chinese Australian

Marginalisation

- If people feel threatened, unwelcomed or devalued in the new setting this could result in them becoming marginalized.
- This could lead to a rejection of both cultures.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> For example young people may take part in fundamentalist religious sects to assert difference and power from the dominant culture

In Australia under the policy of multiculturalism the ideal acculturation response would be to integrate the laws and secular values of Australian society whilst maintaining one's cultural heritage.

IMPACTS OF CULTURAL TRANSITION ON WORKER-CLIENT RELATIONS

Clients may not always understand your behaviour and what is expected of them in Australia. This may lead to misunderstandings between workers and clients. These can occur as a result of the socio political context of their homeland including systematic state sponsored violence, the impacts of traumatic experiences and or particular cultural idioms such as non-verbal cues or what is discussed in the public versus private space etc.

Responses based on socio-political context of country of origin

- Mistrust and suspicion of service providers
- Reluctance to disclose to workers
- Unfamiliarity with types of service provision
- Service uptake may seem unnecessary or unwanted by refugee survivors
- Preference for community based support over government and non-government support

Responses based on traumatic experiences

- Shame and guilt over welfare provision
- Lack of service uptake
- Survival strategies (being forceful and demanding, offering bribes or hiding the fact that they have other forms of support)
- Lack of compliance or over-compliance with service providers

Responses based on cultural idioms

- Reluctance to disclose to workers as seen to be culturally inappropriate i.e. don't speak about difficulties with strangers.
- Clients may not understand your behaviour and what is expected of them in terms of social cues, informality versus formality, institutionalised processes and other aspects to the setting.
- Clients may not be happy about the choice of the interpreter or worker on the basis of gender or religion or ethnicity or all of the above!

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON GAINING KNOWLEDGE

- Am I aware of some of the basic socio-economic and political factors of where my client has come from?
- Am I reading a cross section of information about the clients' socio-political background and am I wary of sources of information which discriminate against certain group or are absolutist in their position?
- Am I keeping a balance between learning from the client rather than just learning about them?
- Do I have an understanding of the difficulties refugees face and an appreciation that everyone is different in their response?
- Do I see the client as a victim rather than a resilient person who has survived terrible circumstances?
- Am I responding to this or reacting?
- Am I aware of the specific challenges my client is facing or has identified for themselves as it relates to the complex interaction?
- How I identified if the client has any traumatic reactions which are impacting on their ability to function?
- If so how am I responding to this in terms of referrals, explaining services etc.?
- Am I listening to my clients' priorities in terms of the resettlement process?
- Can I assist the clients' with these identified needs in my role or do I need to source additional referrals?
- Am I observing any stressors or concerns that the client has identified as a result of cultural transition and acculturation?
- Am I aware of ways to assist the client with their response or do I need to seek support?
- Am I up to date on culturally appropriate services and provision e.g. food, places of worship that are safe and relevant to the clients' needs?

Session 4
ATTITUDES AND SKILLS: WORKER ATTRIBUTES AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNICATION

ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

Being able to demonstrate our cultural competency through our attitudes and communication skills is critical to working with people from refugee backgrounds in a cross culturally competent manner. In this session we will identify some of main skills and components behind culturally competent communication. These include:

1. Adopting key attitudes of cultural competency

2. Communicating effectively

3. Using interpreters

4. Creating and maintaining strong professional boundaries

5.   Practicing organisational, professional and self-care

WHAT ARE THE KEY ATTITUDES OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY?

Openness and willingness to learn	Acceptance that there are other worldviews	Respect for client's Humanity

Humility	Positive

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Communicating effectively and in a culturally competent manner involves an ongoing process and capacity to respond appropriately to the needs of people whose culture may be different the dominant norms of a society and or our own.

How and what you communicate to refugee and asylum seeker clients will have an impact on how well they trust you, and how safe and in control they feel with you. Being able to use interpreters where necessary, communicate with positive regard towards your clients while also being able to sensitively address challenging issues when they arise are also important aspects to effective cross cultural communication. Below is a list of suggestions and examples for each.

Communicating safety, control and trust

- Take time to ease into the conversation. Take care not to ask questions in such a way that it appears like an interrogation

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> *Good afternoon. My name is Julie. Thanks for coming in today. Did you get here ok? Please take a seat where you would like. I just need to close the door for our privacy. Would that be ok with you or would prefer to have it opened? Please let me know if there is anything I can do to make the room more comfortable for you.*
>
> *I really appreciate you taking the time to come and see me. I am interested to know more about you but I am mindful that it is important I explain to you about why I am here and what we do. Would that be ok?*

- Ask open ended questions to encourage client to offer information and knowledge of service provision, your role, their participation etc.

- Explain simply and clearly the service and options, your role and its limits, when and how clients can communicate with you, and what to do if you see each other in other settings, so they know what to expect from the beginning.

- Inform client of their rights; including explaining confidentiality and privacy

- Tend to the most pressing needs determined by the client to encourage safety

- Be mindful of the immediate situation and the systemic intersection of circumstances which could jeopardise their sense of safety e.g. living in relatively unsafe neighbourhoods as a result of low income

- Avoiding anger, dismissal or humiliation

- Convey respect for the clients' humanity e.g. *'I respect people on the basis of being fellow human beings regardless of where they are from or what they have done.'*

- Use of 'we' rather than 'you' and 'I' in relation to service/tasks etc can foster a respect and a working partnership

- Make time for the client to ask questions as a part of your consultation

- Refrain from rushing or not giving yourself enough time to prepare yourself for client

- Be as consistent and predictable as possible in terms of environment and your behaviour

- Use a calm voice and open body language

- Communicate transparency- Justify your questions to client and need for information/tasks (explain the logic of why you need to ask)

EXAMPLE

"Just to let you know that I may need to ask questions so that I can get a better understanding about what is going on for you. Of course you have the right to not answer these questions and I will respect that. It is also important that you know you can ask me any questions. For instance you can ask me why I have asked a particular question or if there is something that you do not feel comfortable with. A part of my role is to listen to you and to do my best to understand and learn about you. This means that your knowledge and skills including the way you understand things is very important to me and for us to work in partnership together to support you in your life."

Use Interpreters When Necessary

Some general principles when using interpreters include:

- ✓ Always use professional interpreters.

- ✓ Don't assume which is the appropriate language – ask the client to tell you which language they want.

- ✓ Be aware of gender issues. Women may prefer a female interpreter.

- ✓ Be aware of different ethnic groups and tensions within the same country as this could affect the choice of interpreter.

- ✓ Brief and debrief the interpreter before and after sessions. They can be affected by the powerful stories and emotions of the clients too.

- ✓ Always introduce the interpreter and explain their role.

- ✓ Always ensure you inform the client that the interpreter is bound by the same confidentiality that you are. They may be concerned about their private details being shared within their own community by the interpreter.

- ✓ Address and make eye contact with the client, not the interpreter.

- ✓ Speak directly to the client in first person

- ✓ Use short and succinct sentences

- ✓ Refrain from lengthy explanations or monologues – be mindful to break things up in digestible chunks for client and interpreter

- ✓ Assess the interpreter's ability to convey non-verbal content and the connotations of the client's responses.

- ✓ If possible request the same interpreter each time you see the client.

- ✓ Be aware of any signs of client distress or any other signs that things may not be going well and do not be afraid to terminate consultation with interpreter if necessary.

- ✓ Telephone interpreting is best suited to discussions that will take less than 15 mins while for consultations that are more complex or will take long a face to face interpreter might be more appropriate.

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Conveying positive regard in culturally competent communication

Be sure to convey positive regard in your communication with clients. The positive connection you make can contribute in a meaningful way to restoring client's sense of dignity and value as a human being.

Ways to convey positive regard include:

- Be patient and be willing to repeat information several times. Confirm the client understands through inviting them to feedback their understanding of your engagement.

- Use your general cultural knowledge to positively frame some aspects of client's background to encourage connection and positive regard.

> **EXAMPLE**
>
> Ahmed tells his caseworker that he is from Islamabad in Pakistan. The caseworker has read enough about Pakistan to know that Islamabad is the capital city where all government institutions are located. She has also seen images of the city and compared to other cities in Pakistan it is known to be one of the planned with established gardens and quality roads. One of her other clients likened it to Canberra and told her that you can get beautiful berries including strawberries and raspberries there. She relays this information to Ahmed by saying that she has heard about these things relating to his city and she asks him for his opinion on such ideas.

- Try to frame the client's uptake in a positive light and appropriate the services according to the client's goals and hopes for theirs and their family's future.
- Spend time relating issues from the clients' cultural perspectives to practices and understandings in Australia.

EXAMPLE

Ask the client about what hopes they have for them and their children? Most people want a good job, an education and a home and to find forms of safety and security. Ask the client what are the ways they think you could help them achieve these goals. Then let the client know that as part of your role you could explain some of the ways in which people achieve success in Australia.

"In Australia there are particular ways of achieving success. Most of the time there are a series of steps that people need to take."

Ask the client what do they think their child would need to be successful at school? Work with the client to articulate these stepping stones and if needed explain further.

"Young people need to attend school on time and do their homework in order for them to have the chance for further success which usually means being able to find a job or go to university. There are lots of other smaller stepping stones."

Communicating cultural competency through challenging issues

▪ When dealing with difficult or confronting issues explain things in a general way rather than personalising it specific to the client.

EXAMPLE

"There are a number of challenges and difficulties involved in settling in a new country and people will have a range of responses to this at different points in time. Some people are confused and sad sometimes, some people get frustrated and angry. Some people make comparisons between their homeland and the new country and miss what was in the past. All of these things are quite normal and common. For people who have been through difficult experiences in their homeland, settling in a new country can be even more challenging."

▪ When the worker is a reminder of a trauma they may need to take the time very early to contextualize what they represent.

EXAMPLE

"I realize that I am a straight person who is going to talk to you about being a gay man. I wondering how that set of circumstances is affecting your ability to tell me about your experience and I'm also wondering what I can do to facilitate this process for you?"

- If the worker is from the same ethnic/religious etc group, the client may feel hesitant revealing something in their history for fear of the workers' reaction. For example Sarah, a caseworker with an Ethiopian background had a client who had underdone FGM. Sarah had also undergone the procedure but didn't want to disclose this information to her client. Instead her responses were as follows:

EXAMPLE

"Many women in our communities were cut when they were little and many of those found it painful and frightening. My mother did. I'm wondering if that was true for you."

"I'm aware that there is a myth that these experiences are not painful which can make it hard to talk about it if that's been your experience. I just want you to know that I'm aware we say this to ourselves and also I know it's a myth because it happened in my family"

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CREATING STRONG PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

The establishment of professional boundaries are particularly important to cross competency. Having an understanding where your worldview is situated in relation to your client's is crucial to remaining impartial and open. Being able to legitimately understand the client's needs from their perspective and not your own is in part addressed through the practice of strong professional boundaries. Coupled with this clients from refugee backgrounds may have complex needs which could evoke unrealistic expectations from both the worker and the client. This may be especially the case with bicultural workers.

People with professional boundaries

- Are aware of their own allegiances, biases and beliefs and refrain from imposing this on clients

- Are able to incorporate regular self-reflection into their work life to maintain impartiality towards client

- Practice self-responsibility through awareness and self-care

- Maintain professional detachment i.e. refraining from affiliating oneself with a particular community or people and providing the same service provision to all clients

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✎ **Notes**

How to set and maintain professional boundaries

- Be friendly towards the client, but don't be your client's friend.

- Be consistent.

- Only reveal your personal information to the client if it is relevant to your client's needs. Too much self-disclosure can shift the focus from the client to you.

- Sensitively address boundary issues or warning signs as they arise with your client by re-clarifying your role and the limits of it. For example emphasise to the client your need to abide by the codes of conduct of your organization in order to maintain your job.

- Discuss and debrief with your supervisor and/or other colleagues about boundary issues to help reduce stress and get feedback and support, particularly when taking reactions personally or reacting strongly to the client. The more sensitive the issue the more important to have a face to face consultation with the client.

- Take care of yourself. Maintain good physical, emotional and mental health.

- Be realistic about your role - Recognise that your client's journey is an ongoing process that you are a part of but not the whole sum of.

- Resource and encourage the client as much as possible to empower themselves.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Inevitably we will be affected by our clients and their stories. This is part of our physiology.

The brain contains a special class of cells - called mirror neurons, which makes us sensitive to the movements and intentions of others. They allow you to feel what another person feels without even thinking about. For example, when someone yawns, you feel like yawning too (Arden, 2010).

Therefore being exposed to the distress and traumatic stories of refugees and asylum seekers, may cause you to experience distress, anxiety and sadness as well. This is called **vicarious traumatisation**, or trauma felt at second hand through the experiences of another.

Some important things to understand:

- Symptoms of vicarious trauma will be as different for each worker (Rothschild et al, 2006).

- The effect of vicarious trauma is normal and unavoidable.

- Don't ignore your feelings of distress. Otherwise you are at risk of burnout (Rothschild et al, 2006, Saakvitne et al, 1996)

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF CARE

Understanding that we will be impacted by our worldview and our clients' requires us not only to be mindful of our actions towards others but also the ways in which we respond to ourselves. Being a culturally competent professional means more than just being aware of ourselves; it also requires us to integrate the practice of self-care on an organisational, professional and personal level.

Organisational Self Care Strategies

Actively putting in strategies to minimise the impact of vicarious trauma and ensure staff are well supported is an organisational responsibility.

Some strategies include:

- Regular acknowledgement of workers' efforts and achievements
- Supportive and consistent supervision for workers
- Provision of training and professional development
- Setting realistic workloads and giving a variety of tasks
- Foster a supportive work culture where work related stresses including cultural misunderstandings are accepted as real and legitimate

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✎ **Notes**

Professional Self Care Strategies

Some important professional strategies that workers and volunteers can use to take care of themselves include:

- Setting and maintaining good professional boundaries
- Regular monitoring of work load and adjustment according to needs and circumstance – avoid regular overtime etc.
- Try and maintain a balance in your work day i.e. Take proper lunch breaks away from your desk and debrief with understanding colleagues where necessary
- Take advantage of the professional development opportunities and other extra circular activities offered by your organisation e.g. fun days
- Schedule 'cultural competency' reflective meetings

Personal Self Care Strategies

It is important to make your personal life a priority so you can be the best you can be while at work. Some important things include:

- AVOID the H.A.L.T.S (Refrain from getting too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired or Serious!)
- Find people, places and things in your personal life that sustain rather than deplete you
- Be mindful of what media you read and watch and who you choose discuss refugee and other cross cultural issues with
- Regularly reflect on what you are doing that's positive and what has worked as a way to counter balance ongoing process of learning in cultural competency

✎ **Notes**

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON ATTITUDES AND SKILLS

- Am I checking in with my feelings and attitudes before I consult with clients?
- How am I conveying safety, control and trust in my verbal and non-verbal communication towards the client?
- How am I conveying positive regard towards my client?
- Am I using interpreters when necessary?
- How am I applying the principles of good practice as outlined in the section on interpreters?
- Is there anything I can do to improve my practice of working with interpreters?
- Are there any trauma or negative events from my past which are impacting on my view of certain clients or my capacity to communicate?
- Am I regularly reflecting on the signs and symptoms of vicarious trauma in me and with the help of my supervisor?
- What am I doing to address these issues? Do I need to seek further support?
- How am I maintaining professional boundaries with my clients and in my workplace?
- What kinds of organisational and professional self-care strategies are in place at my workplace?
- How are they helpful to me in terms of self-care and maintaining my professional boundaries?
- Are there areas for improvement?
- What are my doing to practice daily self-care in my workplace and in my personal/home life?
- What are the factors which inhibit or assist in maintaining self-care strategies?
- What can I do to improve the maintenance and practice of self-care?
- Do I need additional support in this? E.g. joining a gym and taking up a personal trainer, having a regular massage from a qualified practitioner?

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Country Summary: AFGHANISTAN

Note: *This information sheet is designed to give participants a broad understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts that clients have come from, and the implications it may have for your work. Workers should use this information as a base to help them explore the unique realities of individual clients and their communities. It is not intended to stereotype cultures and behaviours, or to serve as 'recipes' for interventions. This information is assumed to be correct at the time of writing and will need to be updated periodically as circumstances change.*

Numbers of clients seen by STARTTS

As of the end of 2016, Afghanistan-born clients made up nearly 11.43 % of STARTTS' total client base. This includes 36% of clients identifying as 'Hazara', 26% identifying as 'Afghan' with smaller percentages of people identifying as 'Tajik' or 'Pashtun'.

	2012	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**
No. clients	265	293	396	265	513
% of total STARTTS clients	11.84%	10.98%	10.61%	9.12%	11.43%

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General Information

Where located: Afghanistan is a landlocked, mountainous, arid and sparsely populated country, with an area of 647,500 square kilometres, bordered by Iran to the west, Pakistan to the south and east, the People's Republic of China to the far north-east and the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north-east.[1]

Population: 33 million[2]

Official languages: Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian)

Other languages: Uzbek and Turkmeni are spoken by 11% of the population and

approx. 30 dialects are spoken by 4% including Hazaragi & Balochi

Main religions: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shia Muslim 19%, other 1% (Sikh, Hindu and Jewish)

Ethnicities: Pashtun (42%), Tajik (27%), Hazara (9%), Uzbek (9%), Aimak (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baloch (2%) and others 4% (e.g Pashai, Nuristani, Arab, Brahui, Pamiri, Gujjar, etc.)[3]

Life Expectancy: Females (61.1 years) Males (57.8 years)[4]

Type of government: Islamic republic

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Afghanistan is a highly complex and multicultural society with many layers of civilisation and cultural influences due its strategic location. Since 1979 it has been impacted by war, conflict and occupation. It is important to understand that all communities and ethnicities in Afghanistan have been adversely affected by such events. Therefore Afghanistan has been the leading source country for refugees and asylum seekers for close to 4 decades until it was recently surpassed by Syria.

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[1] http://minorityrights.org/country/afghanistan/

[2] http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx

[3] http://www.worldlibrary.org/articles/demography_of_afghanistan

[4] http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Soviet invasion and Mujahedeen resistance

In 1978, the communist Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) seized power from President Daoud Khan. This led to rebellion by various tribal opposition groups, who formed themselves into a guerrilla fighting force that came to be known as the 'Mujahedeen'. In 1979 the Soviet Union occupied Afghanistan and sent 80,000 troops to protect the communist regime against the US backed Mujahedeen. Both sides fought for the next 10 years. The regime commenced a systematic political repression, targeting 'enemies of the revolution' including mostly educated upper and middle-class Pashtun and Tajik ethnicities, who were killed, imprisoned and tortured. Disappearances were commonplace. In 1988, a battle-weary Soviet Union admitted defeat and the last Soviet troops left in 1989 after agreeing to a neutral Afghan state. The agreement ended a war that killed an estimated 562,000 civilians (Lacina & Glebitsch, 2005, p. 154) and overall 1.5-2 million Afghans (Klaus, 1994, p. 129) while creating up to 5.5 million refugees. The war decimated the country's agricultural sector and infrastructure. According to Hauer (1989) the impact on Afghan culture of the war included the destruction of "shared Afghan cultural characteristics….with the outcome that the country was split into different ethnic groups, with no language, religion, or culture in common" (p. 40).

Civil war

- Due to continued conflict between the government and the Mujahedeen, as well as factional and tribal conflicts within the Mujahedeen itself, Afghanistan descended into civil war in 1992. As noted by a Human Rights Watch report all major factions have committed gross violations of human rights and an estimated 1.5 million lost their lives as a result of the conflict. Multiple countries have been implicated in supporting particular factions including the United States, Pakistan, Iran and Russia.[5]

The rise of the Taliban rule

- The Taliban, an Afghan Islamic militia movement that emerged in 1994 amidst the civil war began to take over parts of Afghanistan, the first city being Kandahar before eventually seizing control of Kabul in 1996 whereby they installed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, using a Wahhabi inspired interpretation of Islam. The Arabic word ṭālib means 'student' and seeker of knowledge'. Taliban early recruits comprised of Afghan refugee students mainly of Pashtun origin from Islamic schools in Pakistan. The group's initial appeal was their ability to bring order and control which included holding war lords to account amidst the violence and injustice imposed upon civilian populations during the civil war. The Taliban's Islamic Emirate was recognised only by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. An opposition group to the Taliban was formed from various Afghan ethnicities (mainly Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara) called 'The Northern Alliance'.

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[5] https://www.hrw.org/report/2000/12/15/fueling-aghanistans-war-press
https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/07/01/crisis-impunity-role-pakistan-russia-and-iran-fueling-   civil-war-afghanistan

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Taliban rule

- Human Rights Watch have recorded multiple and extensive human rights violations during the Taliban's reign. This includes the 1998 massacre of civilians and non-combatants in the northern city of Mazār-i Sharīf which comprised of mostly Hazara occupants alongside the violations of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Afghan women, other minority groups and political opponents.[6]

- The Taliban enacted both ordinary and extra-ordinary forms of state sponsored violence upon the Afghan population including random acts of violence, public executions, and a moral police force who incited fear and control and imposed strict codes of conduct based on Wahhabi influenced teachings. The Taliban also desecrated historical artefacts that were deemed to be in opposition to their ideology including the Buddhist statues at Bāmiān and the smashing of other ancient sculptures in the country's museums.[7]

Allied Forces invasion and new government

- The Taliban protected Saudi born radical Osama bin Laden and his followers who had been living in Jalālābād since May 1996. Capitalizing on his financial support for the Taliban, Osama bin Laden was able to exercise ideological influence over their rule. Although they were initially an Afghan inspired movement, Bin Laden's anti-Western global jihād increasingly become a part of the Taliban movement. After Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on US soil in 2001, a US led Coalition of multiple nations including Australia invaded and occupied Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai was installed as the interim president and was elected president in 2004.

