



SETTLEMENT SUPPORT  
NEW ZEALAND



REPORTING BACK ON...

# The new to NZ information seminar and discussion

2 March 2010

Enna vishayam

Isibingelelo

Siya namkela nonke

# Welcome

Mabuhay

Chào mừng

Ayubowan

# Willkommen

Piliganimu

# Bienvenue

# Welkom



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## Introduction

The Department of Labour Settlement Support NZ initiative aims to identify gaps and provide sufficient support to help newcomers and their families settle quickly and positively in NZ.

This report has been written for those interested in the concerns of new migrants and refugees who are residing in Upper Hutt. It is a summary of the findings from the *New to New Zealand Information Seminar* held on 2 March 2010 in Upper Hutt. It provides information for organisations that work in migrant and refugee sector, so that a common understanding of the gaps and benefits of different services and/or actions can start to develop.

The main topics of the discussion were:

- **The New Zealand Education System**
- **Emotional Wellbeing**

As well as receiving information about these two topics, participants were encouraged to discuss those subjects in more depth, using specific questions as a guide.

This report aims to contribute towards improved service of Settlement Support in the Hutt Valley.

## Settlement Support

The Settlement Support NZ initiative, established in 19 locations throughout the country, helps provide access to settlement information and coordinates service delivery locally to support migrants and their families in their first two to three years in NZ. The national Settlement Support network offices are funded by the Department of Labour. Hutt City Council is the lead provider for Settlement Support in the Hutt Valley and is responsible for the coordination of Settlement Support throughout this area. Hutt City Council has contracted Upper Hutt City Council (UHCC) to provide a Settlement Support Officer as first point of contact for new refugees and migrants in Upper Hutt. Settlement Support also provides orientation events and workshops for newcomers, as well as workshops for groups providing services to newcomers. The local initiatives are important for identifying needs and gaps within local communities; these findings are reported to the Department of Labour, and inform future development work for the NZ Settlement Strategy.

## SHAW

In 2006 UHCC developed a community consultation model called SHAW (Safety, Health and Wellbeing). The SHAW model is a consultative framework that allows UHCC to align identified areas of need with available funding and projects. As a result of adopting the SHAW model, UHCC facilitates regular forums on topics of focus to identify and address areas of need within the community. The provision of Settlement Support forms one of six focus areas that have been selected based on recent research of social and cultural issues affecting the Upper Hutt community.

There are quarterly forums in each of these six focus areas, one of which is an annual public forum to identify local needs. The remaining forums are for community groups and agencies working within these focus areas to better determine the needs of the community, and formulate appropriate responses to those needs. In addition to being a Settlement Support orientation event, the *New to NZ Seminar* was also a SHAW public forum.



## Definitions used in this report:

“Newcomers” is a term that encompasses new migrants and refugees. The terms “refugee” and “migrant” are very broad and many organisations have different definitions. The majority of feedback received at this orientation event related to migrants and refugees where English is a second language. For the purpose of this report, the following definitions of “refugee”, “migrant” and “newcomer” have been used.

**Migrant** Broad definition to encompass migrants that have a reasonable level of need, for example language or employment needs. The comments made in this report do not generally apply to migrants from English-speaking countries.

**Refugee** The definition used includes quota refugees, family reunification refugees and any person who has entered the country from a refugee background.

**Newcomer** Migrants and refugees that are new to NZ within the last three years or are still experiencing significant settlement challenges. The definition used in this report relates to need rather than years living in NZ; there have been examples of migrants and refugees living in NZ for over 10 years who still have significant settlement-specific needs.

## Approach

The *New to NZ Seminar* was an opportunity to welcome newcomers to Upper Hutt and to identify local settlement needs. The structure of this event was delivered similarly to previous events. Three speakers were invited from Ministry of Education (MoE) and Hutt Valley District Board (HVDHB) to cover the topics of the **NZ Education System** and **Emotional Wellbeing**. After each presentation, participants formed smaller facilitated groups to discuss prepared questions around these topics. The event was publicised through the local newspaper, posters, community groups and existing migrant and refugee networks.

