

Summary

Target participants:

Yazidi, Burmese and Congolese communities in the Murray-Riverina.

Aim: To enable participation and resilience through community-led initiatives to increase understanding of good hygiene and social distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19 in refugee and migrant communities in regional Australia.

Organisations involved:

Australian Red Cross, community members

Location: Albury, Wagga Wagga and Griffith

Funding: Humanitarian Settlement Program (Dept. of Home Affairs) and Mental Health Community Living Supports for Refugees (Dept. Health NSW).

CASE STUDY

Red Cross

Leading local: Community responses to health promotion of COVID-19

In the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health information in emerging languages was not readily accessible to refugee and migrant communities living in Murray-Riverina region of NSW.

Red Cross identified the need to develop and distribute culturally-appropriate information and materials within these communities. Red Cross - working with their bicultural workers, community members and faith leaders - developed a range of assets, both written and multimedia, designed to help promote good hygiene and social distancing, assist self-isolation and help explain government COVID-19 directives and advice. They then worked with communities to distribute the content through trusted channels.

Working with COVID-19 information from NSW Health, Red Cross:

- Workshopped key messages with bicultural workers and community members to ensure a shared understanding and parity in meaning. These included handwashing, symptoms, social distancing and the consequences for non-adherence.
- Then took this information and built a package with key messages in video and audio for communities to share through their networks. They then developed a briefing package that included the assets, key messages and mixed media, and distributed them through community preferred avenues.
- These were distributed through platforms already in use by refugee and migrant communities in the region and included MMS, Facebook/YouTube and WhatsApp.

In addition to the creation of these assets, Red Cross worked with NSW Police to develop a flip card they could use when enforcing community adherence to social distancing. These included basic pictographic



information and key words which they could use to engage members of the community with limited English to describe why they were out. For example, shopping, accessing employment or education, seeing a relative) as well as basic greetings and farewells to build cultural safety.

The range of barriers to public health initiatives in refugee and migrant communities is well acknowledged and include language barriers, health and health system literacy and culturally responses, derived from literacy and pre-arrival experiences and customs.

Added to this, the service environment in regional communities differs to large metropolitan settings with initially limited screening services facilitated through clinics and regional hospitals.

While simple in its design, the approach has been well received by refugee communities in the area and high lights the critical role informal and formal supports are to good settlement and promoting health literacy in Australia.



More information

For more information on Red Cross Migration Support Programs visit <https://www.redcross.org.au/about/how-we-help/migration-support> or follow them on social media.