- At the end of 2016, 1 in 10 Afghans were displaced by war, conflict and occupation. [8] Pakistan and Iran houses the majority of Afghan refugees as first countries of asylum however both nation states offer no permanent protection. As the end of 2016 Pakistan hosted 1.4 million Afghan refugees. Given the porous nature of its borders alongside internal problems with terrorist activity and growing resentment towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan, this has led to the forced removal of refugees back into Afghanistan with 380,000 returnees as of the end of 2016.[9]

- As of August 2016, more than 31,000 civilian has been killed since the American led Coalition forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Many people facing ill health and war

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[6] www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/+236/eo895
https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/10/29/humanity-denied-systematic-violations-womens-rights-afghanistan
https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/10/07/afghanistan-ethnically-motivated-abuses-against-civilians/human-rights-watch
https://www.hrw.org/report/2001/02/01/massacres-hazaras-afghanistan

[7] www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/+236/eo895

[8] http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/

[9] http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/

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wounds have found it difficult to get medical support due to the lack of safe passage within the country. The war has worsened poverty, sanitation, access to health and environmental degradation for Afghan civilians.[10]

Allied Forces withdrawal

On 28 December 2014, NATO formally ended combat operations in Afghanistan and handed over the responsibility of national security to the Afghan government, marking the beginning of the new phase of the conflict.[11] Violence has worsened and there is limited access to basic services. The number of violent incidents, including suicide attacks and roadside bombings, has increased since the mid-2000s, killing thousands of combatants and civilians in addition to the abduction and execution of international aid workers. Afghanistan's national security agency has continued to violate civilians' human rights and regional warlords have used property destruction, rape and murder to discourage displaced people from reclaiming their land and property.[12] Additionally parts of the country are still under the control of non-state actors which includes over 20 insurgent groups such as the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad Union and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).[13] Many Afghans face issues of ongoing internal displacement.[14]

◼ According to Human Rights Watch (2015, p. 1) "the administration of former President Hamid Karzai installed many powerful warlords and failed to confront others, while many others have been funded by and worked alongside international forces, further entrenching them politically into the fabric of Afghan society. In this way impunity in Afghanistan is both a domestic and foreign problem for which the solution resides not only in Kabul but in foreign capitals such as Washington, DC".

Persecuted Groups

It is important to recognise that many people from all ethnicities in Afghanistan have suffered from various and incremental forms of persecution as a result of ongoing conflict over the last 38 years. This has been as a result of external forces such as the Soviet Union's and American led Coalition's invasion, the rise of the Taliban alongside the resultant in-fighting, civil war and unrest between various militia groups aligned with particular ethnicities e.g. Hezb-e-Islami (Pashtun), Ittihad-e-Islami (Pashtun), Jamiat-e-Islami Afghanistan (Tajik), Junbesh-i-Milli –Islami Afghanistan (Uzbek) and Islami-Shi'I Hazaras (Hazara). [15]

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[10] http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/afghan

[11] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/28/nato-ends-afghanistan-combat-operations-after-13-years
[12] Country Profile: Afghanistan. (see footnote 2).
[13] https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-01-30qr-section3-security.pdf
[14] https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/afghanistan
[15] https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/13/ten-dollar-talib-and-womens-rights/afghan-women-and-risks-reintegration-and

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However certain minorities have faced longer term persecution in Afghanistan while particular groups of people have suffered under the weight of religious fundamentalism vis a vis the rise of the Taliban and other forces. For instance atheism or agnosticism is not tolerated and the UK recently granted asylum to an atheist Afghan.[16] The Afghan Constitution states that "followers of other religions are free to exercise their faith and perform their religious rites within the limits of the provisions of law".[17] It t also states that "In Afghanistan, no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam."[18]

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when	When came to Australia
Hazara	- Religious minority - Historical grudges - Ethnic and racial differences - Retaliation for killing of 2,000 Taliban in 1997 by Hazara and Uzbek fighters - Perception that they collaborated with the USSR during Soviet occupation - Since the fall of the Taliban, their plight has improved and they have officially been given full rights to Afghan citizenship but are still targeted for attack in Afghanistan, Pakistan and face discrimination in Iran.	Physical abuse, harassment, mass executions, bombings, detention, forced labour and recruitment, denial of basic rights, extortion, illegal taxation.	Since the 90s, Hazara have fled Afghanistan into Pakistan and Iran or by using people smugglers, into Europe, Australia and the US.	Approx. 2,000 Hazara have arrived in Australia since 1998 via unauthorised boat arrival and have settled mostly in Melbourne and Sydney.[19]
Sikhs and Hindus	- Religious beliefs - Cultural practices such as cremation of the dead, which is forbidden under Islam.	Unable to access state education, discrimination, harassment, physical abuse, fire and	During the Soviet occupation, many fled to India and a second wave followed in	The 2011 census lists 72,000 Sikhs in Australia but there is no data about how many of these

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[16] http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jan/14/afghan-atheist-uk-asylum
[17] http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf
[18] http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf
[19] https://hazaraasylumseekers.wordpress.com/tag/australian-hazaras/

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			the 1990s during civil war.	came from Afghanistan[20].
Christians	• Religious beliefs	Unlike Sikhs and Hindus, there are no Christian seats in the national parliament and no Christian schools or places of worship. Christians have been targeted for kidnappings and killed.	Many Christians fled during Taliban rule, with the main Afghan Christian community established in India.	There are 55 Afghan-born people in Australia who identify as Christian[21].
Women	• War, occupation and gender based discrimination	Women and girls in conflict areas are killed and wounded by insurgents. Local 'codes' of honour have been violated by international troops through intrusive 'night raids'. Women's mobility is restricted by the country's insecurity and the loss of familial 'breadwinners' creates further marginalisation. Radicalised insurgents attempt to deny	It is very difficult for women to find safe passage out of Afghanistan and if they do it is also difficult to support themselves in countries of transit such as Pakistan and Iran. Many women and girls remain in unsafe situations and conflict areas within the country.	A total of 1002 women at risk visas were granted in 2014-2014 by the Australian government with 46.2% of these going to Afghan women. In 2015-2016 a total of 1,277 women at risk visas were granted with 27.3% of those places given to Afghan women. Proportionally the women at risk visa category constitutes on average 1-2% of

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[20] http://blog.id.com.au/2012/population/australian-census-2011/2011-australian-census-fastest-growing-religions/
[21] ABS (2011). See footnote 5.

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		women and girls access to education through attacks on school and threatening students and teachers. They also threaten, attack and even kill women who attempt to work outside of the home alongside women activists including journalists, aid workers etc.[22]		Australia's humanitarian program. [23]
Middle class Tajiks and Pashtuns	• Political opinion and part of the ruling elite at the time of Soviet Invasion	The community regime used a variety of techniques of organised violence to intimidate, harass and kill many of the middle and ruling classes in Afghanistan. This included the use of torture, raping of women, booby traps, enforced disappearances, mines, chemical substances and scorched earth	Many fled to Pakistan, India and Iran and have been included in resettlement programs including Australia's.	According to Bowles and Mehraby (2007, p. 303) prior to the 1999 second wave of Afghan refugees into Australia there were an estimated 14,000 Afghan refugees principally from Tajik and Pashtun communities who had resettled in Australia

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[22] https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/07/13/ten-dollar-talib-and-womens-rights/afghan-women-and-risks-reintegration-and
[23] https://www.border.gov.au/about/corporate/information/fact-sheets/60refugee

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		and depopulation programs (Kakar, n.d.).		

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Other ethnicities and tribes came under persecution from the Taliban and during the previous civil wars, include Hindus, the nomadic **Kuchis**, and the **Nuristanis Panjshiris** (related to the Tajiks). The latter two groups historically suffer from lack of access to arable land and widespread poverty and illiteracy which made them vulnerable to extortion, drug trafficking and forced displacement by local militia and religious leaders.[24] (The status of Panjshiris has risen since the fall of the Taliban and with American backing, they have become dominant in key security posts).[25] However there are no sources indicating any significant migration of these groups to Australia.

Resettlement in Australia

- Up until 1979, most Afghans who migrated to Australia were university students who stayed after completing their studies. After this there has been two distinctive ways of Afghan refugee resettlement to Australia.

  - The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought the first wave of approximately 7000 Afghans in the 1980s and 1990s, mostly educated Pashtuns and Tajiks.

  - The withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and the rise of the Taliban brought the second and biggest wave of Afghans between 2006 and 2011, mostly Hazaras, a persecuted ethnic and religious minority. The stream of Hazara arrivals via the onshore and offshore humanitarian program has continued until the present day.[26]

- 80% of Afghans have come through the Humanitarian Program, 19% through the Family Stream and the remainder through other visas.[27,28] The 2016 census counted 45,610[29] Afghan-born people living in Australia, with a median age of 32 years.[30]

- The largest groups of Afghan Australians in NSW reside in the LGAs of City of Ryde (North Ryde, Macquarie Park, Marsfield, and Top Ryde), The Hills Shire (Castle Hill, Cherrybrook, and Kellyville), Blacktown (Glenwood, Parklea, Stanhope Gardens and Bella Vista) and Sutherland Shire (Miranda). Many Hazara reside in the western Sydney suburbs of Auburn and Merrylands.

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[24] http://www.minorityrights.org/5429/afghanistan/afghanistan-overview.html#current
[25] http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/17/opinion/17harrison.html?_r=0
[26] https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/afghanistan.pdf
[27] http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/country-profiles/_files/afghanistan.pdf
[28] http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/7201_0
[29] http://stat.data.abs.gov.au/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=ERP_COB
[30] http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3412.02015-16?OpenDocument

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Afghan Culture

- Afghanistan's demography reflects its location with the existence of several minorities. The main ethnic groups are dispersed throughout the country as follows: Pashtuns, the majority group, are located mainly in the south and south-east but also live all over state; Tajiks live mainly the north and north-east and Kabul region; Hazaras are located in central Afghanistan (Hazarajat) and in Kabul; Uzbeks in the north, Aimaq in the west; Turkmens in the north; Baluchis in the west and north-west and in the east are the Nuristani.[31]

- Cultural practices vary according to the region. The Pashtuns from the southern and eastern parts of the country follow Pashtun culture, while the western, northern and central regions are influenced by Central Asian and Persian cultures. People's loyalties are first to their local leaders, their tribes and to their ethnic identification, which has prevented the formation of one unified Afghan nation.[32] However this may not be the case amongst certain individuals and some younger populations of Afghans growing up in Australia who may wish to be identified as 'Afghan'.

- Afghan culture is collectivist. Each tribal group claims a common male ancestor and is divided into sub-tribes, clans, lineages and families. Genealogy establishes inheritance, mutual obligations and solidarity. Hospitality, the importance of family dignity, honour, shame and revenge are central values to Afghan identity.

- Afghanistan's holidays follow the Islamic calendar. Afghan-specific holidays are Nowruz (Farmer's Day), an ancient annual Afghan festival which celebrates both the beginning of spring and the New Year. The observances usually last two weeks, culminating on the first day of the Afghan New Year, March 21. Other holidays are Afghan Independence Day (19 August) and Mujahideen Victory Day (28 April).

- Other significant days in the Islamic calendar:

  o Eid-al Fitr which marks the end of Ramadan.

  o Eid al adha or Greater Eid (Afghans call this Eid –e Qorban) which is a significant Islamic adherence for Muslims. It is also known as the Feast of Sacrifice as it commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham) willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God as an act of obedience to God. Greater Eid also marks the end of Hajj, the five days' religious journey (pilgrims pray around the holy Kaaba at the Grand Mosque) when millions of Muslims from all around the world travel to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

  o Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar. The 10th day (Ashura) of Muharram is the most significant. While Shia Muslims celebrate this day to mark the death of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Mohammed who was beheaded during the battle of Karbala, Sunni Muslims celebrate the

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[31] from http://www.minorityrights.org/5429/afghanistan/afghanistan-overview.html#current

[32] Bowles, R. & Mehraby, N. (2007). Lost in limbo: cultural dimensions in psychotherapy and supervision with a temporary protection visa holder from Afghanistan. In Drozdek, B. & Wilson, J. (Eds). *Voices of Trauma*. New York: Springer.

victory of Moses over the Egyptian Pharaoh. While for Sunni Muslims it is a day of celebrations, for Shia Muslims it is a day of mourning.

Implications for service provision

- The continued violence and political situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is an ongoing source of trauma for Afghan individuals and communities. This might include fear for loved ones and financial obligations for people left behind or in situations of danger and the experience of complex grief.

- Due to current policies with specific reference TPV's, double negative pathways family sponsorship, financial obligations for family members overseas it is important to be aware of the potential burden this could have on individuals and the community as a whole and the adverse impacts that such stressors could have on resettlement and acculturation processes. This might include people being forced to work in the informal economy and being susceptible to various forms of workplace exploitation and a lack of overall access to services and multiple referral pathways which could impede on people's bio-psychosocial health.

Implications for clinical service provision

- As a result of the protracted nature of the conflict and limited opportunities for safe repatriation, complex grief and cultural bereavement may be an issue for some Afghan clients in the clinical setting. Additionally the protracted nature of the conflict and life in exile may have led to cultural differences between family members. For example some family members may have grown up in Iran or Pakistan, others in Australia while others may have direct experiences of life in Afghanistan. Such differences in life course and development can place pressure on community and familial cohesion.

- Some workers have noted that as a result of such resettlement and other stressors some clients and families may be at risk of domestic and family violence (DFV). Workers should be aware of the psychological forms of DVF including verbal, financial and emotional forms of violence imposed upon some Afghan women including constraints on mobility, independence and control of finances by other family members. This can include women perpetrators as well i.e. mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws enacting such forms of violence. It is important for workers to bear in mind that DFV may therefore not be purely physical. Newly married women may be at particular risk of such gender based violence. The threat of communal and familial ostracism and accusations of abandoning their culture may mean that some women will tolerate such events rather than 'leaving'.

- The idea of 'counselling' and mental health may be both stigmatising and unfamiliar to Afghan clients. Given the prevailing conflict in the homeland and lack of provision for mental health services in Afghanistan and first countries of asylum alongside the association to being 'crazy' people may be reticent to engage with counselling services. Counsellors should be sensitive to explaining counselling in ways that are

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

culturally appropriate. For example talking about the challenges of resettlement such as housing, financial issues and concerns about their children and the ways you're your service might be able to support clients through these processes may be a softer and culturally appropriate entry point for engagement.

- Being culturally sensitive to the values, belief and cultural worldview of Afghan clients in the intervention process is critical to best practice. For example understanding that clients may associate counselling as 'being crazy' and that this would mean a loss of respect, status and roles within the community for them alongside not being taken seriously by other community members is critical for counsellors to take into account. Also talking about sexual health may be confronting for some Afghans alongside the importance of respecting gender boundaries between the sexes for others.

- Being aware of the Islamic practices for some Afghans is also important to clinical service provision. Some clients may prefer to have the same sex interpreter, some may be fasting or attending to rituals and celebrations during particular periods of the Islamic calendar.

- Given the prevalence of Islam, collectivism and family within Afghan communities, counsellors could use the concept of 'we' rather than 'you' and 'I' when working with Afghan clients. Additionally discussing the concept of 'suicide' as it applies to a Muslim worldview may be helpful in acting as a protective factor for some Afghan clients who identify with the Islamic faith.

- Clinicians should keep in mind that when working with families on a double negative pathways parents may not discuss the implications of their visa status with their children in the hope of protecting them. The young people may nevertheless be sensitive to their family's circumstances and may also be acculturating faster into Australian society. Clinicians should be sensitive to such possible dynamics within some Afghan families with the aforementioned visa statuses and work towards supporting the family as a whole.

Implications for community development service provision

- As a result of the rising sectarianism between the various ethnic groups due to war, occupation and conflict in Afghanistan such tensions may exist in the Australian context. This may be the case in the school context where bullying and intimidation may be one of the stressors experienced by Afghan young people.

- Further to this some young people may be reticent to identify with their respective groups for fear of reprisal while some may want to identify as 'Afghan' only and priorities may lie in acculturation into the Australian context over and above affinity to 'ethnic' group. This can be also be a stressor experienced by young Afghans and other groups in negotiating their agency/identity in their respective communities. This process can also take a long time and may be interspersed with developmental challenges.

- It is critical to adopt an asset based framework and to work alongside and contribute to the existing strengths of the Afghan communities including its strong leadership, collective resilience, array of community based associations and established community spaces including places of worship.

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Country Summary: DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Note: This information sheet is designed to give participants a broad understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts that clients have come from, and the implications it may have for your work. Workers should use this information as a base to help them explore the unique realities of individual clients and their communities. It is not intended to stereotype cultures and behaviours, or to serve as 'recipes' for interventions. This information is assumed to be correct at the time of writing and will need to be updated periodically as circumstances change.

General information

Where located: Central Africa, bordered by Republic of the Congo, CAR and South Sudan to the north, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to the east, Angola and Zambia to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

Population: 71,495 million[33]

Official language(s): French

Other languages: Lingala, Kotuba, Swahili, Tshiluba

Main religions: Christianity 70%, Islam 10%, other beliefs.

Ethnicities: Approx. 250 ethnic groups, with the Bantu being the largest. Dominant Bantu tribes are the Kongo, Luba and Mongo.[34]

Type of government: Semi-presidential republic.

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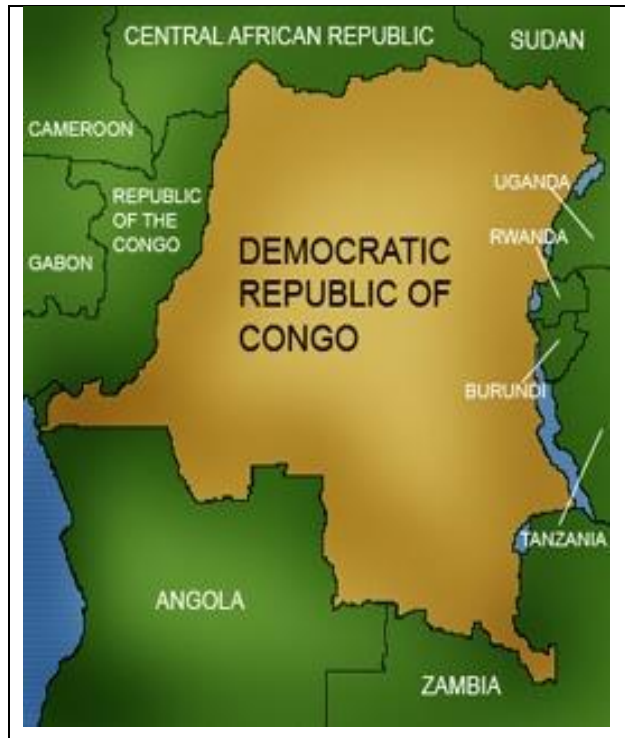
[33] Countrymeters. (2015). DRC Population Clock. Retrieved at
http://countrymeters.info/en/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo
[34] CIA. (2015). *The World Fact book: DRC*. Retrieved at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

The history of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly named Zaire) has been one of civil war, brutality and corruption. Civil war has claimed up to six million lives either through killings, disease or malnutrition and another 2.7 million people are internally displaced.[35,36] With over 80 million hectares of arable land and over 1,100 minerals and precious metals, DRC has the potential to be one of the richest countries in the world but is one of the poorest and most violent and dangerous places on Earth.[37]

Belgian exploitation

- In 1881 King Leopold II of Belgium hired the explorer Henry Stanley to explore and establish a colony in the Congo region, after which he gave himself sole ownership of the entire territory. King Leopold followed such brutal and exploitative policies that even then there was an international outcry. Congolese were enslaved en masse to collect rubber, ivory and other resources for Belgium; communities that didn't produce faced brutal collective punishment, including limb amputation and execution. Leopold's 'Congo Free State' caused the approximate deaths of 10 million Congolese. From 1908, in response to the first sustained international human rights campaign, the territory was taken out of Leopold's personal possession and became a regular colony of the Belgian state, called the Belgian Congo.

  Forced labour continued, even though formally banned. Belgian rule relied heavily on manipulating chiefs and tribes and causing ethnic divisions, reinforced by the educational system carried out mainly by the Catholic Church and confined almost entirely to primary level. A pro-independence movement gradually grew through the 1940s and 50s and finally Congo became independent in 1960 after years of conflict and rioting.

Post Belgian independence

- After independence from Belgium in 1960, Patrice Lumumba was elected Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu the President of DRC. The country faced an immediate mutiny by the army and an attempt at secession by two mineral-rich provinces. Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba turned to the USSR for help which provoked the US and the UN to block arms shipments into the country. President Kasavubu allied himself with the west and with CIA backing, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was seized and killed by troops loyal to army Chief Joseph Mobutu.