His Worship the Mayor, Wayne Guppy was present at the event to welcome newcomers and engage in informal conversations about living in Upper Hutt.

A team from Council comprising of both Community Services and Upper Hutt Library staff assisted at the event by setting up, packing down, facilitating in discussion groups, serving light refreshments and informal discussions with attendees. The Hutt Settlement Support Coordinator was present at the event to promote settlement-related workshops in the Hutt Valley.

Settlement related information was displayed at the event in brochure stands. Information kits that contained settlement and community related information were distributed at the event.

There was a low turnout to the event, with only twelve participants. All attendees were permanent residents which revealed a slightly different trend from last year, where most were prospective permanent residents holding temporary work permits. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of attendees.

## Main Findings

All feedback received at the event was from migrants, rather than refugees. As a result, most of the findings are specific migrants' experiences of settling in Upper Hutt. Again, this differs from previous events which have had a strong refugee bias.

Attendees were encouraged to discuss prepared questions and provide feedback on settlement issues in a relaxed environment related to presented topics:

- **NZ Education System**
- **Emotional Wellbeing**

The discussion questions can be found in Appendix 2.

## NZ Education System

The majority of the participants knew how the NZ education system works, with only a small number of participants needing more information.

### Finding out about the NZ Education System

"Friends and family" and "forum" methods were highly rated as the best way to learn about the education system in this country. Internet, school websites, the Immigration NZ website, Settlement Support service and specific information from different agencies were also listed by the participants as sources of advice.

Parents from two families visited NZ schools before deciding to emigrate to NZ and it was a vital step for them. However they noted not everyone can afford to do this prior to the move to NZ, although they highly recommended it. Some attendees suggested using the library as a way of promoting and learning about different topics regarding settling in New Zealand.

One couple gave feedback on the process of getting information about education for their child who has autism. Information was sought from the MoE website followed by a visit to the school and a meeting with a special education advisor in Lower Hutt. In this way, the couple gained information on how their child would fit into the NZ education system.

One couple who had chosen to home school their children as a lifestyle decision, were surprised to find out about the complicated application process and the vague guidelines for home schooling in New Zealand. The couple have joined the Wellington Home School Association which they found via the internet and have found this to be very useful.

### Understanding the NZ Education System

Most participants felt they had a good understanding of how the education system works in NZ. Some had approached schools with queries and were satisfied with the responses. "Parent and teacher evenings" were also mentioned as a good place to clarify queries regarding the system. However, there were requests for further explanations on zoning, waiting lists, how to register, assessment of schools through ERO reports, as well as information about tertiary education providers.

### Barriers to register children for school

A few comments were made about the barriers to register children for school. Language barriers were identified by the participants, especially teachers who did not slow down for those for whom English is a second language.

Another comment was made about the tertiary education system. According to one participant from the Philippines, he had to start from year one in a NZ university, even though he had already completed year three in his home country. Fees were also mentioned as a barrier for some families to continue studies at university, especially when the family has just moved and need the money for settling into New Zealand.

### **Learning issues in NZ schools**

A number of participants were concerned about the learning culture in NZ schools. Compared to the curriculum in their home countries, learning in NZ schools was described as “dumbed down” and “lax”. It was expressed that there is less homework in NZ and insufficient time given to basic numeracy and literacy. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was suggested as a good scheme.

The kiwi accent was raised as an issue in that it can be hard to understand. Children going into year 13 also may find it more difficult to make new friends compared with younger children who may adjust to a new environment easier and faster.

In addition, one parent felt there were no easy system in the middle of the year to help her daughter cross credit her qualifications from secondary school in the UK into NCEA level two, a level similar as where she had been. However, the parent said that the school had been very helpful in making sure the student gets the right credits to go onto a new level in the new year.

In contrast it was noted that children who are home schooled can work at their own pace. These particular participants had children aged 1, 3, 7, 10, and 13 who would all be home schooled.