- In 1965 Mobutu seized power, and renamed the country Zaire in 1971. He used Zaire as a base for operations against Soviet-backed Angola, thereby ensuring protection from the United States. After the Cold War, Zaire ceased to be of interest to the US and Zaire's reputation was weakened by international criticism of human rights abuses and by embezzlement of government funds for

[35] BBC News. (2015, 23 January). *DRC – Overview*. Retrieved at http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13283212
[36] UNHCR. (2015). *DRC*. Retrieved at http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45c366.html
[37] The World Bank. (2015). DRC Overview. Retrieved at http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview

Mobutu's personal use. Mobutu left a legacy of corruption, nepotism and extravagant living with money stolen from his own people.

Rwandan Hutus flee to DRC

- The Rwandan genocide in 1994 saw 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus killed.[38] As a new Tutsi government took power in Rwanda, more than two million Hutus sought refuge in eastern Zaire from revenge attacks. In 1996, Rwanda and Uganda invaded Zaire in an effort to find Hutu perpetrators of the genocide hiding there. This gave support to anti-Mobutu rebels, who captured the capital, Kinshasa, installed Laurent Kabila as president and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Rise of rebel movements

- Kabila fell out with Rwanda and Uganda and in 1998 these countries sponsored rebel movements to invade the DRC again. This was ostensibly to protect the Tutsi minority group from the Hutu-dominated Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) but the two countries' involvement was felt by many Congolese to be self-serving and led to bitter community divisions[39]. The rebels also had the support of the then Tutsi-dominated Burundian police and security forces while the Kabila government were supported by Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, who also wanted to benefit from DRC's mineral resources. Seven nations were now directly involved and because they often rewarded in natural resource concessions, they had little incentive to withdraw. Other countries, such as Chad and Ukraine, were involved through the supply of armaments, personnel, banking and money laundering facilities. Fighting continued despite a July 1999 ceasefire agreement and deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in 2000. Between 1998 and 2004, nearly four million people in the DRC died as a result of the war.[40]

Conflict between government and militia groups

- President Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and his son Joseph Kabila was appointed president at the age of 29. Coup attempts and sporadic violence saw renewed fighting in the eastern part of the country in 2008. The FDLR clashed with government forces, displacing thousands of civilians. In an attempt to bring the situation under control, the government invited in Rwandan troops in 2009 to help mount a joint operation against the FDLR active in eastern DR Congo.

- The Rwandan and Congolese governments cooperated in 2009 to find the remaining FDLR still in eastern Congo. The FDLR were weakened but continue to spread instability in eastern DRC. In the north-eastern region, the Lord's Resistance Army, an armed militia group active in Uganda for the last several years, continue to cause terror and conflict after being moved on from southern Sudan in the mid-1990s and crossing into DRC.

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[38] Minority Rights Group. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Overview.* Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/5082/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-overview.html

[39] T. Beya (personal communication, 4 May 2015)

[40] Minority Rights Group, *op cit*.

The peace process in eastern DRC is still fragile with multiple armed groups operating throughout the region and terrorising civilians. More than 1.3 million are unable to return to their homes in the eastern region and 300,000 Congolese refugees live in neighbouring countries.[41]

Persecuted Groups[42]

All sections of Congolese society have been persecuted due to numerous militia groups roaming the country, but those tribes who live in the areas of Katanga and Ituri in the Kivu province, eastern DRC, are particularly vulnerable. Most of these are the Banyarwanda (Hutus, Tutsis and Batwa who speak Kinyarwanda and live along the Rwandan border in Kivu province).[43] There was traditional enmity between the Banyarawanda and other tribes over land use and ownership, with other tribes seeing the Banyarwanda as 'foreigners', as they had largely migrated from Rwanda since the 19th century to work on Belgian-owned farms. The waves of refugees fleeing Rwanda in 1994 intensified the conflict.

Torture, rape and killings are common in people caught in fighting between the Congolese Tutsi (aka Banyamulenge) and the Hutu-dominated FDLR. People in Kivu province are also at the mercy of various raiding groups with no particular political affiliation but who want to exploit resources. The Congolese Batwa, or Bambuti, are also targeted because of logging and exploitation of their traditional lands.

Congolese Culture[44]

- Like many African cultures, Congolese live and socialise in large extended families and will assume the care of relatives' children if needed. The raising of children is seen as a community responsibility, with all adults in the community taking a role in care of children. Children are expected to obey parents, especially the father.

- While polygamy is illegal, the practice continues in some tribes. Marriage in DRC is considered as the uniting of two families. In DRC dowry is paid to the bride's father and it is customary to also provide dowry to the bride's uncles. Gender roles are traditional, particularly in rural areas. Women's legal rights are limited and married women cannot open a bank account, obtain a passport or rent or sell property without their husband's permission. Domestic violence is not widely addressed in Congolese law and domestic violence against women, including spousal rape, has high levels of social acceptance.[45]

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[41] Eastern Congo Initiative. (2015). History *of the conflict*. Retrieved at http://www.easterncongo.org/about-drc/history-of-the-conflict

[42] Minority Rights Group. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Overview*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/5082/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-overview.html

[43] Minority Rights Group. (2005). *Banyarwanda*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/5077/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/banyarwanda.html

[44] Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. (2010). *Congolese Community Profile*. Retrieved at http://www.ethniccouncilshepparton.com.au/uploads/Congolese_Community_Profile_-_RAP_2013.pdf

[45] Social Institutions & Gender Index. (2014). *Congo, Democratic Republic of*. Retrieved at http://genderindex.org/country/congo-dem-rep

- Families are usually large as children are seen as a sign of prosperity. Traditionally, contraception is not commonly practised and may be frowned upon as it is seen as depriving the community of growth.

- An important cultural day is June 30, National Day, a day that commemorates the country's liberation from Belgium in 1960.

Resettlement in Australia

- From 2001-06 the Congolese community in Australia was very small at about 270 people in 2001 with slow growth of 618 people in 2006. In 2004-05, humanitarian entrants from DRC were one of the top 10 groups assisted through the Humanitarian Settlement Program. In the 2011 census there were 2,576 people recorded as born in the DRC. [46]

- The 2011 census showed Queensland had the largest number of Congolese-born with 578, followed by South Australia (544), New South Wales (490) and Western Australia (448).[47]

- Community organisations:
  - **Sydney**: *Congolese Community of New South Wales*, 245 John Street, Cabramatta West 2166. President: Mr Moussa Kaman Chemo. Email: ccnsw@yahoo.com.au
  - **Newcastle**: *Newcastle Congolese Community Inc*, 39 Carolyn St, Adamstown Heights 2289. Ph: 0413 322 622

- The Congolese community have experienced challenges in assisting new arrivals to settle. Entrants from DRC often have limited or no English language skills and so require translating and interpreting services. As there are not enough schools or teachers in DRC and schooling has been interrupted by war and poverty, many Congolese have no formal education and limited or no literacy and numeracy skills. 24% of Congolese in Australia are unemployed, compared to 5.6% of the Australian population.[48]

Recommended Resources

- BBC News. (2015, 23 January). *DRC – Overview*: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13283212
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[46] DSS. (2012). The *Democratic Republic of the Congo born community*. Retrieved at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/democratic_republic_congo.pdf
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.

- Marchand, A. (2006*). Congolese Community Profile*. Retrieved at http://www.australianrefugee.org/wp-content/uploads//2014/02/Congo.pdf
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- Minority Rights Group. *Democratic Republic of the Congo Overview:* http://www.minorityrights.org/5082/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-overview.html

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Last updated: 2 June 2015

Country Summary: IRAN

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Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

General information

Where located: Iran is located in western Asia and is bordered by Armenia and Azerbaijan in the northwest; by Turkmenistan to the northeast; by Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east; Turkey and Iraq to the west and by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to the south.

Population: 79,424 million people.[49]

Official language(s): Farsi

Other languages: Turkic, Azerbaijani, Luri, Kurdish, Arabic

Main religions: Shia Islam, followed by 90-95% of the population. 4-8% are Sunni Muslims and the remainder are minorities including Baha'i, Mandaean, Yazidi, Christians and Jews.[50]

Ethnicities: 61% Persian, 16% Azerbaijani, 10% Kurds, 6% Lurs, 2% Arabs, 2% Balochs, Turkmen and Turkic tribes 2%, 1% other.[51]

Type of government: Unitary presidential theocratic republic.

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Persian Empire and Identity

- Most Iranians are not Arabs but descendants of Persians who migrated to Iran with other Indo-European tribes from about 2000 BC. Until invaded by Arabia in the 7th century, Persians practiced Zoroastrianism, an ancient monotheistic religion that still influences Iran today.[52] While Iranians identify with Muslims in general and Shiites in particular, Iranians see themselves as Persian-speaking Shiites. They hold fast to a

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[49] Countrymeters. (2015). Iran *population*. Retrieved at http://countrymeters.info/en/Iran
[50] CIA. (2012). Iran. Retrieved at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html
[51] Library of Congress. (2008). Country *Profile: Iran*. Retrieved at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Iran.pdf
[52] Price, M. (2009). *Iran, a Brief History*. Retrieved from http://www.cultureofiran.com/a_brief_history.html

distinct Persian identity through pride in a rich culture of language, architecture, literature and art.[53]

Mosaddeq Overthrow – democratically elected

- Central to Iranian identity is the character of Mohamed Mosaddeq. Mosaddeq was a strongly pro-nationalist politician who was appointed premier in 1951 and soon nationalised the Iranian oil industry to stop British ownership and influence. The British and American governments conspired to overthrow Mosaddeq's nationalist government and under western direction, the Shah dismissed Mosaddeq and the nationalist government in 1953 without parliamentary approval and installed western-backed General Zahedi as the new Prime Minister. This resulted in massive nation-wide rioting in support of Mosaddeq. The army and police force crushed the rioting and Mosaddeq was tried by the Shah's military court and remained under house arrest until his death in 1967. Mosaddeq remains a symbol of Iranian independence and pride.

The Rule of the Shah

- Mosaddeq's treatment by western governments gave rise to growing Iranian hatred of rule under the Pahlavi Dynasty Shahs (Reza and his son and successor Mohammad) and western interference, which influenced the later 1979 revolution. Iran under Reza Shah was authoritarian and dictatorial and many rights were suppressed, such as freedom of the press, political freedoms and trade unions. Reza Shah also angered many pious Muslims and clerics with a number of decrees such as ordering people to wear western dress and forbidding women to cover their heads.

- In 1941 Shah Mohammad Reza succeeded his father. After an assassination attempt on his life in 1949 and Mosaddeq's overthrow in 1953, Shah Mohammad Reza declared martial law, imprisoned communists and other dissenters and arrested most of Mosaddeq's political allies and supporters. Any criticism or opposition to the Shah's authoritarian government were rounded up, imprisoned, tortured and/or killed.

The Islamic revolution

- After years of demonstrations against the Shah and a movement of civil resistance, Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah in 1979. Iran's modern, capitalist economy was replaced by conservative, populist and Islamic economic and cultural policies. Much of industry was nationalised, laws and schools Islamised and Western influences banned. Protestors and political opponents were executed. At this time the 'Basij' was founded, a volunteer militia given authority to oversee law enforcement, organise public religious ceremonies, police the dress code and public morals and suppress protest gatherings. The Basij have become synonymous with persecution and abuse of their fellow Iranians' human rights and are feared by many.

The Iran-Iraq War

- With the Shah deposed and Iran in a state of instability, Iraq's Saddam Hussein saw an opportunity to invade Iran at Khuzestan in 1980, an oil-rich territory, starting the

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[53] Bar, S. (2004). Iran: *Cultural values, self images and negotiation behaviour*.   Paper presented at the Herzliya Conference, Israel. Retrieved at http://herzliyaconference.org/_Uploads/2614Iranianself.pdf

Iran-Iraq War which lasted until 1988. Tens of thousands of Iranians were killed by Iraqi chemical weapons.

Political turmoil since 1979 revolution

- Iran since the revolution has been marked been marked by political turmoil. In 1981, Iran's first president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was impeached and fled the country, after which Iran banned all political parties except the Islamic Republic Party. Ali Raja-i then became president but was assassinated the same year in a bomb. Ali Khamenei became president and then Ayatollah when Khomeini died in 1989, after which Akbar Rafsanjani became president. Presidents Rafsanjani (1989-97) and Khamati (1997-2005) focused on political reform, building up the economy and making the country more democratic.

The Green Movement and human rights violations

- In July 1988, Iran began to systematically execute thousands of political prisoners and used torture to force prisoners to repudiate their cause and political colleagues on video. Iran's human rights record worsened after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005. His 2009 re-election marked a decisive turning point in the human rights and religious freedom environment in Iran, as security and paramilitary forces used brutal force against the hundreds of thousands of Iranians who protested in the streets in the months after the elections. A spontaneous uprising named "the Green Movement" saw many Iranians killed and thousands arrested, convicted and given lengthy prison terms. Dissidents were executed on a variety of charges, including alleged religious crimes such as "waging war against God," "spreading corruption on earth," and "moral corruption." The Iranian government brought national security cases against members of religious minority communities and individuals for alleged crimes such as "confronting the regime" and apostasy. [54,55,56]

- Since 2013, Hassan Rouhani has been President. While he was initially regarded as a moderate, human rights have worsened with soaring executions and the imprisonment of journalists and activists. According to a UN Human Rights Council report, Iran has executed over 1000 people since January 2014 and continues to execute more people per capita than any country in the world.[57]

- Restrictions and punishments in Iran which violate international human rights norms include punishment for fornication and homosexuality, execution of offenders under 18 years of age, restrictions on freedom of speech and the press (including the

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[54] International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. (2008). *Rights Crisis Escalates Faces and Cases from Ahmadinejad's Crackdown*. Retrieved from http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2008/09/irancrackdown/

[55] Worth, R. (2009, July 28). Reports of Prison Abuse and Deaths Anger Iranians. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/world/middleeast/29iran.html?_r=2&

[56] United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). *Iran*. Retrieved from http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Iran%202013.pdf

[57] Shaheed, A. (2015, 17 March). Iran's human rights situation worsening, says UN special rapporteur. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/16/un-rapporteur-human-rights-situation-in-iran-worsening

imprisonment of journalists), and restrictions on freedom of religion and gender equality, especially attacks of adherents of the Baha'i religion.[58]

Sanctions and Nuclear Program

◾ Since Iran's nuclear program became public in 2002, the UN, EU and several individual countries have imposed sanctions in an attempt to prevent it from developing military nuclear capability. This has taken a terrible toll on Iranian people through economic hardship, inability to buy necessary goods such as pharmaceuticals and reduced growth opportunities in the economy. Iran and world powers agreed to an interim deal in 2013 which saw Iran gain around $7 billion in sanctions relief in return for reducing uranium and giving UN inspectors better access to its facilities. World powers also committed to assist Iran in accessing $4.2 billion in restricted funds.[59]

Persecuted Groups

◾ Below is a summary of persecuted minorities in Iran from the World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples report[60].

◾ Ethnic and religious minorities make up nearly half of the Iranian population. Since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power in August 2005, the government has promoted the country's majority Persian and Shi'a Muslim identity and harassment of various minority groups has increased, particularly among members of religious and ethnic minority groups such as Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, Kurds, Nematullahi Sufi Muslims, Sunnis, Baha'i and Christians. In 2007 the government continued a crackdown on ethnic and religious minorities through police repression, educational discrimination and state media campaigns. Nearly all ethnic Baluchis and Turkmens, most Kurds, and some Arabs practise Sunni Islam disfavoured by the regime.

◾ Although the Iranian Constitution recognises Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism as legitimate religions and affords them a certain official protection (although their adherents are still randomly targeted for persecution), other religions are not recognised or tolerated, especially the Baha'i.

The main persecuted groups are:

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when
Baha'i	• Persecuted for their belief that other prophets	• Persecution is systemic, covering all areas of state activities, law,	The Baha'i have fled all over the world but especially to other parts of the Muslim

[58] Library of Congress (see footnote 3).
[59] BBC News. (2015, 30 March). *Iran nuclear crisis: what are the sanctions?* Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-15983302
[60] World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People's Report (2014). *Iran Overview*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/5092/iran/iran-overview.html

	followed Mohammed • Are seen as apostates.	education and security. • Arrests, detentions and violent attacks on their homes and property. • 20 years' imprisonment of 7 Baha'i leaders, the longest prison sentence for any prisoner of conscience in Iran.	world, such as secular Turkey. The Australian 2011 census report the Iranian Baha'i at 6269, 18% of the Iranian-born population in Australia.[61]
Sunni Muslims	Several of Iran's ethnic minorities such as Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen practice Sunni Islam and make up approx. 9% of Iran's population. These groups suffer persecution due to both their faith and ethnic identities.	Sunnis are regularly harassed by security forces and suffer discrimination in government employment. Sunni clerics are arrested for spreading Sunni teachings and Sunni mosques vandalised or destroyed.	There is no data available on how many Iranians of the Sunni branch of Islam are in Australia. Islam (no denomination described) was the main religion for 37% of all Iranian-born Australians.
Christians	Religious beliefs	Christianity in Iran has mostly consisted of Armenians and Assyrians but it is Muslim converts to Christianity who are most monitored and harassed. Christians are subject to harassment, arrests, close surveillance and imprisonment.[62]	Many Christians have fled the country to Europe and other western countries. The Australian 2011 census report Iranian Christians at 6.1% of the Iranian population in Australia%.[63]

[61] Department of Immigration & Citizenship. (See footnote 4).

[62] Afghanistan, L. (2014, March 14). Iran's Oppressed Christians. *The New York Times*. Retrieved http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/opinion/irans-oppressed-christians.html

[63] Department of Immigration & Citizenship. (2011). Iran-*born*. Retrieved at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/iran.pdf

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Muslim reformers	Even members from the majority Shi'a community have been targeted when speaking out against the 2009 election results and criticising the government's crackdown on protesters.	More than 2 dozen people have been sentenced to death on the charge of 'moharebeh' (waging war against God).[64]	Since Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009 and the rise of the Green Movement amongst ordinary Iranians, Iranian asylum seekers to Australia have increased. Many activists, journalists, bloggers and others have fled. The UNHCR has seen a steady increase in asylum applications from Iran in the last few years, with 5541 Iranians arriving by boat in 2013.[65,66] (It is not known how many of this number specifically reformers were).
Sufis	Since the 1979 revolution, Sufi practices have been repressed and harassment increased since President Ahmadinejad's rise to power in 2005.	Sufis are imprisoned, fined and flogged, charged and imprisoned with insulting the Supreme Leader, spreading lies and membership of a 'deviant group'.	The 2011 census does not include Sufism as a religion followed by Iranians; however Sufis have fled into exile to western countries since suffering persecution from 1979 and many are also persecuted in other Muslim countries.
Faili Kurds	Persecuted for their Kurdish ethnicity as	Faili Kurds were placed in refugee camps and given only limited access to	Iranian Kurds began settling in Australia from the late 1980s under the

[64] USIRF (see footnote 6).
[65] Human Rights Watch. (2012). *Iran: activists fleeing assault on civil society*. Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/12/13/iran-activists-fleeing-assault-civil-society
[66] Aguis, C. (2013, 20 July). Iran's poor economy and religious, political and racial persecution blamed for refugees. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-20/why-leave-iran3f/4832502

	well as their former citizenship of Iraq.	education, healthcare, housing and employment, as well as being arbitrarily detained and harassed by the Basij and other security forces.	Humanitarian Program, although it is unclear which language and dialect groups. The 2011 census identified 6,991 people in Australia who spoke Kurdish at home but does not specify a specific Kurdish ethnicity.[67]

Resettlement

- The 2011 census counted 34,453 Iranian-born people living in Australia, with a median age of 36 years.[68]

- New South Wales had the largest number at 15,463 followed by Victoria at 7447, Western Australia (3722) and Queensland (3562). Compared to 62% of the total overseas population, 46% of Iranian-born arrived in Australia prior to 2001; 17% between 2001 and 2006 and 30% between 2007 and 2011.

- While most recent arrivals have come through the Humanitarian Program, many Iranians in the 1990s migrated under the Skilled and Family Migration Streams.[69] Iranian asylum seekers have increased over the last few years; in 2013, one-third of all asylum seekers originated from either Iran or Sri Lanka.[70]

Iranian Culture

- Persia is one of the oldest civilisations in the world. For more than three thousand years, Persia was a meeting point between civilisations and demographic movements between Europe and Asia and from 539 BC became the centre of the world's first empire under Cyrus the Great.[71] Its empire once covered India to Libya and was invaded by Greeks, Romans, Mongols and Turks. Such wide contact with various cultures developed the rich Persian culture, and Persian culture has in turn influenced other cultures. Persian culture has contributed much to the world such as distinct Persian forms of calligraphy, art, poetry, architecture and ceremonies.

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[67] DIPB. (2014). People *of Australia: Statistics from the 2011 Census*. Retrieved from http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/resources/publications/LocalGovernment/The_People_of_Australia.pdf
[68] Department of Immigration & Citizenship. (2011). Iran-*born*. Retrieved at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/iran.pdf
[69] Ibid.
[70] UNHCR. (2014). *Asylum Trends 2013*. Available at www.unhcr.org/statistics
[71] Kianush, K. (1998). *Persia or Iran: a brief history*. Retrieved at http://www.art-arena.com/history.html

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- Iranian culture can be seen as both individualist and collectivist. The regional origins and status of a family play an important role in an individual's social identity. Family and extended family ties increase a person's status and success and offer protection against unstable political regimes and social grudges. However compared to other Middle Eastern peoples, Iranians are seen as more individualist, suspicious and distrustful of anyone outside their own inner circle and especially suspicious of those in power, governments and foreign powers.[72]
- Iranians pride themselves on rationalism, science and pragmatism and see this as an advantage to Arab "emotionalism". Iranian national identity includes a sense of superiority towards its Arab neighbours and pride in its pre-Islamic imperial past. For Iranians, all that was great in what is commonly referred to as Islamic or Arab culture was actually Persian. According to those who have studied the Iranian character, this self-image even holds certain racial overtones in that it links Iran to an ancient "Aryan" world of settled civilization, far superior to the "primitive" nomadic Arabian culture.[73]
- Important celebrations in Iran follow the Islamic calendar. Celebrations specific to Iran are: February 11, Victory of the Islamic Revolution; 20th March (Nationalisation of Oil Industry Day) and 21st March, Nowruz (Persian New Year).

Recommended Resources

Department of Immigration & Citizenship. (2011). *Iran-born*. Retrieved at
https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/iran.pdf

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). *Iran*. Retrieved from
http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Iran%202013.pdf

World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People's Report (2014). *Iran Overview*. Retrieved at
http://www.minorityrights.org/5092/iran/iran-overview.html

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Last updated: 12 June 2015

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[72] Bar, S. (see footnote 5).
[73] Ibid.

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Country Summary: IRAQ

General information

Where located: Present-day Iraq occupies what was once ancient Mesopotamia, one of the 'cradles of civilisation'. Iraq is in western Asia and is bordered by Turkey in the north, Iran in the east, the Persian Gulf and Kuwait in the south east, Saudi Arabia in the south, Jordan in the west and Syria in the north-west. Iraq includes Kurdistan Region, an autonomous region in Iraq's north. Iraq's capital city, Baghdād, is located in the east central part of the country.

Population: 35 million as of 2014[74]

Official language(s): Arabic

Other languages: Kurdish, Turkmen, Persian and Aramaic.

Main religions: Islam (97% of the country, divided into approximately 65% Shia and 32-37% Sunni) and 3% Christianity, Mandaeism, Shabak, Yazidi and others.

Ethnicities: Kurds 17%, Turkmen 3%, Assyrians 2%, Persians 2% and others 1%.

Type of government: Islamic republic. Current Prime Minister: Haider al-Abadi

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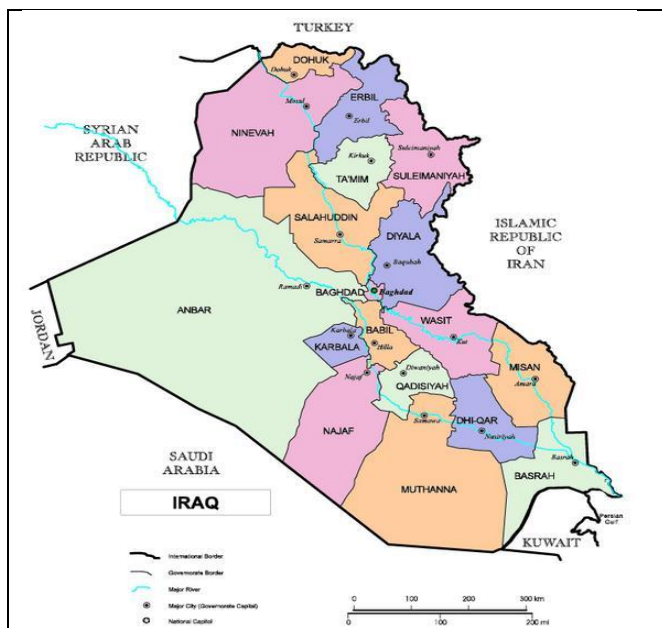
[74] Iraq Population. (2014). World Population Review retrieved June 2014 from
www.worldpopulationreview.com

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Overview

Iraq continues to be one of the world's largest sources of refugees. Over 60% of Iraqi people in Australia have arrived since 1996 in the aftermath of the Gulf War through family reunion, humanitarian and refugee programs. This population includes Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Mandaeans, Turks, Turkmen and Jews. Since 2014, Iraq has been engaged in a military campaign against ISIS to recapture territory lost in the western and northern parts of Iraq.

Rise of the Ba'athist Party

- Iraq was formed out of the three formerly Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul captured by Britain during 1916-18. In 1921 Britain made Iraq a monarchy under the Hashemite King Faisal, recently ousted from Syria. In 1958 the monarchy was overthrown in a coup d'état led by Iraqi Army Brigadier Abdul Qasim who became Prime Minister but whose own government was overthrown by Arab nationalists and Sunni Ba'athists in 1963. In 1968, the Sunni Ba'athists ousted the Arab nationalists and established a one-party state.

- The new vice-president, Saddam Hussein, emerged as the most powerful member of the regime. He established an extensive regime of secret police and informers and sought to destroy the leadership of all other groups that might pose a threat to the regime. When Saddam Hussein became President in 1979, he purged hundreds of senior members from the administration, narrowing power to a small network drawn from clan and kinship ties.

Iran-Iraq War

- In 1980 Saddam Hussein launched full-scale war against Iran, including the use of chemical weapons, followed by an assault on Iraqi Kurds later in the 80s whom he felt posed a threat to his regime. Iran agreed to a cease-fire in 1988 when Western support for Iraq rendered an Iranian victory impossible. Two years later Saddam Hussein seized Kuwait and lost western support. Having failed to withdraw unconditionally, Iraqi forces were driven out of Kuwait by a US-led international coalition force.

Economic embargo

- In the mid-1990s Iraq remained under embargo because of its refusal to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions regarding weapon stocks. Despite an UN-administered 'Oil-for-Food Program, the people of Iraq were starved of food and other essential supplies.

Western invasion

- In March 2003, the United States, supported by western allies including Australia, launched an invasion of Iraq without UN authorisation. This was justified under the pretexts that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction that threatened its neighbours and that through connections with al-Qaeda, Hussein was linked to the 11 September 2001 terror attacks on the United States. It later emerged that the Bush and Blair

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governments had manipulated intelligence reports to support a political decision to launch a war for Saddam Hussein's removal.

- Baghdad quickly fell to the invasion force and formal military resistance collapsed. The Shi'a majority saw power for the first time in the country's history and formed its own militant organisations, some with deep ties to new government structures.

Sectarian violence

- Since 2003, Iraq has suffered continuous waves of sectarian violence. The 2003 invasion occurred after an eight-year war with Iran and a decade of harsh economic sanctions. The invasion not only overthrew the Sunni dominated government of Saddam Hussein but exacerbated ethnic, tribal and sectarian divisions in the country, particularly between Sunni and Shia. From 2003 to 2005 there was war between US-led invasion forces and Iraqi forces, including government forces as well as Islamist and nationalist insurgents. Civilians in this period were bystanders.

- In early 2006, Iraq's conflict became a civil war, fought among three factions: Sunni insurgents, including Islamist extremists and former Saddam loyalists; Shia militias, some of them rogue members of state security forces; and the US-led occupation force. In this 2-year period, civilians were often the target of the violence through bombings and death squads. While conditions improved significantly after 2008, there is fear that the current crisis could reignite the sectarian hatreds and militias of 2006 to 2007.

- In 2010, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's party won 27.4% of the seats in the Iraqi Parliament but no party won an overall majority. American and allied troops withdrew in December 2011. Prime Minister al-Maliki dropped his bid for a third term in office after widespread protests against his Shia-dominated rule, enabling new Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi, another Shia, to win parliamentary approval of his new cabinet in September 2014.

The rise of Islamic State

- In December 2013, al-Maliki had ordered the Shia-dominated Iraqi Army to confront Sunni militia forces linked to the Sunni jihadist militant group, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). The sectarian and demoralised Iraqi Army retreated and collapsed from a much smaller ISIS force, caused by sectarian division and demoralisation but also by previous US actions in stripping the Iraqi army of its Baathist influences to prevent the regime reasserting itself. The result was that former Baathist soldiers joined militia groups including ISIS.

- ISIS came to take over large parts of northern and central Iraq, as well as half of Syria to date. ISIS has systematically carried out barbaric human rights abuses against Iraqi minorities who do not submit to its interpretation of Sunni Islam and Sharia law and has used death threats, torture and mutilation to force conversion to Islam. Other crimes committed by ISIS include the use of child soldiers, sexual slavery of women and girls from minority groups, beheadings, mass executions and destruction of religious and cultural heritage sites. In 2014 ISIS proclaimed itself to be a worldwide caliphate, claiming religious, military and political authority over all Muslims worldwide, although this has been rejected by many Muslim clerics and communities across the world.

Persecuted Groups

Iraq's religious and ethnic minorities, as well as minority women and LGBTI individuals, have always been targeted for violence, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, harassment, intimidation, displacement, political disenfranchisement and social and economic marginalisation[75]. Persecution of minority groups has only increased under ISIS.

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when	When came to Australia
Kurds, an Indo-European people of the Iranian branch	During the Iraq-Iran war some Kurds sympathised with Iran and were subject to a systematic genocide between 1987-1989	Arrest, execution, forced relocation, chemical weapons	After Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in 1988, Kurds fled to other countries, especially Turkey and western Europe.	Although Turkish Kurds had migrated to Australia in the 1960s, Iraqi and Iranian Kurds began to arrive in Australia in the late 1980s under the Humanitarian Program[76]. Most live in Melbourne and Sydney.
Turkmen, who live in the north of Iraq, share close cultural and linguistic ties with Turkey and are made up of both Sunnis and Shiites	When Saddam Hussein came to power, thousands of Turkmen were uprooted from their homes in northern Iraq and replaced with Arabs under government relocation programs.	Systemic discrimination aimed at dispersing their numbers and reducing their influence in the north. Persecution, exile and ethnic cleansing by both Arabs and Kurds.	Most Turkmen fled to Turkey and European countries, with smaller diasporas in Canada, the US and Australia.[77]	From the late 1980s

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75 Mumtaz, Lalani. (2010). Still Targeted: *Continued Persecution of Iraq's Minorities*. Minority Rights Group International: London.

76 Jupp, James (2001), *The Australian people: an encyclopaedia of the nation, its people and their origins*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

77 Sirkeci, Ibrahim. (2005). *Turkmen in Iraq and International Migration of Turkmen*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 at http://www.turkmenaspect.com/english/assets/docs/turkmen%20in%20iraq%20and%20international%20migration%20of%20turkmen.pdf

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Shabaks, Culturally distinct from Kurds and Arabs and living mainly in the Ninevah plains, an area that falls under Kurdish self-rule. Shabaks speak their own language, with 70% Shi'a and the rest Sunni.	Their separate ethnic identity has not been recognised by either Arabs or Kurds wanting to extend land claims into the Ninevah region and they have suffered targeted persecution from both groups.	Ethnic cleansing, forced relocation and harassment from both Arab and Kurdish militants.	Many Shabaks remain internally displaced and most of those who have left Iraq fled to European countries, with smaller populations in other western countries including Australia.	Specific numbers of Shabaks living in Australia are difficult to confirm as many do not disclose their ethnicity for fear of further persecution[78].
Assyrians / Chaldo-Assyrians originally indigenous people from northern Mesopotamia and descendants of one the greatest empires of the ancient Middle East. Assyria was located in what is now northern Iraq and south-eastern Turkey	Assyrians speak Aramaic and practice Christianity. Due to their Christian faith they came under persecution and random imprisonment from Saddam Hussein and their persecution intensified after his fall.	Bombing of churches, massacres, threats, harassment, ethnic cleansing, and intimidation.	Assyrians have emigrated all over the world but large populations are found in Europe, the USA and Australia.	The 2011 census listed 62,584 people who identified themselves as Assyrian-Chaldean, mostly in Sydney and Melbourne[79]. Migration started from the 1970s.
Mandaeans, a Semitic people and indigenous to Iraq.	Targeted for religious beliefs and for their	Physical assaults, kidnappings, robbery, forced	The largest diaspora is in Sweden (approx. 7000)	Arrival in Australia from 1981. Mandaeans

[78] Institute for International Law & Human Rights. (2013). *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 at http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

[79] Department of Social Services. (2014). *The Iraq-born community*. Retrieved 3 July from http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-iraq-born-community

Mandaeism is one of the ancient religions of Mesopotamia and one of the earlier known monotheistic religions.	affluence due to gold smithing.	conversion to Islam, confiscation of property and threats.	due to a long established community there, with other large communities in Australia, the USA and Canada.	number around 70,000 worldwide, with approximately 5,000 in western Sydney[80].
Adherents to the **Baha'i** faith	As this is a relatively new faith (founded 1844), Baha'i adherents are considered apostates and heretics.	Many Baha'i have no citizenship documents and so have difficulty registering children in school, leaving the country and proving their citizenship. In 2008 the government reinstated the rights of Baha'i to identity cards, but their religion was changed to 'Muslim' and they were prohibited from altering the cards to reflect their faith.	Baha'i is a religion practised globally, with an estimated 7.9 million adherents.	No data found.
Armenians, present in Iraq since before the birth of Christ	Armenians are mostly Christians.	Due to their religion and economic success, they have been subject to kidnappings and Armenian	Many Assyrians fled to other Middle Eastern countries such as Syria and Lebanon and in the west, Europe, USA,	The Armenian National Committee of Australia estimates a population of 50,000, mainly in Sydney and

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[80] Compass. (17 July 2011). *Mandaeans: The Water People*. ABC TV.

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		churches have often been bombed.	Canada & Australia.	Melbourne. They do not state how many of this number come from Iraq[81].
Faili-Kurds, Shia Muslims	Under Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime, many were expelled to Iran as their Shia faith made them "Iranian" and stripped of their citizenship.	Faili Kurds returning from Iran to Iraq report challenges to reclaim confiscated property, access to services and employment. Some also report difficulty reclaiming citizenship obtaining Iraqi documents.	Many Faili Kurds fled to Iran, making up 65% of the Iraqi refugee population.	Some Faili Kurds remain trapped in Australian detention centres, unable to get refugee visas and unable to be returned to Iraq due to being stateless.[82]

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[81] Armenian National Committee of Australia. (2014). *Armenian-Australian Community*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 from http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-iraq-born-community

[82] Institute for International Law & Human Rights. (2013). *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 at http://lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf

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Yazidi practice a 4,000-year-old religion combining monotheistic, Zoroastrian and Manichaean beliefs	Islamic groups have declared Yazidi as "impure" and extremists have called for the deaths of all members of the Yazidi community, with even moderate Muslims considering Yazidi as "devil worshippers".[14]	Their community suffered the worst attack on any group in Iraq in 2007 when four bombings destroyed 2 Yazidi towns, killing 400 civilians, wounding 1562 and leaving 1000 families homeless. Since the emergence of ISIS they have been targeted for genocide, kidnapping and enslavement.	Many fled to Syria and Jordan.	No data found.
Other minorities:	Roma gypsies, Jews, Armenians, Circassians, black Iraqis (migrated as workers or descended from slaves), Kaka'I and Palestinians. For further information on these groups, visit Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights.			

Resettlement

- Iraqis were first identified in Australia in 1976 when they numbered 2273; by the end of the Gulf War in 1991, this number had risen to 5186. Iraqi immigration to Australia peaked between 1992 and 1995 after the Gulf War. Most recent Iraqi immigrants have arrived under the Family and Skilled Migration categories. Many recent arrivals have come under the Humanitarian Program. Some Iraqis have sought refugee status after arrival in Australia and have been detained pending processing.

- The 2011 census recorded 48,170 Iraqi-born people in Australia, an increase of over 48% from the last census. New South Wales has the largest number at 29,341.[83]

- Iraqi minorities in Australia with the largest numbers are the Assyrian (10,593) and Chaldean groups (6365) who have experienced long term persecution for their religious and political beliefs. This reflects Catholicism being the largest religious

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[83] Dept of Social Services (see footnote 6).

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denomination amongst Iraqis in Australia at 17,179, compared to Muslims at 15,395.[84]

Iraqi Culture

- As Iraq's population consists of many minorities, cultural practices vary. While the population is majority Arab Muslim, there are sizeable minority populations with their own cultural practices and ethnic identities. Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmen have traditionally settled in the north; Sunni Muslims in the north and west and Shia Muslims and Christians in the south. The actions of ISIS and their plan to set up a Sunni caliphate in Iraq have caused many minorities to flee to neighbouring countries and it is yet to be determined how this will affect the traditionally diverse ethnic and religious cultures of Iraq.

- Iraq's holidays follow the Islamic calendar. Iraq-specific holidays are 8th August, Ceasefire Day (end of the Iraq-Iran war) and 3rd October, National Day (Iraqi Independence Day).

- Other significant days in the Islamic calendar:

  o Eid-al Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan.

  o Eid al adha or Greater Eid which is a significant Islamic adherence for Muslims. It is also known as the Feast of Sacrifice as it commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham) willing to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God as an act of obedience to God. Greater Eid also marks the end of Hajj, the five days' religious journey (pilgrims pray around the holy Kaaba at the Grand Mosque) when millions of Muslims from all around the world travel to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

  o Murrami, the first month of the Islamic calendar. The 10th of Muhrram is of most significant. While Shia Muslims celebrate this day to mark the death of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson of the prophet Mohammed who was beheaded during the battle of Karbala, Sunni Muslims celebrate the victory of Moses over the Egyptian Pharaoh. While for Sunni Muslims it is a day of celebrations, for Shia Muslims it is a day of mourning.

Recommended Resources

- Blanchard, C. (2009). *Islam: Sunnis and Shiites*. US: Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from http://fas.org/irp/crs/RS21745.pdf
- CIGI (Centre for International Governance Innovation). (2009). *Minorities in Iraq: the other victims*. Retrieved http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/minorities_in_iraq_final.pdf
- Department of Social Services. (2014). *The Iraq-born community*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 from http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-

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[84] Ibid.

affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-iraq-born-community

- Human Rights Watch (website): http://www.hrw.org/home
- Insight on Conflict (website): http://www.insightonconflict.org
- Institute for International Law & Human Rights. (2013). *Iraq's Minorities and Other Vulnerable Groups: Legal Framework, Documentation and Human Rights*. Retrieved 3 July 2014 at http://www.lawandhumanrights.org/documents/MinorityHB_EN.pdf
- Leezenberg, M. (1994). *The Shabak and the Kakais: Dynamics of Ethnicity in Iraqi Kurdistan*. Retrieved 1 July 2014 from http://www.illc.uva.nl/Research/Publications/Reports/X-1994-07.text.pdf
- Luomi, M. (2008). *Sectarian Identities or Geopolitics? The Regional Sunni-Shia Divide in the Middle East*. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/vandme/Downloads/08_Sectarian_Identities_or_Geopolitics.pdf
- Slewa-Younan, S., Mond, J., Jorm, A. F. Smith, M., Milosevic, D., Mohammad, Y. & Guajardo, M. G. (2014). *Mental health literacy in a resettled refugee community in New South Wales: Paving the way for mental health education and promotion in vulnerable communities*. School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney: Sydney. Retrieved at http://www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/761373/MHL_of_Iraqi_Refugees.pdf
- UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation). *Iraq: The Situation of Ethnic and Religious Minorities*. Briefing Paper. Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/d-iq/dv/05unpodiqbriefingnote_/05unpodiqbriefingnote_en.pdf

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Last updated: 15 June 2015

Country Summary: MYANMAR (Burma)

Note: This information sheet is designed to give participants a broad understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts that clients have come from, and the implications it may have for your work. Workers should use this information as a base to help them explore the unique realities of individual clients and their communities. It is not intended to stereotype cultures and behaviours, or to serve as 'recipes' for interventions. This information is assumed to be correct at the time of writing and will need to be updated periodically as circumstances change.

Numbers of clients seen by STARTTS

Refugees from Myanmar were the sixth largest client group seen at STARTTS in 2014, comprising nearly 4% of total client numbers.

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
No. clients	137	129	87	107	173
% of total STARTTS clients	3.5%	4.6%	3.8%	4.5%	4.5%

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

General Information

Where located: Burma is in south-east Asia and is bordered by Bangladesh and India to its west; China to its north and Laos and Thailand to its east.
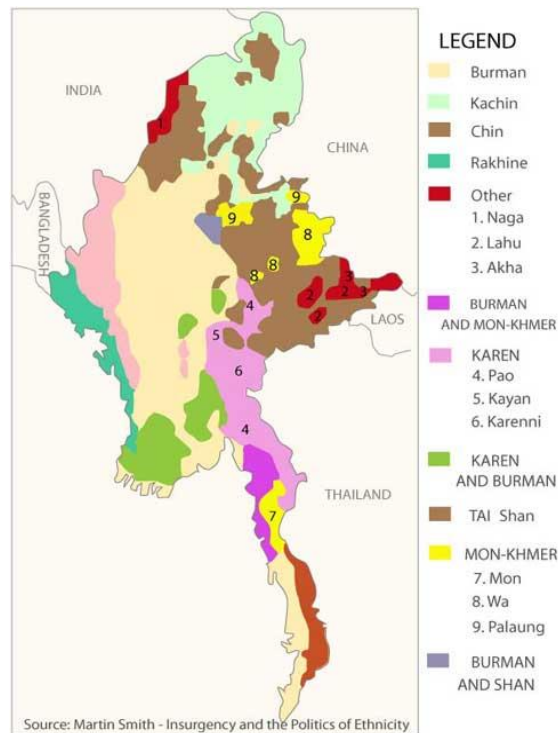
Population: 53.7 million[85]

Official language(s): Burmese

Other languages: Each ethnicity speaks its own language (see below).