### **Other concerns about children in schools**

Participants generally felt that schools and playgrounds were safe. However, one parent felt that other parents are not taking responsibility for bullying in schools. Peer pressure was raised as an issue. In addition, special needs units and the new National Standard was also raised as a concern. Some participants felt very positive that schools are flexible, particularly for students who may need to work at a different pace or complete a level later on. As for home schooling, there was no concern about NZ specifically; it was chosen simply as lifestyle preference.

### **Making the transition into NZ schools easier**

A suggestion was to have teachers who are well trained to specifically teach migrant children. One boy who has recently moved to NZ was struggling in his intermediate school.

Parents who had come to NZ to research and visit a few local schools were well prepared. One school also supported a network for the visiting children to email current students where the parents were planning to enrol their children. This was rated as a great social connection for their children so that they already had friends on arrival to the country.

A few other suggestions were about highlighting how to apply to schools and the differences in curriculum. A participant thought it would be helpful if children could talk to older/peer support students from similar backgrounds about their experiences in schools in NZ.

Some participants felt that they did not know what to ask to get started. Therefore, they felt they had to read all relevant information.

Extra curriculum activities like ballet and sports were considered difficult to get into for children when they first arrived. It was suggested that an information sheet could be developed about activities for children.

## **Actions for Council**

Clearly there are a number of factors in regard to the education system that are national issues rather than issues specific to Upper Hutt. However, Council could work more closely with schools when they receive enrolments from migrant or refugee children, in order to facilitate information being fed back to parents.

## **Emotional Wellbeing**

### **Where to go for help with difficulties**

The majority of participants would talk to family when things are getting difficult. Becoming a volunteer was noted as one of the ways participants would get involved in the community and help others, while also adjusting to the English language used in NZ. Immigration support such as Settlement Support was noted as a big help for newcomers. Participants felt that it was difficult to make sure their children were happy and whether or not they made friends at school. One participant noted the importance of a positive attitude.

### **Feeling isolated**

Most of the participants had not felt isolated when they first arrived. One participant felt lonely because they were not in the workforce. Family, friends, co-workers, different associations, culture and religious affiliations were listed as the common networks that participants would ideally approach if they felt isolated in a new place.

One participant who works for the military had developed a strong social network. He noted that he has still participated in other activities such as a tramping club and a Maori course to make an effort to build more networks, which took significant time. Conversely, one participant felt isolated and lonely without immediate family members being around after arriving in NZ.

One couple felt that the library is a very good community space, especially for children as there are great activities available there.

One participant queried whether there is any support and networking opportunities for mums in NZ, such as movie sessions. She would like to share experiences and help new mums.

### **Barriers to seeking help when feeling emotionally distressed**

Some factors that were discussed that may prevent people from seeking help when feeling emotionally distressed are:

- Fear of failure
- Pride
- Unfamiliarity, not knowing where to go and what services are available
- Constraints of childcare
- Culture, do not want to be dependant on other family members
- Lack of immediate family members and friends



Leaving home for a new country is difficult. A participant said, "no one would understand the difficulties unless they have done it themselves." One couple felt lucky that English was their first language. They did not feel it would be as hard to seek help in NZ. Another couple however said they speak Afrikaans at home and their 3 year old doesn't yet understand English, which may be a difficulty later on.

### **Knowledge of mental health services in the Hutt Valley**

Most participants did not know about the mental health and addiction services. However, many expressed that they would ask their GPs and family members who know about these services if a situation arose. One couple noted that they were concerned by the news about a GP shortage when they first arrived in Upper Hutt, but found that it was not so hard to find a GP when needed. A few participants knew that NZ had a thorough health system that would include these services. Plunket was another place where a participant mentioned they would go to find out about other services.

Most felt that they do not feel the need to know what the services are until they really need them. One said that they wouldn't necessarily know this information in their home country either.

### **The common signs and symptoms of depression and its effects**

All participants indicated that they know the common signs and symptoms of depression. Symptoms discussed were:

- Withdrawing into themselves
- Social withdrawal
- Mood swings, irritability or moodiness
- Unfounded fears
- Anxieties
- Irrational feelings
- Thinking about things out of context
- The onset can be very gradual - things are not black and white
- Lack of enjoyment or interest in life
- Lack of appetite
- Sleep disturbance and fatigue
- Not going through daily routines

According to the participants and their understanding of depression, all of the discussed symptoms would have an effect on self-esteem, jobs and relationships.