Main religions: Theravada Buddhism (89%) and Christian (4%).

Ethnicities: The Burman ethnic group make up the majority (68%) of the population.[86] The main ethnic groups of Burma are the Karen, Shan, Mon, Chin, Kachin, Rakhine and Karenni.

LEGEND
- Burman
- Kachin
- Chin
- Rakhine
- Other
  1. Naga
  2. Lahu
  3. Akha
- BURMAN AND MON-KHMER
- KAREN
  4. Pao
  5. Kayan
  6. Karenni
- KAREN AND BURMAN
- TAI Shan
- MON-KHMER
  7. Mon
  8. Wa
  9. Palaung
- BURMAN AND SHAN

Source: Martin Smith - Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity

Other main groups include the Nagas, who live in north Burma. Recently arrived ethnicities include Indians, Pa-O, Wa, Kokang, Palaung, Akha and Lahu[87].

An approximate breakdown of ethnicities are the Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Indian 2%, Mon 2%, other minorities 5%[88].

Type of government: Unitary presidential republic

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Colonialism and independence

- Great Britain annexed Burma as an Indian province in 1886; before this, the country had never existed as a unified nation state, with its present geographical boundaries

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85 The World Bank: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL
86 CIA. (2015). *The World Factbook: Burma*. Retrieved https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html
87 Minority Rights International. (2009). *Myanmar/Burma Overview*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/4477/myanmarburma/myanmarburma-overview.html#current
88 CIA. (2015). *The World Factbook: Burma*. Retrieved at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html

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encompassing 100 different nationalities and centralised government administration. To date this remains a key issue, with minority demands focusing on historical rights to self-determination, autonomy, federalism and the right to manage the resources found within their own territories.

- Japan briefly occupied Burma between 1942-1945, after which the British regained control over most of Burma. During this period Japan named Burma as an independent nation and General Aung San received military training and support from Japan; however he became disillusioned with Japan's promise of independence for Burma. He cooperated with the British and helped drive them out of Burma and ensure an Allied victory.

- In 1947 General Aung San was able to negotiate a plan for independence with the British and convince minority groups to join the Union of Burma. Burma gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. Through the Panglong Agreement in 1947, Aung San outlined his government's commitment to minority rights. The 1947 constitution specifically granted the Shan and Karenni peoples the option to secede from the union 10 years after independence. In mid-1947 Aung San and most of his Burman-dominated cabinet were assassinated. British promises that Burmese minorities would enjoy independence came to nothing and minority groups were left to the mercy of the Burmese military.

Violence and annexation of minority lands

- After independence in 1948, Karen, Mon and other ethnic groups which had not participated at Panglong or in assembly elections became dissatisfied with Prime Minister U Nu's government for its failure to listen to minority demands for autonomy and self-determination. In early 1948 the Communist Party of Burma began insurrection against the government and, as violence spread across the country, the Karen, Mon, Rakhine and other ethnic groups took up arms as well. By 1949 as political violence swept the country, the government faced uprisings from Communists and a number of minorities, including the Karen, Karenni, Mon, Pao and Rakhine.

- In 1962, a new federal movement emerged in the country as discontent spread among the Shan, Kachin and other ethnic groups. General Ne Win staged a military coup and his newly-formed Burma Socialist Programme Party proceeded to crackdown on ethnic minority political leaders and pro-democracy activists. Alienation from the central government deepened and armed opposition increased once again, especially in ethnic border areas. This marked the beginning of an endless cycle of war and ethnic insurgency which continues to the present day.

Ethnic uprisings

- In 1962, General Ne Win took over and installed a military socialist regime. He was to rule until 1988. He nationalised the economy, formed a single party state with the Socialist Program Party as the sole political party and banned independent newspapers. The coup was particularly damaging for minorities, as the military not only entered into a cycle of increasing repression against all opposition, but also moved towards policies and practices which identified more and more with the Burman Buddhist majority.

- Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, minority groups increasingly opposed the regime and by the late 1970s, over a dozen armed groups opposed military rule, most of which involved minority-based armies controlling much of the hill territories near Burma's land borders. In 1976, nine of these groups united to form the National Democratic Front (NDF) alliance.

- During General Ne Win's rule, the 1947 Constitution was replaced in 1974 by a new constitution which created a more centralised state and withdrew many of the provisions that had guaranteed rights for some of the country's ethnic minority groups. The military junta ensured minorities had no autonomy or leadership in the upper levels of the Burman army; refused to recognise education beyond fourth grade in schools in local, non-Burman languages; introduced discriminatory policies which resulted in disadvantage in public service employment; confiscated land (especially in minority areas) and exploited natural resources. Along with brutal tactics of the military junta, this resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis with several hundred thousand people forced to flee, especially minority groups such as the Shan and Karen. The Karen have seen as many as 20% of their population either displaced internally or becoming refugees in neighbouring Thailand.

Pro-democracy protests

- The people of Burma eventually challenged the regime of General Ne Win in 1988 when demonstrations swept through the capital Yangon (Rangoon). Mass uprisings throughout much of Myanmar led by university students and Buddhist monks were violently suppressed, with many Burmese pro-democracy activists fleeing to minority-controlled areas. While General Ne Win stepped down, he was replaced in power by a handpicked group of military officers in September 1988 which called itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). However, the army regained control in September 1988 and cracked down on the democratic movement, imprisoned hundreds of people and introduced the SLORC as the government of Burma. In 1989 it changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar.

Election rigging

- The SLORC promised elections; however the results of the 1990 election gave a landslide victory to the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of independent Myanmar's founder, Aung San. The SLORC not only disregarded these results, but cracked down on the victorious NLD, preventing any elected national assembly from convening and continuing to hold the main leaders of the NLD under house arrest despite increasing international pressure. The SLORC adopted the name of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), although this was widely considered a cosmetic change as the leadership remained the same.

- Reports of massive human rights violations continued throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Sanctions against Myanmar by the European Union, the United States and other countries were intensified during this period, with the SPDC placing Aung Suu Kyi again under house arrest in 2000 until 2002, when she was 'released' with some travel restrictions. Aung Sang Suu Kyi was finally released in 2010, having spent 15 out of 21 years under house arrest.

Sham constitution

◀ In 2003, the SPDC announced a 7-step 'roadmap to democracy'. Excluded were the main pro-democracy parties, including the NLD and allied ethnic parties. In 2008, the SPDC finally presented a draft constitution to voters in a referendum widely condemned by the opposition and international human rights groups as a sham. The new document enshrined military control over the government, guaranteed enough seats for the military in parliament to block any further constitutional reform without the military's agreement and excluded Aung San Suu Kyi. The referendum was accompanied by police harassment, official review of citizens' ballots, revision of 'no' votes to 'yes' votes and other irregularities.

First general election and thawing of international relations

◀ The first general election in 20 years was held in 2010. This was hailed by the junta as an important step in the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy, although opposition groups alleged widespread fraud and condemned the election as a sham. It was boycotted by the NLD. A civilian government was installed in 2011 led by President Thein Sein, who had served as a general and then prime minister under the junta. However, the new constitution brought in by the junta in 2008 had entrenched the power of the military. A quarter of seats in both parliamentary chambers were reserved for the military and three key ministerial posts - interior, defence and border affairs - were be held by serving generals. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a landmark visit in December 2011, the first by a senior US official in 50 years. In 2012, the EU lifted all non-military sanctions in April 2012 and offered Myanmar more than $100 million in development aid.

Continued discrimination against minorities

◀ There have been some progress towards democracy since 2011, with 1100 political prisoners released, labour law reform and greater media freedom; however the Myanmar government's continued monitoring and control of religious activity within its borders has led the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to designate it in as a 'country of particular concern'[89]. The report documents the Burmese junta allowing or instigating violence against religious minorities and forcefully promoting Buddhism over other religions. Authorisation to construct new churches and mosques is often denied. Non-Buddhist minorities continued to experience employment discrimination at upper levels of the armed forces and public sector.

◀ The exclusive use of the Burmese language in state primary schools and by state authorities, even in areas with very large concentrations of linguistic minorities such as the Shan and Kachin, continues to disadvantage these minorities in educational, economic and social terms. Some of the worst discriminatory practices affect the

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[89] USCIRF. (2013). *Burma: implications of religious and ethnic violence* (policy brief). Retrieved at http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Burma%20Policy%20Brief%20final(1).pdf

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Muslim minority, also known as Rohingya, in the northern Rakhine State (see 'Persecuted Groups' below).

- There are consistent reports that the army continues to force girls and boys from minorities and indigenous peoples to become soldiers or work as forced labour. Rape, torture and other brutalities remain rampant[90].

- UNHCR currently estimates there are 97,000 IDPs (internally displaced people) in Kachin State; 140,000 in Rakhine State; 230,400 in the south-east (Mon, Kayah and Kayin states and Tanintharyi region) and 1,090,000 who are stateless[91].

- The peace process in Burma is ongoing and fragile. There have been many outbreaks of violence between various rebel groups and the Burmese army since February 2015, including outbreaks of violence between the Karen Benevolent Army (Buddhist army) and the Burmese Army from July 2015 onwards. Other border guard forces (former allied soldiers with the Burma Army) have also been engaged in sporadic outbreaks of fighting. The Karen Human Rights Group report that since the cease fire agreement in 2011 there has been a reduction in hostilities and violence but it has not ceased. The shelling of farmers and other military interventions have continued to cause internal displacement, loss of lives and forced others to flee into Thailand and neighbouring countries.[92]

Persecuted Groups

As there are approximately 135 sub-ethnicities, not all will be mentioned in below. The following ethnicities are the largest and the most well-known. Apart than ethnic groups who have been mostly persecuted for their aspirations to autonomy, non-Buddhist religious groups, pro-democracy groups, federal unionists and journalists are also persecuted.

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when
Chin	• Religious belief; the majority of Chin are Christians • Chin protests against repression and human rights abuses	Forced labour, land expropriation, closing of Chin schools, killings and arbitrary arrest.	Since the 80s, many Chin have fled to neighbouring countries such as Thailand, India and the largely Christian state of Mizoram in India. As of 2005 (latest figures), the Chin were 0.45% of Burmese arrivals to Australia.[93]

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[90] Minority Rights International. (2009). See footnote 2.
[91] UNHCR. (2014). *Myanmar Factsheet*. Retrieved at http://www.unhcr.org/50001cf99.html
[92] Karen Human Rights Group. (2015). *Ceasefire*. Retrieved at http://www.khrg.org/reports/issue/ceasefire
[93] DIMA. (2006). *Burmese Community Profile*. Retrieved at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2013/community-profile-burma.pdf

Kachin	• Christian religious belief • Kachin protests against Buddhism as the national religion and anger at discriminatory practices led them to set up the Kachin Independence Organisation and the Kachin Independent Army, which made it a target for the military.	Discrimination, land confiscations, forced labour, sexual violence.	Most Kachin have fled to camps throughout Kachin state, northern Shan state and China. The percentage of Kachin in Australia is unknown.
Karen (also includes Padaung, Bghai and Brek ethnicities).	• Perceived as benefiting from British colonialism and helping to repress Burmese rebellions • Being the 2nd-largest minority group to rebel against the military government through the Karen National Liberation Army.	Discrimination, forced labour, forced relocation and confiscation of land, burning of villages, sexual violence.	More than 150,000 Karen have fled to refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border, with many then being resettled in western countries. As of 2005 (latest figures), the Karen were 14% of Burmese arrivals to Australia.[94]
Karenni, *aka* Red Karen or Kayah	• The Karenni State was previously independent under British colonial rule. After independence from Britain the Karenni refused to join the union of Burma resulting in Burmese invasion in 1948.	Forced labour, land confiscation, involuntary relocation, torture, arbitrary executions, sexual violations and accompanying malnutrition and poor health have impacted more on this ethnicity than others, as it is Burma's least developed state.	As much as a third of the population in the state of Kayah has been displaced since 1996 with an estimated 20,000 of them fleeing to Thailand. More than 2,500 villages have been destroyed or their inhabitants forced to relocate by the Burmese military regime.
Mon	• Formation of the Mon National	Discrimination, banning of the Mon language,	The largest Mon community is in

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[94] DIMA. (2006). See footnote 6.

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		enforced labour, displacement, land confiscation, rape, murder.	Thailand, with smaller communities spread throughout western countries. The percentage of Mon in Australia is unknown.
Defence Organisation in 1948 as a response against the threat of a Burmese-dominated state			
• Rebellion and insurgency against the military regime			
Rohingya	• Islamic religious beliefs • Being seen as migrants from India and Bangladesh and not native to Burma • Seen as non-citizens and non-indigenous to Burma by the revised 1974 constitution.	As perceived non-citizens, Rohingyas have no access to education, health, travel, employment or the right to marry without a license. They suffer torture, killings, execution, arbitrary arrest and detention, rape, forced labour, forced relocation, confiscation of land and property and restrictions on movement.	As stateless people, Rohingyas are not allowed to travel without permission although thousands have fled to refugee camps in Thailand and Bangladesh where they have been subject to human rights abuses. They have recently attracted international attention through their attempts to flee from camps on boats throughout southeast Asia and being targeted by human traffickers. As of 2005, the Rohingya were 0.45% of Burmese arrivals to Australia.[95]
Shan	• As Burma's largest minority, the Shan have formed several armed rebel groups in opposition to Burmese majority rule and the government moving other displaced minorities into their territory.	Discrimination, banning of the Shan language, enforced labour, displacement, land confiscation, rape, murder.	Many Shan live in Thailand and Malaysia where they live in refugee camps or hide from authorities and work illegally. The percentage of Shan in Australia is unknown.

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[95] DIMA, (2006). See footnote 6 .

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Resettlement

- The first people from Burma to settle in Australia were Anglo-Burmese, who were of Burman and European descent and were a distinct community who migrated in large numbers after the military takeover in 1962. In 1988, many more people from ethnic minorities in Myanmar resettled in Australia due to government persecution.[96]

- At the end of 2013 there were 27,410 Myanmar-born people living in Australia, a 91% increase from 2006[97]. This comprises 0.4% of Australia's overseas-born population. 45% of Myanmar-born came to Australia between 2006-2011 and 8% between 2001-2005.[98]

- 82% of visas granted to the Myanmar-born have been humanitarian visas. Myanmar has ranked in the top two countries of origin for Australia's offshore humanitarian program for the last seven years. Myanmar was also in the 10 countries of origin for Australia's onshore humanitarian program for eight of the last 11 years.[99]

- The 2011 census reported that Western Australia had the largest number of Myanmar-born (7456), followed by Victoria (5607) and New South Wales (5159). The top ancestry responses that Myanmar-born people reported were Burmese (11 606), Karen (3478) and Chinese (2180).[100]

Myanmar culture

- As there are over 135 sub-ethnicities in Myanmar under seven major ethnic groups, it should not be assumed that there are similarities amongst the groups. Refugees from Myanmar will vary greatly in their history, cultural identity, religious beliefs, customs and values.

- Theravada Buddhism is followed by the majority of the country (Burman and minority groups alike) is heavily influenced by Theravada Buddhist practices, which emphasises hierarchy, obeying the doctrine of elders and self-enlightenment, rather than enlightenment through also helping other sentient beings, as in Mahayana Buddhism.

- People from Myanmar generally do not have family names and to identify each other, they will refer to the father's name and other relatives; e.g. Aung San Suu Kyi's name derives from her father's name Aung San; Suu from her paternal grandmother and Kyi from her mother Khin Kyi. Some ethnic groups use honorifics which have mistakenly been incorporated as first names during the immigration process.

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[96] DIPB. (2014). *Community Information Summary: Myanmar-born*. Retrieved at https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/myanmar.pdf

[97] DIBP. (2015). *Country profile: Myanmar*. Retrieved at http://www.border.gov.au/about/reports-publications/research-statistics/statistics/live-in-australia/country-profiles/myanmar

[98] ABS. (2011). *People in Australia who were born in Burma*. Retrieved at http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/5101_0

[99] Asylum Insight. (2015). *Burma*. Retrieved at http://www.asyluminsight.com/burma/#.VacUGqSqqko

[100] DIPB. (2014). See footnote 6.

- The head holds special honour and must not be touched. Likewise, the feet hold the lowest place and should not point at anyone. Shaking hands is not common but when it is done, the right hand is supported by the left as a sign of special respect. When handing something to someone, Burmese will do so with both hands as a sign of respect. Nothing should ever be passed with the left hand.[101]

Recommended Resources

BBC News. (2015, 19 June). *Myanmar profile – overview*. Retrieved at
http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563

DIPB. (2014). *Community Information Summary: Myanmar-born*. Retrieved at
https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/myanmar.pdf

DFAT. (2015). *Burma Country Brief*. Retrieved at
http://dfat.gov.au/geo/burma/Pages/burma-country-brief.aspx

Minority Rights International. (2009). *Myanmar/Burma Overview*. Retrieved at
http://www.minorityrights.org/4477/myanmarburma-overview.html#current

Zu, D., Naw, W. & Cachia, G. (undated). *Burma Presentation for STARTTS Staff* (Powerpoint slides). Sydney: STARTTS.

USCIRF. (2013). *Burma: implications of religious and ethnic violence* (policy brief). Retrieved at
http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/resources/Burma%20Policy%20Brief%20final(1).pdf

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[101] IOM. (2005). *Burmese Cultural Profile*. Retrieved at
http://www.peianc.com/sitefiles/File/resources/cultural_profiles/Burma.pdf

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Country Summary: SOUTH SUDAN

Note: This information sheet is designed to give participants a broad understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts that clients have come from, and the implications it may have for your work. Workers should use this information as a base to help them explore the unique realities of individual clients and their communities. It is not intended to stereotype cultures and behaviours, or to serve as 'recipes' for interventions. This information is assumed to be correct at the time of writing and will need to be updated periodically as circumstances change.

General information

Where located: South Sudan is a landlocked country in north-eastern Africa and is bordered by the Republic of Sudan to its north, Ethiopia to the east, Kenya to the south-east, Uganda to the south, DRC to the southwest and CAR to the west.

Population: 11,742 million people.[102]

Official language(s): Sudanese Arabic (aka Juba Arabic), English.

Other languages: Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zanda, Shilluk

Main religions: Christianity and animist beliefs.

Ethnicities: Dinka 35.8%, Nuer 15.6%, Shilluk, Azande, Bari, Kakwa, Kuku, Murle, Madi, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi, Anuak, Bongo, Lango, Dungotona, Acholi.[103]

Type of government: Republic.

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[102] Countrymeters. (2015). *Sudan Population*. Retrieved 16 April 2015 at
http://countrymeters.info/en/South_Sudan
[103] CIA. (2015). *South Sudan*. Retrieved at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

- The territories of what is now South Sudan and the Republic of the Sudan were occupied by Egypt under the Muhammad Ali Dynasty from 1805-1898. Egypt attempted to colonise the region of southern Sudan by establishing the province of Equatoria in the 1870s. Islamic revolutionaries overran the region in 1885, who were overthrown in turn by British forces in 1898. An Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was established in 1899 with Equatoria being the southernmost of its eight provinces. The Arabic Muslim North and the Christian/animist south were ruled as two distinct regions. Although the north was modernised, the south was largely left to itself over the following decades. Christian missionaries converted much of the population and introduced the English language.

- In the south, English, Dinka, Bari, Nuer, Latuko, Shilluk, Azande and Pari were official languages, while in the north, Arabic and English were used as official languages. Islam was discouraged by the British in the south, where British missionaries were permitted to work.

- A 1947 policy change to unify the regions meant that when the country was granted independence in 1956, Sudan was left with a heavily centralised state ruled from Khartoum in the north. The south, which already had social and political grievances, feared it would be dominated by the Arabic and Islamic north.

- In 1955, tensions flared up and led to the outbreak of the first Sudanese civil war. When Sudan gained its independence in 1956, it was with the understanding that the south would be able to participate fully in the political system. When the Arab Khartoum government reneged on its promises, a mutiny began that led to two prolonged periods of conflict, the first from 1955 to 1972. Disputes over the discovery of oil in the south in 1979, combined with President Nimeiry's decision to implement Islamic Sharia law for the whole of Sudan and to end the south's autonomy, led to a second surge in civil violence from 1983 to 2005. In total, around two million people died and another four million were displaced. A 1989 coup led to Omar al-Bashir assuming the presidency. Under his rule, repression increased while the situation in the south and other regions deteriorated. Approximately 2.5 million people died, mostly civilians, due to starvation and drought.

- Ongoing peace talks finally resulted in a Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in January 2005. As part of this agreement the south was granted a six-year period of autonomy to be followed by a referendum on final status. The result of the referendum in January 2011 was a vote of 98% in favour of secession and South Sudan became independent in July 2011.

- Since independence, South Sudan has deteriorated as various rebel militia groups operate in its territory and wreak havoc on the civilian population depending on tribal affiliation. Economic conditions have deteriorated since January 2012 when the

government decided to shut down oil production following disagreements with Sudan.[104]

- Adding to this has been deadly conflict between the Nuer and Dinka tribes that started when President Salva Kiir from the governing Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a Dinka from the largest ethnic group, sacked his deputy Riek Machar, a Nuer from the second largest ethnic group. Machar had accused Kiir of corruption and had challenged him for the SPLA's leadership. What began as a political dispute between Kiir and Machar descended into another civil war. Since December 2013, South Sudan has been torn apart by violence and targeted killings initially perpetrated by Dinka government troops against Nuer civilians suspected to be Machar supporters. Violence spread from the capital Juba across the Greater Upper Nile region, including the oil-rich Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile states. Thousands of Nuer civilians have been rounded up and killed, up to 1.5 million forced to flee their homes and 100,000 people forced to seek shelter in refugee camps and United Nations compounds, too afraid to return home.[105,106]

- After the events of December 2013, the UN Security Council authorised an urgent deployment of security forces and peacekeepers to aid in nation building efforts and civilian protection, authorising UN troops to use force. After two failed attempts by the government and opposition forces to reach cease-fire agreements in 2014, Kiir and Machar agreed to stop fighting in August 2014 at talks mediated by the regional group, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Under the deal, both sides have six months to form a unity government but have come to a standstill over the terms of a power sharing agreement.

Persecuted Groups

South Sudan is home to an estimated 56 ethnic groups and almost 600 sub-groups. While South Sudan is rife with tribal conflict and violence, there is no one particular group that is responsible. Competition over access to scarce resources has caused tension between all groups, repeating itself in a cycle of violence and retribution and damaging development and infrastructure, with small tribal groups aligning themselves to where they can survive.[107]

Tribal conflicts and major players include David Yau Yau who leads an insurgent group which fights for independence for the minority Murle tribe; massacres by Dinka army and police force against Nuer civilians and retaliatory attacks by Nuer against Dinka; and Murle cattle

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Howden, D. (2013, December 24). South Sudan: the state that fell apart in a week. *The Guardian*. Retrieved at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/23/south-sudan-state-that-fell-apart-in-a-week

[106] Human Rights Watch. (2015). *World Report 2015: South Sudan*. Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/africa/south-sudan

[107] Minority Rights International. (2011). *Southern Sudan: the role of minority rights in building a new nation*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/10824/briefing-papers/southern-sudan-the-role-of-minority-rights-in-building-a-new-nation.html

raids against the Nuer in Jonglei state followed by retaliatory attacks by the Nuer.[108, 109] While the SPLA blames ongoing conflict on Khartoum manipulating southern tribes, smaller tribes have claimed forced dependence on Khartoum, as they claim supplies and medicine go through the Dinka-dominated city of Bor and never reach them. The Shilluk and Murle tribes are also victimised by other tribes due to historical ties to Khartoum and the north.[110]

Recommended Resources

- BBC News. (2015). South *Sudan Profile: Overview*.
  http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14069082
- CIA. (2015). The *World Fact book: Sudan*.
  https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/su.html
- Global Conflict Tracker. *Internal Violence in South Sudan*.
  http://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137#!/?marker=33
- Human Rights Watch. (2015). World *Report 2015: South Sudan*.
  http://www.hrw.org/africa/south-sudan
- Insight on Conflict. (2015). South *Sudan: Conflict Profile*.
  http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/south-sudan/conflict-profile/

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Last updated: 17 April 2015

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[108] Insight on Conflict. (2015). South *Sudan: Conflict Profile*. Retrieved from
http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/south-sudan/conflict-profile/
[109] Human Rights Watch. (2014). *South Sudan: ethnic targeting, widespread killings*. Retrieved from
http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/01/16/south-sudan-ethnic-targeting-widespread-killings
[110] Welsh, M. (2011). Sudan: **t**ranscending tribe. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from
http://www.aljazeera.com/photo_galleries/africa/201111010324526960.html

Country Summary: SRI LANKA

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General information

Where located: Sri Lanka is an island in South Asia with India to its northwest.

Population: 21,866,445[111]

Official language(s): Sinhala

Other languages: Tamil 18%, English 10%, other 8%[112]

Main religions: Buddhism 70%, Hinduism 12.5%, Islam 10%, Christianity 7.5%[113].

Type of government: Unitary semi-presidential constitutional republic.

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[111] CIA. (2013). The *World Fact book*. Retrieved https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2119.html?country
[112] Ibid.
[113] Department of Census & Statistics Sri Lanka. (2012). *Population by district, religion and sex*. Retrieved http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/FinalReport/Population/Table%20A4.pdf

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Colonial Rule

- Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) was colonised by the Portuguese in the 16th century, the Dutch in the mid-17th century and the British in the mid-18th century which has left a mark on its people. The British influenced the formation of a civil service and professional ranks, which formed new castes and social classes in Sri Lankan society and for the first few decades of the 20th century, united Sinhalese and Tamil alike in pressing for independence and constitutional reform[114].   Sri Lanka became an independent republic in 1948, although the British maintained a military presence through air and sea bases and retention of military staff.

Systemic Discrimination of Tamils

- In 1956, Prime Minister Bandaranaike introduced the 'Sinhala Only' Act, which proclaimed Sinhalese as the only official language in Sri Lanka; the Tamil community perceived it as a threat to their language and culture. After years of peaceful demonstrations, Tamils rioted against the Sinhalese government in 1956 and 1958, the latter which resulted in the deaths of thousands of Tamil civilians.   By the late 1960s Tamils were officially calling for a separate Tamil state.   In 1971, the Sinhalese government introduced the Standardisation Policy, which was meant to allow geographically isolated students to access tertiary education but actually resulted in a decrease of university places for Tamils. This led to widespread riots and was a further step towards future Tamil militancy.

Civil war

The civil war that started in 1983 was the culmination of many years of official discrimination against the Hindu Tamil ethnic minority by the Buddhist Sinhalese majority, including discriminative practices in education and employment and state-sponsored colonisation of Tamil areas by Sinhalese peasants. In 1983, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an independent militant organisation, stated their intention to create an independent Tamil state in the north of Sri Lanka. In what came to be known as "Black July", Sinhalese mobs killed 3000 Tamils across Sri Lanka in July 1983 in retaliation for LTTE killing of 13 soldiers, which resulted in a wave of Tamils fleeing to other countries and thousands of Tamil youth joining militant groups[115]. LTTE carried out a campaign of violence against the state, assassinating policemen, moderate Tamil politicians who tried to negotiate with the government and hundreds of civilians through assassinations, massacres and later, suicide attacks. The LTTE have been listed as a terrorist organisation by the United States since 1997. After 25 years of conflict, the war ended in May 2009 after a major government offensive that caused the LTTE to surrender. The war caused the deaths of an estimated 80,000-100,000 people, although

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[114] De Silva, D. (1981). *A history of Sri Lanka*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

[115] Harrison, F. (2003, 23 July). Twenty years on – riots that led to war. *BBC News*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3090111.stm

the Sri Lankan government disputes this figure[116]. Sri Lanka's civil war has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, tens of thousands whom remain displaced today. Since 2009, the international community has called for investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity for ongoing abuses against Tamils, especially many allegations of sexual abuse by Sri Lankan security forces.[117]

Human rights abuses

◄ Human rights abuses have been carried out by all ruling parties in Sri Lanka: the former British colonial rulers, the Sinhalese government and the LTTE. The Sinhalese government have abducted, tortured and killed Tamil civilians; made arbitrary arrests, denied people fair trials and restricted freedom of movement and speech of Tamils as well as harassment and intimidation of the media. In turn, the LTTE have forcibly recruited child soldiers, massacred civilians, carried out hundreds of suicide attacks and assassinations (including Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Primadasa in 1993 and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991) and bombed public buildings, transportation hubs and Buddhist temples.[118]

Muslim persecution

◄ The LTTE have also targeted Muslims with a call to evict all Muslims in the north as a form of 'ethnic cleansing', using violence against those who refused to leave. The Muslim communities were not seen to support the LTTE struggle and were considered to be ethnic outsiders. The Ultra-Right Wing – Buddhist Nationalist Party, Bodu Bala Sena, formed with the aim of maintaining the Buddhist majority and specifically targeting the Muslim minority.

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[116] ABC News. (2009, 21 May). *Up to 100,000 Killed in Sri Lanka's Civil War*. Retrieved *http://www.abc.net.au/news/2009-05-20/up-to-100000-killed-in-sri-lankas-civil-war-un/1689524*
[117] International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect. (2015). *Crisis in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-sri-lanka
[118] US Department of State. (2009). *Report to Congress on Incidents during the Recent Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/131025.pdf

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Persecuted Groups

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when	When came to Australia
Tamils	• Religious and ethnic differences • Tamil push for an independent state throughout the 20th century, resulting in the 25 year civil war from 1983 to 2009.	Disappearances, executions, torture, rape, harassment, surveillance.	After Black July in 1983, many Tamils fled Sri Lanka with large diasporas settled in India, Canada and Europe.	• First came to Australia in large numbers in the mid - 1980s as a result of the escalating conflict. • The 2011 census counted 5182 Australians of Sri Lankan-Tamil ancestry.[119]
Muslims (also known as *Sri Lankan Moors* or *Indian Moors*) and Malays.	• Religious difference • Past Muslim resistance against becoming a minority within a Tamil dominated homeland.	Persecuted by Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists both: displacement, land loss, vandalism of small businesses, harassment, killings, abductions and extortion. Muslims have always been targeted but especially in 2014 due to rallies organised by the ultranationalist Buddhist movement, Bodhu Bala Sena.	Due to their persecution by Tamils in the north during the 1990s, many Muslims fled to the south and a small number to Arab and western countries.	There is no data available on specific numbers of Muslim Sri Lankans; as they originally came from the north and speak a Tamil dialect influenced by Arabic, they are often included in the Tamil population.

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[119] Department of Immigration & Border Protection. (2012). People *of Australia: statistics from the 2011 census*. Canberra: AGPS.

| Dissenters: e.g. journalists, trade unionists, clergy, students, human rights activists, the judiciary, opposition politicians. | • Any criticism or dissent of the government is met with accusations of treason. | Government dissenters are threatened, imprisoned, attacked and sometimes tortured. Especially targeted is the judiciary, who are threatened when ruling in favour of human rights violations.[120] | Reprisals against dissenters have increased since 2009 after the end of the civil war and a change to the constitution in 2010 that saw government institutions fall directly under the president's power. | Although the Sri Lankan diaspora is mostly made up of Tamils via the Humanitarian Program, DIBP saw an increasing number of ethnic Sinhalese seeking asylum by boat for the first time in 2012 (6400 in total, up from 200 in 2011). [121] |

Recommended Resources

- ABS. (2011). People *in Australia who were born in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/7107_0
- Amnesty International. (2013). Sri *Lanka's Assault on Dissent*. Retrieved at https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA37/003/2013/en/
- Department of Immigration & Border Protection. (2012). *Community Information Summary: Sri Lankan Born*. Retrieved https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/srilanka.pdf .
- Human Rights Watch. (2014). Sri *Lanka*. Retrieved http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/sri-lanka
- Minority Rights International website: http://www.minorityrights.org/

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Last updated: 11 May 2015

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[120] Amnesty International. (2013). Sri *Lanka's Assault on Dissent*. Retrieved at https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA37/003/2013/en/

[121] DIBP. (2013). *Placing recent Sri Lankan maritime arrivals in a broader migration context*. Retrieved at http://www.immi.gov.au/media/research/irregular-migration-research/_doc/placing-recent-sri-lankan-maritime-arrivals-broader-migration-context.pdf

Country Summary: SYRIA

> **Note:** *This information sheet is designed to give participants a broad understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts that clients have come from, and the implications it may have for your work. Workers should use this information as a base to help them explore the unique realities of individual clients and their communities. It is not intended to stereotype cultures and behaviours, or to serve as 'recipes' for interventions. This information is assumed to be correct at the time of writing and will need to be updated periodically as circumstances change.*

Numbers of clients seen by STARTTS

Due to the 2015 decision by the Australian government to take an additional one-off humanitarian intake of 12,000 Syrians and Iraqis – In 2016 STARTTS saw an increase in the number of Syrian clients compared to previous years.

	2016	**2015**	**2014**	**2013**	**2012**
No. clients	576	338	210	18	19
% of total STARTTS clients	11%	11%	5.3%	0.6%	0.8%

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

General information

Where located: Syria is a country in western Asia, with Lebanon and the Mediterranean to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south and Israel to the southwest.

Population est.: 17,185,170[122]

Official language: Arabic

Other languages: Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian

Break down of religions: Sunni Muslim (74%), Alawite Muslim (11%), Christian (10%), Druze (3%), Shiite/Isma'ili Muslim (2%), Yazidi (0.2%).[123]

Ethnicities: Arab 90%; Kurds, Armenians and others 10%.

Type of government: Republic under an authoritarian regime.

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Overview: Syria overtook Afghanistan as the highest source country for refugees in 2015 and 2016, with over half of its population – over 11 million – displaced by war. Over 5.5 million are refugees hosted by some 123 countries worldwide, with over 87% located in neighbouring countries including Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. The conflict is ongoing.[124]

Syrian history: 500BC – 1920

 Under the Ottoman Empire, Syria was known as Bilad al-Sham and included all of modern Israel, Palestine and Lebanon as well as modern Syria. Syria has been variously occupied by the Persians in 500 BC, by the Greeks in 333 BC and the Romans in 64 BC. The Turkish Ottoman Empire took over in 1516, followed by the French occupation from 1920.

Under French mandate: 1920 - 1936

 Within a month France allocated the Syrian ports of Tripoli, Sidon and Tyre and the Biqa'a valley to Greater Lebanon and in 1939 gave the district of Alexandretta to Turkey. France divided the rest of Syria into four territories: the north-western Nusayri mountains for the

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[122] CIA. (2016). *The World Factbook*. The UNHCR estimates that over 5.5 million Syrians have fled as refugees since 2011. UNHCR. (2017). *Global Trends 2016 Report.* 20 June 2017.
[123] Ibid.
[124] UNHCR (2017). *Global Trends: 2016.*

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

Alawis, Jabal Druze for the Druze and the cities of Damascus and Aleppo as two separate entities. As a result of Arab nationalist pressure, France reunited these territories in 1936.

Unrest and coups: 1946 – 1970s

- France recruited minority groups such as the Alawis, Druze, Isma'ilis, Christians, Kurds and Circassians, into its local force, Les Troupes Speciales du Levant. This not only caused tension with the Sunni Arab majority but also brought about later minority control of Syria.

- Syria became independent in 1946 and three years later a coup installed the first in a succession of Kurdo-Arab officers in power, each of whom relied on minority support. Syria then joined Egypt to form the United Arab Republic in 1958 to protect the region against Israel, but this fell apart when Syria came to resent Egyptian dominance in the partnership. This was followed by more political instability including the Six Day War with Israel in 1967.

Rise of Alawi minority rule: 1940s - Present

- The Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party, founded in 1940 with a socialist Arab nationalist ideology, made progress in the poorer parts of Syria and within the military. A part of its appeal was its emphasis on the equality of all Arabs, irrespective of religion, and its view of Islam as a cultural rather than religious part of Arab national identity. In 1963 the Ba'athists seized power, purging the army of 'disloyal elements' and replacing them with officers disproportionately drawn from the Alawi and Druze communities.

- By 1966, many Sunnis had been removed from positions of authority. A Druze attempt to stop Alawi ascendancy in the Ba'ath Party failed in 1966 and many Druze were purged from the security forces.   Although power was already concentrated in the hands of a largely Alawi leadership, Isma'ilis were the next to be purged from the armed forces.

- In 1970 Defence Minister Hafez al-Assad came to power in a coup against a fellow Alawi and officially became president in 1971. Although many posts in the armed forces and security apparatus were held by Sunnis, Alawis from al-Assad's own family, tribe or village essentially controlled the state. Hafez al-Assad was an authoritarian ruler and in 1982, killed thousands from the Muslim Brotherhood organisation who opposed his rule.

President Bashir al-Assad: 2000 – Present

- Bashir al-Assad came to power in 2000 after the death of his father. While there were initial hopes for reform and the release of political prisoners, a year later Bashir al-Assad repressed reform movements and continued the authoritarian regime of his father. Dissent was crushed and violence was used to suppress demonstrations.

Modern Life in Syria: 2000s

- Although political dissent was suppressed, many citizens enjoyed a comfortable, stable, and relatively secure lifestyle in Syria before the civil war. The middle-class significantly grew in

the late 1990s, and had lives not unlike those in Australia, with strong communities, families, homes and promising careers. [125]

- According to UNICEF, the 2008-2012 literacy rate of female youth aged 15-24 was 94.1%, and the corresponding male literacy rate was 96.4%, indicating a relatively literate society. [126]

- From 2007-2011, 1.7% of the population lived below the international poverty line of US$1.25 per day. In 2008, GPA per capita was US$2,058, which was higher than Indonesia, but less than Guatemala.[127] This data indicates relatively low levels of extreme poverty (as defined by the UN) and a higher standard of living, especially in urban areas.[128]

- In 2010, the average life expectancy for male and females in Syria was 73.7 years, whereas in Australia it was 81.9 years. The Syrian average of 73.7 was higher than the 2010 worldwide average of 69.6 years; one marker of a moderately developed society.[129]

Civil war: 2011 - Present

- The ongoing Syrian civil war was inspired by the 2011 Arab Spring revolution and the increasingly repressive regime of Bashir al-Assad. It began in January 2011 as a chain of peaceful protests against police corruption and assaults on civilians. The Syrian Army responded by arresting thousands of demonstrators in which several people died. In April, 100,000 gathered in the city of Homs to call for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad. The government responded with harsh security clampdowns including firing on the crowd and killing protestors. This provided a catalyst for a full-scale armed rebellion. In July 2011, army defectors formed the Free Syrian Army.

- The civil war is an ongoing conflict between the Syrian army and various rebel groups including ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). All sides have been accused of human rights abuses. The UN Human Rights Council has found numerous incidents of torture, summary executions and attacks on cultural property. The Syrian government was accused of committing UN-condemned chemical attacks on civilians in March 2015 and April 2017.

- The conflict has increasingly forced minorities to align themselves with one side or another, with Christians, Druze and Armenians largely siding with the government and Turkmen with anti-government forces. Palestinians have split, while Kurds have fought against both rebels and government forces. Some Christian communities have formed militias to protect their

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[125] Adnan Albash, S. (2016). "What was life in Syria like before the war, until it started?" Retrieved: https://www.neulandzeitung.com/single-post/2016/04/05/What-was-life-in-Syria-like-before-war-until-it-started-Interview

[126] UNICEF. (2017). *Syria Statistics.* Retrieved: https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/syria_statistics.html

[127] World Bank. (2017). *GDP by Country.* Retrieved: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/

[128] Footnote 5.
UNICEF. (2017). *Australia Statistics.* Retrieved: https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/australia_statistics.html

[129] WHO. (2017). *Life Expectancy Statistics.* Retrieved:
http://gamapserver.who.int/gho/interactive_charts/mbd/life_expectancy/atlas.html

neighbourhoods from rebel fighters. International religious freedom groups have drawn attention to the plight of Syria's Christian minority at the hands of the rebel jihadist groups.

- In December 2016, fighting in Aleppo escalated and the city fell to rebels. There has been massive destruction of culture, infrastructure, and entire communities, in addition to indiscriminate attacks on civilians, hospitals, homes, and schools.

- The Assad regime has gradually lost control of certain areas, as various opposition groups have gained control. By the end of 2016 the Syrian government captured Aleppo, while Kurdish fighters gained control of Northern areas, reducing ISIL's territory to the mid-East region (Deir Az Zor). Rebel forces have mainly occupied the NW area beyond Aleppo, and some parts in the SE. Turkish backed rebel forces have also made claims in the NW near Jarablus. Territory control is constantly changing and remains difficult to monitor. [130]

Regional Actors and Proxy Wars: 2011 – Present
Multiple 'Proxy Wars' have emerged as regional actors' involvement has increased and further complicated the conflict; it is now an international crisis with over tens of thousands combatants involved.[131]

- U.S. vs. Russia. The U.S. has opposed the Assad regime since the 1970s and currently supports the Sunni-dominated Free Syrian Army. Conversely, Russia has been selling arms to Assad-regime loyalists and launched an air campaign against Assad's opponents.[132]

Figure 1: Source: ABC News - Steven Viney

- Iran vs. Saudi Arabia. The Iranian and Shia militant group, Hezbollah – the Lebanese Party of God, has also supported the Assad regime by sending monetary and material aid. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States have been supporting the opposition groups.
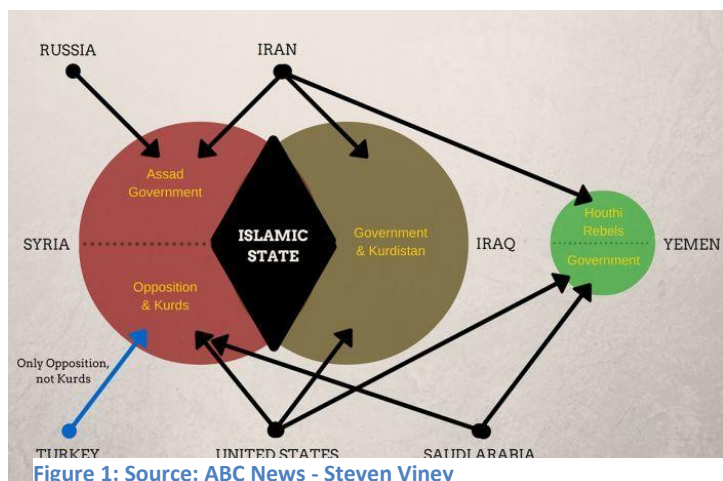
- Turkey has a vested interest in resolving the conflict and supports the Assad opposition groups such as the Free Syrian Army, but in a way which does not empower the Kurdish minority. It is also the biggest host of Syrian asylum seekers; by the end of 2016, Turkey had more than 2.8 million Syrian refugees – representing over 98% of refugees hosted there. [133]

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[130] Aljazeera (2017). *Syrian Civil War Map*.
http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html
[131] PBS. (2017). *Who is fighting in Syria's civil war?* Retrieved: www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/fighting-syrias-civil-war
[132] The Washington Post. (2016). *How the Growing Wed of Conflict in Syria Became a Global Problem.* Retrieved: https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/explaining-the-syrian-conflict/
[133] Footnote 3.

- France, the UK, and Jordan have also supported the Free Syrian Army to varying degrees.

- ISIL vs. everyone. ISIL seized control of Raqqa in early 2014, and it became ISIL's de facto capital. According to the US military, in July 2017 US-backed forces breached walls around Raqqa's Old City – a major advance in the battle to drive out ISIL. The UN estimates 50,000 to 100,000 civilians remain in Raqqa in dire conditions.[134]

- United Nations. In part due to the Russia's support of Assad and their respective UN Security Council (UNSC) veto-power, the UNSC has remained largely in deadlock in regards to brokering a peace agreement between the Syrian government and opposition groups, and passing other resolutions, which would impose economic sanctions on Syria. [135]

Syrian lives lost and displaced: 2011 - Present
- The Syrian death toll as of early 2016 is estimated to be as high as 470,000, with 5.5 million refugees– nearly half of them children – in neighbouring countries, mainly Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. Additionally, 6.3 million people are internally displaced in Syria.[136]

- In 2016, more than half of the Syrian population are displaced, and Syria is currently the largest source country of refugees globally.[137]

- In 2016, the largest number of Syrians submitted for resettlement to the UNHCR came from Jordan (30,181), Lebanon (23,498), and Turkey (16,682).[138] Many have spent time in refugee camps waiting for resettlement. In 2016, 1 in every 6 person in Lebanon was a refugee.[139]

- Classroom violence against Syrian children in Lebanese schools, abuse in the workplace, and ill treatment on the streets of Beirut has been reported as common occurrences. [140]

- Many have fled beyond neighbouring countries in hopes of resettlement and claiming asylum elsewhere in Europe. This has brought the 'refugee crises' to countries like Germany, Greece, and Sweden. The trek across the Middle East and Europe is treacherous, with some paying smugglers and/or taking their chances on overcrowded boats to cross the Mediterranean Sea via Egypt or Libya in hopes of passage to Germany or as far as Norway.[141]

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[134] ABC. (2017). *Islamic State Battle of Raqqa Nears End.* Retrieved: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-05/islamic-state-battle-of-raqqa-nears-end/8678978

[135] SBS. (2017). *UN Security Council Voting Delayed Over Syria Gas Attack.* Retrieved: http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/04/07/un-security-council-voting-delayed-over-syria-gas-attack

[136] Human Rights Watch (2017). *Syria*. Retrieved at https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/syria.

[137] Footnote 3.

[138] UNHCR. (2017). *UNHCR Resettlement Fact Sheet 2016.* Retrieved: http://www.unhcr.org/en-au/59364f887

[139] Footnote 3.

[140] Kraft, K. (2017). *A Case Study of Syrian Muslim refugees.* Journal of Contemporary Religion. 32.2: 221_235.

[141] The Nation. (2015). *Why Syrian Refugees Risk the 'Journey of Death' to Europe*. Retrieved: https://www.thenation.com/article/why-syrian-refugees-risk-journey-death-europe/

Persecuted Groups

The turmoil in Syria is influenced by the revolt of the Sunni majority against the perceived injustice of its ruling Alawi minority. Unlike other Arab states, Syria's history has not been marked by widespread persecution of minority groups (except for the regime's targeting of Kurds) as Assad cultivated minority groups. However since the rise of ISIL in 2014, minority groups have been in grave danger and have been ordered to convert to Islam, pay a 'jizyah' tax for protection or be executed.

There are many small minorities who have fled from neighbouring countries such as Yazidis and Mandaeans but the groups below are the largest minorities.[142]

Name	Reasons for persecution	How persecuted	Where fled and when	When came to Australia
Christians (Arab Christians, Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks)	• Religious beliefs	Since the rise of ISIL, there have been reports of mass killings in Christian villages, conversion at gunpoint, beheadings, kidnappings and forced marriage and sexual abuse of women.	An estimated 11 million Syrians of all groups have fled their homes since 2011, which includes 6.3 million internally displaced and over 5.5 million to neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and beyond.[143]	51% of Syrian-born Australians are Christian (Orthodox or Catholic). In regards to "ancestry", the 2016 census found about 17% of Syrian-born Australians identified as Assyrian, and 7% as Armenian.[144]
Kurds	• Ethnic differences • Political opinion and dissent • Claim by the government that Kurds are	Following large Kurdish demonstrations in 2004, Kurds have been detained, harassed and tortured[145].		The 2016 Australian census identified 245 people who were of Kurdish ancestry, and Syrian-born. [146]

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[142] Minority Rights Group International. (2017). *Syria Overview*. Retrieved at http://minorityrights.org/country/syria/
[143] UNHCR. (2017). *Global Trends 2016 Report.* 20 June 2017.
[144] ABS. (2017). Census TableBuilder. Retrieved 15/08/2017
[145] Human Rights Watch. (2009). *End Persecution of Kurds*. Retrieved from http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/11/26/syria-end-persecution-kurds
[146] ABS. (2017). Census TableBuilder. Retrieved 15/08/2017

	not Syrian but Turkish.			
Political activists, or those of differing political opinions	• Different opinions to the Assad regime, or other opposition groups (e.g. ISIL) → perceived threat to rule, political goals, and gov control	Imprisoned or detained, forced disappearances, murdered, tortured, harassed, and/or threats to self or family members.		There are not specific numbers on which refugees or asylum seekers are political activists
Palestinians (migrated after Israel's creation in 1948).	• Cannot hold Syrian citizenship. • Like other minorities, they are targeted if the economy is poor or unemployment rates are high.	When Assad banned PLO leader Yasser Arafat's forces in 1983, large numbers of Palestinians were executed or tortured. Without citizenship, most are vulnerable to abuse and discrimination.[147]	Palestinians migrated to Australia from across the Arab world and there is no specific data on numbers who came from Syria.[148]	The last large wave of Palestinian migration was after the Gulf War in 1991. The 2016 census counted 10,119 Australians of Palestinian descent; of those 194 were also Syrian-born.[149]
Druze, a monotheistic faith based in Islam but	• Seen as heretics by Islam	Imprisoned, forced into army conscription.	The largest Druze communities are in Syria,	There are Druze associations in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne

[147] IRIN. (2012). *Palestinian refugees from Syria feel abandoned*. Retrieved: http://www.irinnews.org/report/96202/analysis-palestinian-refugees-from-syria-feel-abandoned
[148] Immigration Museum Australia. (2009*). Handing on the Key: Palestinians in Australia*. Retrieved: http://museumvictoria.com.au/pages/11443/handing-on-the-key_brochure.pdf?epslanguage=en
[149] ABS. (2017). Census TableBuilder. Retrieved 15/08/2017

also incorporating beliefs drawn from Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism.	• Refusal to join the Syrian Army		Lebanon and Israel but since the rise of ISIL have fled Syria. There are large numbers of Druze in western countries, Latin America and West Africa.	but no data on how many have settled in Australia, as they have often been included in Arabic populations. They are largely invisible as they speak Arabic and follow similar social patterns.

Syrian Culture

◼ Syrians tend to identify primarily with their religious group or sect, however they do generally identify with the nation state as 'Syrian'. The majority of the country is Sunni Muslim which creates a strong feeling of cultural unity amongst this group. Like other Arab nations, Syrian life is collectivist and centres on the extended family and community. The individual's allegiance to family is nearly absolute and usually overrides all other obligations. Although status is changing within the middle class, ascribed rather than achieved status still regulates the average Syrian's life, and honour and dignity are tied to the status of the family and the group.[150] It should be noted that this generalisation about Syrian culture will not apply to all individual clients.

◼ Syria follows both the Christian and Islamic calendars. Events and holidays specific to Syria are Martyr's Day (Id as-Suhada) on 6th May, which commemorates the execution of Syrian nationalist fighters against the Ottoman Empire in 1915; and Evacuation Day (Id-Al Gala) which commemorates the evacuation of French troops at the end of French mandated rule and emergence of Syrian independence on 16th April 1946.

◼ Syria follows a combination of Sharia law and civil/criminal (secular) law. Converting religions is traditionally looked down upon, and punishable by law. Those who speak out against the government is also punishable by law.

Other significant days in the Islamic calendar:

◼ Eid-al Fitr marks the end of Ramadan.

◼ Eid al adha or Greater Eid (Afghans call this Eid –e Qorban) is a significant Islamic adherence for Muslims. It is also known as the Feast of Sacrifice as it commemorates Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God as an act of obedience to God. Greater Eid also marks the end of Hajj, the five days' religious journey (pilgrims pray around the holy Kaaba at the Grand Mosque) when millions of Muslims from all around the world travel to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

◼ Muhrram is the first month of the Islamic calendar. The 10th of Muhrram is significant. While Shia Muslims celebrate this day to mark the death of Hussein ibn Ali, the grandson

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[150] Collelo, T. (Ed). (1987). *Syria: A Country Study*. Washington: Library of Congress.

of the prophet Mohammed who was beheaded during the battle of Karbala, Sunni Muslims celebrate the victory of Moses over the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Resettlement in Australia

- Syrian-born immigrants were first counted in the 1891 Victorian census. Early Syrian immigrants may have included persecuted Christians, people escaping economic hardship and rural workers. After World War II the Syrian population grew significantly. The population increased further during the 1970s and 1980s, as a result of regional military conflict.[151]

- The 2016 census counted 15,324 Syrian-born people in Australia, an increase of about 80% from the 2011 census. New South Wales had the largest number at 9,294.[152]

   Resettlement in 2015-2016
- In September 2015, the Department of Immigration set aside 12,000 additional places for Syrians and Iraqis in the offshore humanitarian program (includes 200, 202, 204s). As of March 2017, all additional 12,000 visas have been granted, and the recipients have arrived. Over half have been resettled in NSW, particularly in Fairfield and Liverpool.[153]

   o Priority for the extra 12,000 places was given to people displaced by the conflict in Syria and Iraq who were assessed as being the most vulnerable – persecuted minorities, women, children and families with the least prospect of ever returning safely to their homes; and those located in Lebanon, Jordan or Turkey.

   o The ethnicity and visa subclass breakdown for the 12,000 visas is not yet public information, but it has been reported that many are Christian minorities.[154]

- In the year 2015-16, Syria was Australia's second source country (after Afghanistan) for humanitarian visa applications, with 24,571 applications made (31.9% of total applications). Of these, only 4,261 (17.3%) were accepted.[155]

- Of the 4,261 visas granted in 2015-2016, 136 were subclass 204 (Women at Risk) - (10.6% of total subclass 204 visas granted). This number is expected to rise in 2016-17 data.[156]

[151] Museum Victoria. (2014). *History of immigration from Syria*. Retrieved: http://museumvictoria.com.au/origins/history.aspx?pid=61
[152] DIBP. (2014). *Community Information Summary: Syria-born*. Retrieved: https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/syria.pdf
[153] IBID.
[154] SBS. (2017). '*Persecuted Minorities' Pledge Delivers Christian Refugee Boom.* Retrieved: http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2017/02/23/persecuted-minorities-pledge-delivers-christian-refugee-boom
[155] DIBP. (2016). Australia's *Offshore Humanitarian Programme: 2015-16*. Retrieved: http://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/statistics/australia-offshore-humanitarian-programme-2015-16.pdf
'Country of birth' breakdown by visa subclass (aside from 204s) or religion is not available.
[156] IBID

- Syrian asylum seekers to Australia have been detained in offshore processing centres such as Manus Island, with controversy over plans by DIBP to send them back to Syria.[157]

STARTTS' clients

- In regards to STARTTS clients, in 2016, 8% of Syrian clients were reportedly on 204 (Women at Risk) visas. A rise is expected to be reflected in 2017 client data.

- In 2016, 31% of Syrian clients arrived on 200 (Refugee), and 44% arrived on 202 (Global Special Humanitarian) visas.

- 13% of Syrian client's visa statuses were not recorded or were unknown. Very few were reportedly on bridging visas or spouse visas. [158]

Implications for STARTTS Work

NOTE: This section has combined peer-reviewed journals, organisation websites, STARTTS client data, and STARTTS' employees' experiences. Few articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals regarding mental health of Syrian refugees or of refugee-like backgrounds, and this is a limitation. Most information about the Syrian refugee crisis is available from news sources and organisation websites. This is partly due to mass movement of Syrians and focus on emergency care. [159]

General issues

- The Syrian crisis is ongoing and has been catastrophic in its impact over six years. The crisis is regularly broadcast in the media and Syrian clients are faced with news and images from their war torn country in a continuous news cycle as well as anxiety or guilt over family members left behind.[160]

- The extreme destruction of culture and entire communities, along with a prolonged journey to neighbouring countries to seek refuge may also contribute to ongoing trauma. With such a recent flight to safety and no end to the conflict in sight, they will continue to be in a state of suffering and trauma for some time.[161]

- What topics and concerns that come up in counselling may depend on which part of Syria the client is from and it may be pertinent to be informed about what devastation or persecution took place there (e.g. chemical warfare, suicide bombings, etc.).

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[157] RCOA. (2014). Australia must step up to support Syrian asylum seekers. Retrieved at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/media/australia-must-step-up-to-support-syrian-refugees/

[158]STARTTS internal database (received 24 July 2017).

[159] Ghumman, McCord, Chang. (2016). *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Syrian Refugees: A Review.* Canadian Psychology: Ottawa 57.4: 246-253.

[160] Hassan, G., Kirmayer, L., Mekki-Berrada A., et al. (2015). *Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians: A Review for MHPSS staff working with Syrians Affected by Armed Conflict*. Geneva: UNHCR.

[161] IBID.

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- Be aware that anger may be commonly expressed in counselling or groups as a result of sudden massive losses in regards to a stable lifestyle, employment and career opportunities, and security for the future of their family.[162]

- Syrians resettled in Australia are a highly diverse group, with varying degrees of cohesiveness. Some may have doubts or suspicions about others from differing ancestral, ethnic, or religious groups, while others may feel more connected.

- Consider that some clients may prefer an interpreter from the same religious background and/or gender as them.

Waiting for resettlement

- Know these 'additional' traumatic experiences and stressors may impact them similar to other clients from refugee-like backgrounds that have spent prolonged periods in refugee camps or waiting for resettlement elsewhere.

STARTTS offices

- Most of STARTTS' Syrian clients are located in Fairfield/Liverpool (mainly Christian Assyrians), or Wollongong (mainly Muslim Syrians).

- To cope with the dramatic influx from the additional 12,000 visas granted, over half of whom resettled in NSW, a new STARTTS' office was opened in Fairfield in 2016.
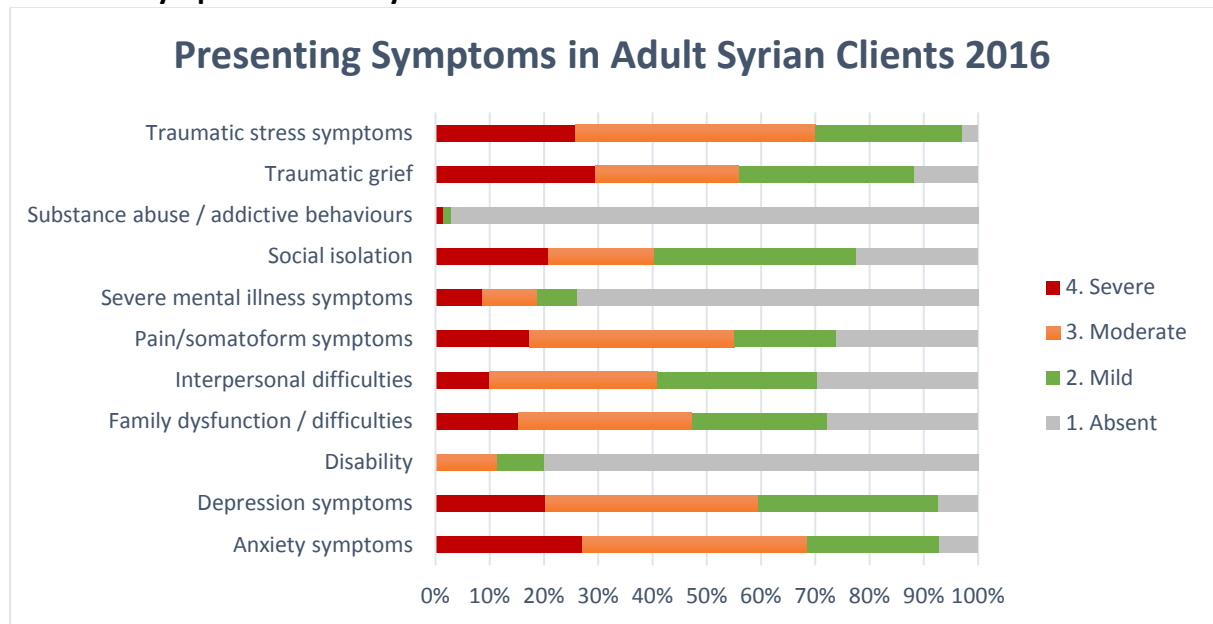
Clinical

Overview

- It is important to realise that Syrians may experience a wide range of mental health difficulties including exacerbations of pre-existing mental disorders prompted by the above conflict-related violence and displacement related to fleeing persecution.[163]

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[162] Footnote 37.
[163] IBID.

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STARTTS' Symptom Summary Data: what to look out for

Presenting Symptoms in Adult Syrian Clients 2016

Common Symptoms: 44% presented moderate traumatic stress symptoms; 27% presented severe anxiety symptoms; 39% had moderate depression symptoms; and 38% had moderate pain/somatoform symptoms.[164]

PTSD Rates

- Be mindful of PTSD symptoms in Syrian clients. A study done on Syrian refugees living in Turkey refugee camps reported that 33.5% of the study participants had PTSD, as defined by the DSM-5.[165]

- STARTTS workers should be cognizant that Syrian Kurdish clients may be at particular risk of developing PTSD as occurrences of torture appear higher than 'average'. A psychological study of Syrian Kurdish refugees in Iraq reported that over 41% experienced two or more instances of torture, and 38.46% presented PTSD symptoms. The UNHCR has reported that 24% of all refugees submitted for resettlement are survivors of torture and/or violence. [166]

'Traditional' Emotional Expression

- Be conscious that Syrian clients may with-hold personal opinions or feel uncomfortable discussing emotions at first. Traditionally, for men and women, expressing emotions or

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[164] STARTTS' internal client database (received July 2017).

[165] Footnote 32. This is significant compared to other research which suggests only about 9% of individuals having experienced a potentially traumatic event (PTE) develop PTSD (studies on rates of PTSD in refugees range from 7% to 86%).

[166] UNHCR. (2017). *Global Resettlement Needs.* Retrieved at: http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/resettlement/575836267/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2017.html.

Ibrahim, H. and Hassan, C.Q. (2017). *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms Resulting from Torture and Other Traumatic Events among Syrian Kurdish Refugees in Kurdistan Region, Iraq.* Frontiers in Psychology. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00241

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personal opinions is not greatly emphasized in Syrian culture (especially political opinions not in agreement with the government, as there is serious risk of persecution).

◀ Some Syrian men may hold more traditional views that men don't cry and are not afraid, thus they may find it more difficult to acknowledge feelings such as sadness or anxiety. Be alert to possible anger, resentment, or feelings of revenge, which often may be the emotion that surfaces the most easily and in some cases, be expressed as aggressive behaviour, towards those close to them, such as wives and children.[167]

Grief

◀ Understanding the grief process can assist with addressing the issue therapeutically. During the grieving period, many visitors (extended family and community members) commonly come to the family's home for several weeks or longer. Clients may present with complex grief.

Attitudes towards Counselling

◀ Concepts of mental health in Syria have gradually changed and awareness of mental healthcare has increased in recent years. Many Syrians are likely to recognise that the causes of their sufferings or mental health difficulties arise from the violence, losses and daily social and economic pressures. However, some still may be unfamiliar with counselling and some may not seek it out due to the stigma and shame associated. [168] Going to family and friends for support is more common.

◀ Understand instead of counselling, some Syrian clients may commonly place importance on social gatherings, community, and building friendships in a casual setting.

Group and community development work

STARTTS has engaged various groups in the Syrian community and supported the newly forming Syrian Community Association.

Identified trends and Issues

◀ Clarify with the client how they identify. It is important that some Syrians as community members tend to use their ethnicity or religion as their primary identifier, while others may identify primarily as a Syrian national.

◀ Be familiar that community-led associations are at varying levels of development. For example, the Assyrian Community in NSW is relatively well-established compared to other groups such as the newly forming Muslim Syrian community in Wollongong. So, it may be pertinent to take that into consideration as it may impact CD programs, and clients' respective resettlement and cultural adjustment process.

◀ Each Syrian subgroup has its own unique needs, culture, and history.

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[167] Hassan, G., Kirmayer, L., Mekki-Berrada A., et al. (2015). *Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians: A Review for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support staff working with Syrians Affected by Armed Conflict*. Geneva: UNHCR.
[168] IBID

FICT Groups

◄ FICT groups for Syrian clients have taken place in Wollongong and Fairfield/Liverpool

◄ Since September 2016, FICT has trained over 30 Syrian and Iraqi clients (of various religious and ethnic backgrounds), whom have successfully facilitated over 16 FICT workshops in their own communities.

Syrian youth clients

Identified Issues and Trends

◄ Some youth, due to the sudden and large-scale conflict and flight from Syria, may not have had access to school, never had formal schooling, and/or begun working from a young age before being resettled in Australia. This may make their transition to an Australian school more difficult – be supportive and sensitive to their needs.[169]

◄ Workers should be aware that some male youth may come from a family without a father figure, and therefore may seek to take on the 'head of house' role. There may be a disparity between their perceived adult role in the home, and role as a student in school, which may potentially contribute to difficulties academically, socially, or emotionally. They may need extra support.[170]

◄ Workers may need to be attentive to possible frustration, attention-seeking behaviour, or aggression especially from male youth, who may attempt to push boundaries of authority-like figures, due to their traumatic experiences and lack of stability on top of regular adolescent life changes and struggles.

◄ Burn out, the importance of self-care, and limited STARTTS' Youth Worker staff has been reported as an issue by STARTTS' Young Men and Boys Youth Workers in response to the influx of 15-17 year old Syrian and Iraqi youth arrivals. Youth workers should be prepared to take self-care seriously.[171]

Youth camps and school initiatives

◄ Since the arrival of the extra 12,000 Iraqi and Syrian people from refugee-like backgrounds, youth camps and school activities have largely comprised of Syrian and Iraqi youth, ages 10-17, of all religious and ethnic backgrounds.

◄ STARTTS works with Syrian youth primarily within Fairfield HS, Prairiewood HS, Bossley Park HS, and several other schools through various initiatives such as boxing (mainly for boys), Sporting Linx, Urban Art, Street Workout, Capoeira, the "I am Beautiful" program (mainly for girls), and camps.

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[169] UNESCO. (2016). *Missing Out: Refugee Education in Crisis.* Retrieved at: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/missing-out-refugee-education-in-crisis_unhcr_2016-en.pdf
[170] Anecdotal evidence from STARTTS worker (07/2017).
[171] Anecdotal evidence (July 2017).

- These programs teach goal-setting, learning how to win or lose, mindfulness, conflict resolution skills, team-work and even anger management.

- Keep in mind that sport activities and dance are popular choices for Syrian youth.[172]

- A new tier to Sporting Linx is being developed. It is aimed at Syrian and Iraqi male youth to teach them about male role models, leadership, and 'what it means to be a man' in Australian society, while combating gender-stereotypes.

- In Liverpool, two schools have begun offering "transition classes" to help children from refugee-like backgrounds learn coping strategies and what to expect in an Australian school. Find out if your client has access to these services or not.

- In 2017, another initiative called 'The Music Project' began, which primarily targets Syrian and Iraqi youths in Fairfield/Liverpool. Musicians from refugee-like backgrounds will partner with Australian music teachers to teach musical instruments to youth in local schools.

Work with minority groups from Syria

- Engagement with Assyrians from Syria through groupwork and camps with youth, FICT groups and support for Assyrian community activities (*see Assyrian Factsheet*).[173]

Community Organisations:
- Assyrian Community Association (NSW)
- Syrian Community Association (Fairfield based)

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[172] Reported by STARTTS' staff: 08/2017.
Group activities in schools should be tailored to the specific needs and interests of the group.

[173] *See Community Consultation Reports in R Drive for upcoming updated information about Assyrian and Muslim Syrian communities' needs and recommendations to STARTTS (late 2018).*

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Recommended Resources

- DIBP. (2014). *Community Information Summary: Syria-born*. Retrieved January 2015 from https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2014/syria.pdf

- Hassan, G., Kirmayer, L., Mekki-Berrada A., Quosh, C., el Chammay, R., Deville-Stoetzel, J.B., Youssef, A., Jefee-Bahloul, H., Barkeel-Oteo, A., Coutts, A., Song, S. & Ventevogel, P. (2015). *Culture, Context and the Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Syrians: A Review for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support staff working with Syrians Affected by Armed Conflict*. Geneva: UNHCR.

- Minority Rights Group International. (2017). *Syria Overview*. Retrieved at http://minorityrights.org/country/syria/

- Human Rights Watch. (2017) *Syria: Events of 2016.* Retrieved at https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/syria

- Transcultural Mental Health Centre. *The Mental Health of Syrian Refugees and Recommended Resources.* Available at: http://www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/Transcultural-Mental-Health-Centre/Resources/InformationSheets/MentalHealthSyrianRefugees/default.aspx

- Ibrahim, H. and Hassan, C.Q. (2017). *Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms Resulting from Torture and Other Traumatic Events among Syrian Kurdish Refugees in Kurdistan Region, Iraq.* Frontiers in Psychology. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00241

Authors

Note: This fact sheet underwent a minor revision in March 2018

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Client Group: TIBETANS

Numbers of clients seen by STARTTS

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
No. clients	68	38	17	2	29
% of total STARTTS clients	1.7%	1.3%	0.7%	0.08%	0.7%

General information

Country of origin: Tibet, or The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), has been a province in China since 1951. Tibet is a mountainous region above the Tibetan Plateau that lies between Central, South and East Asia. To its north and east is the Central China Plain; to its west is India's Kashmir region and to its south are Nepal, India and Bhutan.

Population: 3 million[174] (2010 Chinese census) although the figure is believed to be closer to between 5-7 million people.[175]

Language(s): Mandarin Chinese is the official language in Tibet, but standard Tibetan or Lhasa Tibetan may also be spoken by Tibetans. There are 220 dialects related to Tibetan, the main ones being Khams and Amdo Tibetan.

Other languages spoken are Dzongkha, Sikkimese, Sherpa and Ladakhi.

Religion(s): Buddhism

Ethnicity: Tibetan

Socio-Political and Cultural Context – Political Conflict, Organised Violence and Human Rights Violations

Chinese takeover

- Tibet's history as an independent state dates back 2000 years, with short periods of Chinese occupation in the 13th and 18th centuries later used by the Chinese government to claim that Tibet had always been a part of China. Despite warnings by the 13th Dalai Lama in the 1930s, Tibet did not have an army, had not formalised its independent state and had not made alliances with other countries, as the aristocracy and the monks

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174 Wang, G. (2011, 4 May). Tibet's population tops 3 million. *Xinhua News*. Retrieved from
http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-05/04/c_13858686.htm
175 Minority Rights Group. (2008). *Tibetans*. Retrieved at
http://www.minorityrights.org/5328/china/tibetans.html

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believed foreign influence would destroy Tibetan culture and undermine their authority. This left them highly vulnerable to attack by foreign forces.

- The turning point in Tibet's history was 1949, when China's People Liberation Army crossed into Tibet, defeated the Tibetan Army and imposed its *17 Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet* in 1951. As the agreement was signed under duress, it was not recognised under international law and a number of countries protested; however, 40,000 Chinese troops in Tibet and the threat of an invasion of the capital Lhasa forced the Tibetan government to sign.

- Although China exercised sovereignty over Tibet, it ostensibly promised to recognise the Tibetan government's autonomy over its own internal affairs. As Chinese control grew, they repeatedly violated the treaty and open resistance to Chinese rule increased, leading to a national uprising in 1959 which caused the Dalai Lama's flight into India and establishment of the Tibetan Government in Exile, who estimated that up to 87,000 Tibetans died during the uprising.[176] This figure has not been independently verified.

Persecution

- Following the National Uprising, China clamped down on supressing revolts and displays of Tibetan nationalism. Believing in Karl Marx's dictum that "religion is the opiate of the masses", the Chinese started to destroy the monastic system. Nomads were persuaded to settle in one place, land was confiscated and collectivised, forests harvested and minerals exploited for Chinese profit. The worst was yet to come from 1966 until 1970 during the Cultural Revolution, when horrific human rights abuses were perpetuated against monks and nuns including being publicly tortured and being buried or burned alive. Tibetans were forced to study Mao's teachings and anyone who resisted was intimidated, beaten or killed. One million Tibetans died and thousands were sent to labour camps. This particularly brutal period only ended with Mao's death in 1976.

- The government has continued to limit the number of monasteries and monks, vets all applicants for the monkhood, oversees the selection of monastic leaders, prohibits performance of traditional rites and conducts ongoing re-education campaigns centred on opposition to the Dalai Lama.

Attempted Chinese control over the Dalai and Panchen Lamas

- In 2005, the chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region announced that China would choose the next Dalai Lama. Chinese authorities have long refused to allow access to the boy the Dalai Lama identified in 1995 as the new Panchen Lama (the second most important personage in Tibetan Buddhism) and have kept him under house arrest in Beijing. In his place, the Chinese government chose another boy as the Panchen Lama and in 2005 they ordered monks to come out in force to greet him in Sichuan. Authorities held several suspected "troublemakers" in preventive detention in advance of the visit.

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[176] Tibet Online (official website of the Tibetan Government in Exile). (1998). *History Leading up to March 10th 1959*. Retrieved at http://www.tibet.org/Why/march10.html

Powerlessness and forced 're-education'

- Tibetans hold no power in their own region. A US State Department human rights report found that almost all top government, military and police positions in the TAR were held by Han Chinese.[177]

- The TAR and other Tibetan areas continued to be under intense and formalised systems of control aimed at enforcing social stability and undermining the religious authority of the Dalai Lama. The government has attempted to assert control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhist monastic and religious practice, such as through compulsory 'patriotic education' and 'legal education' campaigns at monasteries, denunciation of the Dalai Lama, establishing permanent police and security personnel presence at monasteries and taking over the identification and training of reincarnated lamas. This has provoked acts of resistance among the Tibetan population, who see it as a threat to Tibet's distinct religious, linguistic and cultural identity. These acts of resistance have led to more forceful attempts by Chinese authorities to maintain control and have provoked increasingly desperate acts by Tibetans, such as a series of self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhist clergy and laypersons in China's Tibetan areas.

Human rights abuses and discrimination

- There continue to be severe repression of the freedoms of speech, religion, association and movement. Authorities continue to commit serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial detentions and house arrests. According to a US state human rights report[178], economic and social exclusion has been a major source of discontent amongst Tibetans, including business operators, workers, students, university graduates, farmers and nomads. According to the report, some ethnic Tibetans reported that they experienced discrimination in employment as ethnic Tibetans were not welcome to apply for certain job advertisements; that Han were hired preferentially for jobs and received higher salaries for the same work; and that it was more difficult for ethnic Tibetans than ethnic Han to obtain permits and loans to open businesses. Restrictions on international nongovernmental organisations that provided assistance to Tibetan communities resulted in the closure of many valuable NGO programs and the removal of most foreign workers from the TAR and other Tibetan areas.

- The preservation and development of Tibet's unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage and unique environment remain vulnerable. As in prior years, authorities intensify control over speech, travel, assembly and religious practice in the TAR and other Tibetan areas prior to and during politically sensitive dates, such as the anniversary of the March 2008 protests, the observance of "Serf Emancipation Day" on

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[177] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labour. (2011). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: China-Tibet*. Retrieved at
http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=187481#wrapper
[178] Ibid.

March 28 and the 60th anniversary of the "peaceful liberation" of Tibet on July 19. The government strictly control information about, and access to, the TAR and Tibetan areas outside the TAR, making it difficult to determine accurately the scope of human rights abuses.[179]

Reasons for persecution

- Although the law provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, the Chinese restrict this right in practice. Tibetans are imprisoned for peaceful political expression such as distributing leaflets, putting up posters, flying the Tibetan flag, distributing the Dalai Lama's writings and teaching other Tibetans about their history and culture. The Tibetan flag and national anthem are banned. Tibetan exiles describe repeated beatings in prison, near-fatal illnesses that went untreated and punishments suffered by entire families for the acts committed by one family member.

- Tibetan priests and nuns are seen as a threat to the Chinese state and China has decreed "re-education" in Tibetan monasteries. Priests and nuns who resist are imprisoned and tortured. Many have set themselves alight in protest against China's suppression of religious freedom and Tibetan culture. There are ongoing violations of human rights through arbitrary arrest, torture, unfair trials, the secular takeover of religion and the absence of freedom of association, expression and assembly.

- Schools in Tibet limit use of the Tibetan language and do not teach students Tibetan history and culture. Officials do not tolerate privately-run Tibetan schools.

- A 2008 United Nations report found that the use of torture in Tibet was "widespread" and "routine", including police firing indiscriminately into crowds, forbidding independent investigators into the region and the arrest and detainment of 6000 protestors, of which the fate of 1000 is unknown.[180]

Tibetan Culture[181]

- Recorded Tibetan history dates from the fourth century when the first kingdoms were established at Yarlung, in what is now South-Central Tibet. Later, in the seventh century, the centre of Tibetan civilization shifted to the valley of Lhasa, "Gods' Place," where the first Buddhist kingdoms were established. Buddhist influence from India and Nepal and political influence from China played major roles in the organisational aspects of Tibetan society and culture.

- The main strengths of Tibetan culture result from a long period of relative isolation. It is is the Tibetans' unique political and cultural system which is the basis of their claim of independence from China.

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[179] Ibid.

[180] UN. (2008). *Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture: China*. Retrieved at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/docs/CAT.C.CHN.CO.4.pdf

[181] Cultural Survival. (1986*). The Survival of Tibetan Culture*. Retrieved at http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/china/survival-tibetan-culture .

- Modern Tibetan culture has been subjected to strong disintegrating influences. This includes the loss of independence, Chinese colonialism and modernisation as well as the impact of media and tourism.

- Although committed by the 17 Point Agreement of 1950 to preserve the political and cultural autonomy of Tibet, Chinese attempts to impose socialist policies have left little to the authority of the Tibetan government. After the departure of the Dalai Lama and collapse of the traditional Tibetan government in 1959, the Chinese intensified their attempts to transform Tibetan society to the doctrines and techniques of socialism.

- Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, traditional Tibetan culture was subjected to forceful reform. The traditional organisation of society was intentionally split and an economic class basis introduced into society. The Tibetan language was simplified by elimination of honorific titles and the introduction of proletarian terms and the Chinese language was promoted over Tibetan. Buddhism was eradicated as far as possible both in its physical and spiritual forms.

- The policy of liberalisation since 1979 has opened up a new economic benefit from Tibet in the form of tourism. The Chinese have permitted certain aspects of Tibetan culture which are politically inoffensive and attractive to tourists, while prohibiting other aspects. Along with tourism have come new forms of social entertainment, especially film and television. Tibetan family life has suffered the same disruptions that any society experiences with the introduction of modern communications media.

- Although the Tibetan government in exile has been successful in preserving much of its traditional culture, it has had an impact on individual identity as Tibetans living in India are neither a citizen of India nor of Chinese Tibet.

- Tibetans face the problems of many traditional societies trying to adapt to rapidly changing conditions. Although affected by the loss of their independence, Tibetans have not become absorbed into the general Chinese population but have retained their own cultural identity.

Resettlement in Australia

- The first recorded Tibetan migrant to Australia was Namygel Tsering, who arrived in 1973. By 1996, there were over 200 Tibetans, mainly in Sydney and Melbourne. Small numbers continue to arrive under Australia's humanitarian resettlement program.

- The majority arrived between 2000 and 2007: in 2008, there were approximately 320 Tibetans in Sydney, most of them born in Tibet. Many are former political prisoners and dissenters who suffer trauma at being exiled from their homeland.[182]   At the time of the 2011 census, there were 955 people in Australia who were born in Tibet.[183]

- **The Tibetan Community of Australia (New South Wales) Inc** at www.tibetancommunity.org.au represents the interests of Sydney's Tibetans, most of whom live at Dee Why. Other groups include the **Australian Tibetan Society** at

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[182] McCormack, T. (2008). *Tibetans*. Retrieved at http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/tibetans
[183] DIBP. (2014). *The People of Australia: statistics from the 2011 census*. Retrieved at http://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/people-australia-2013-statistics.pdf#search=Tibetans

www.tibet.org.au/cgi/wp in Killara that promotes Tibetan culture and assists Tibetans in Australia and overseas. Regular newsletters provide current information on Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora.

Implications for General Service Provision

- Important dates for Tibetans follow the Buddhist calendar but important dates specific to Tibetans are:
  - Losar (Tibetan New Year): celebrated over 15 days in late January and February, but especially the first 3 days.
  - Tibetan National Uprising Day: March 10
  - Birthday of the Panchen Lama: April 25
  - Birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama: July 6
  - Democracy Day of Tibet: September 2
  - Anniversary of the 1989 awarding of the Noble Peace Prize to the 14th Dalai Lama: December 10.

- Which language a Tibetan refugee will speak will depend on whether they grew up in Tibet, where the Tibetan language is under threat; or whether they grew up in exiled communities like India or Nepal where the Tibetan language is still taught by the exiled community. Tibetans may also prefer the language of their country of exile. Many younger Tibetans from Tibet will speak Chinese, as it has replaced Tibetan as the official language. Secondary education is taught in Mandarin and Tibetans cannot pursue higher education or public service jobs without it. Older Tibetans may prefer Tibetan. Ask the client in which language they would prefer an interpreter.
- The main STARTTS office seeing Tibetans is Auburn.

Clinical

The following is summarised from STARTTS' community consultation report with the Tibetan community[184].

- In the past, Buddhist faith and practice have been central to Tibetan identity, although this is declining with younger generations raised in western societies.   It is helpful to be familiar with some basic Buddhist principles transferable to the counselling process.

- In Buddhism, thinking of a mental or emotional activity is regarded as an action and therefore an aspect of one's behaviour. A person can be as troubled by their thoughts and emotional responses as by their physical actions.

- The success of traditional Buddhist meditative and spiritual practices have been confirmed through research studies into the positive effects of meditation on brain plasticity, affect regulation, mood states and physical health.

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[184] Cunningham, S. & Stirling, S. (2015). *Tibetan Community Consultation Report*. STARTTS: Sydney.

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- Some techniques commonly used by mental health practitioners can be linked to Buddhist practices such as mindfulness-based approaches, visualisation, breathing exercises, cognitive restructuring and sense and meaning making. The approaches of mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy are based on the Buddhist meditation techniques of 'Shamantha' (calm abiding) and 'Vipassana' (insight). These treatment methods can be regarded as culturally appropriate and effective in the support of Tibetan people, whether or not the counsellor offers them as part of an overtly Buddhist framework.

Recommended Resources

- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights & Labour. (2011). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011: China-Tibet*. Retrieved at www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2011humanrightsreport/index.htm?dynamic_load_id=187481#wrapper
- Cultural Survival. (1986*). The Survival of Tibetan Culture*. Retrieved at http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/china/survival-tibetan-culture
- Cunningham, S. & Stirling, S. (2015). *Tibetan Community Consultation Report*. STARTTS: Sydney.
- Minority Rights Group International. (2008). *Tibetans*. Retrieved at http://www.minorityrights.org/5328/china/tibetans.html
- Yoldi, O. (2002). Tibet: the progressive destruction of a unique culture. *Refugee Transitions*, (12), pp. 4-11.

Author

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Last updated: 15 September 2015

APPENDIX 2
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

You are about to meet your client for the first time. She is a recently arrived Kurdish woman who is currently living in a women's refuge with her 7 year old daughter. The information that has been provided to you by the refuge is that the client has recently left her husband as a result of ongoing domestic violence issues. The refuge has expressed concern that the client's main intention is remarry as quickly as possible. Your role is to discuss with the client her future options and to provide information on appropriate referrals.

How would you respond?

CASE STUDY 2

Your client is a homosexual man originally from Iran. He has been in Australia for a couple of years and is an active member of his community and local mosque. He has recently been diagnosed with HIV and is both shocked and overwhelmed. He has come to see you for information on referrals to support his current situation. He is adamant that his sexuality and recent diagnosis must remain a secret.

How would you respond?

Culltural Competence in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds

CASE STUDY 3

Your co-worker is an ex Buddhist monk persecuted in Burma as a result of his participation in the Saffron revolution. Most of his family remain in Northern Thailand and he is on his own here. He often suffers from bouts of depression as a result of feeling lonely and isolated. He is a very kind person and is very generous towards you and your colleagues. He is well liked in the office and many, including you, feel sorry for him.

Recently you have been assigned a joint project with him. On several occasions now he had failed to follow through on promises that he had made to complete particular duties relating to the project. You are becoming frustrated with your colleague and fear that this may have implications on your own performance and work load.

How would you respond?

CASE STUDY 4

Your new clients are a family originally from South Sudan. Prior to their arrival in Australia they were living in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. Your supervisor explains that the family have refused supplying any of the necessary documentation needed. This includes all of their birth certificates. Your supervisor tells you that she thinks that the parents are not providing this information as a deliberate ploy to try and cheat the system by claiming that the children are younger than they really are. When the family arrive they are 25 minutes late and the father is not in attendance even though you are expecting him.

How would you respond?

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