## Evaluation

Two thirds of the participants completed the evaluation form after the event. 88% of those who responded thought the discussions were the most useful parts of the event. Further aspects of the event that the participants felt worked well were:

- informal discussions and networking
- the presentation on the Education system in NZ
- the format of the forum which include presentations and discussions
- meeting nice people and other migrants, and being able to share experiences

Half of the participants heard about the forum from the Upper Hutt Settlement Support Officer. Others learned about it from the settlement support newsletter, a brochure from the Upper Hutt Library, family, and the Community Administration and Projects Officer.

During the forum, participants were asked for suggestions on prospective workshops to be held that may be of interest to them. Suggestions included:

- Medical services including how to register with a GP, children's dental care, health insurance, ACC and how the hospital system works
- Finance
- Traffic rules
- Buying houses
- Tax system in NZ
- Walking or other activity groups
- Job opportunities for migrants
- Environmental awareness
- The tertiary education system
- Early Childhood Education

## Recommendations/Proposed Actions for UHCC

This report will be circulated to the relevant agencies and groups, areas within Council, and to the attendees who indicated an interest in receiving the findings. The report will also be circulated to newcomer communities and relevant agencies for feedback. The purpose of this will be to ensure that the comments recorded at the forum are accurate and reflect the general experiences of newcomers.

It is clear that whilst some of the recommendations from the discussions are best undertaken by Council, others would be better addressed by other community groups and agencies. In this case, Council's role will be to ensure that the relevant groups and agencies receive a copy of this report and in some situations to suggest actions to the organisations best placed to facilitate solutions to the issues raised.

### Community Information

Community Services may explore options to run workshops targeted at newcomers to NZ around the topics suggested in the evaluation.

In 2009, Community Services produced a booklet titled "52 Family Friendly Activities in Upper Hutt". Community Services will explore ways of promoting this more to those who are new to NZ.

Although Community Services has developed information sheets on child care and child education, an information sheet on children's services for parents could be added to the series to cover topics such as bullying, children's dentist services and extra curriculum activities, all of which were raised in the forum.

Community Services has also developed a series of information sheets on relevant topics for newcomers in Upper Hutt. The information sheets are available in branded information stands placed in public venues in the city as well as [www.upperhuttcity.com](http://www.upperhuttcity.com) under the Community Services community information sheets page.

Current information sheets specifically targeted to migrants and refugees include the following:

- services to help you (also available in Mandarin version)
- getting ready for work (also available in Mandarin version)
- need help with English (also available in Mandarin version)
- help for former refugees
- support services for Sudanese community general

Community Services will continue to expand the range of community information sheets in response to the needs of the community and plans to increase the number of brochure stands available in the city.

Regular emails with news and opportunities relevant to newcomers or agencies working with migrants and refugees are emailed to service providers and clients. It is expected that this information is passed on to more migrants and refugees who may be interested.

Upper Hutt City Council is organising a parenting expo in Upper Hutt in partnership with the Trentham Military Camp in June 2010. Settlement Support will promote the event to participants from the forum and have an information stall with settlement related information available throughout the event.

## Conclusion

Community Services and Upper Hutt Settlement Support will continue working with the community to address the needs of migrants and refugees living in Upper Hutt. This report will be used to define the future work that Community Services will undertake and it is hoped that other organisations will use it as a resource to assist with prioritising needs and services for refugees and migrants.

Upper Hutt Settlement Support will continue to facilitate regular forums for groups working with refugees and migrants and will work with groups to respond to the issues highlighted in this report.

Through Settlement Support, UHCC will continue to highlight local settlement needs and keep the Department of Labour informed of these needs.

## Appendix 1: Attendees at the forum

Country of origin	Gender	Age group	Years in NZ
Canada	Female	35-44	< 1 year
Germany	Female	55-64	< 1 year
Pakistan	Male	55-64	< 1 year
Philippines	Male	<24	< 2 years
Philippines	Female	45-54	< 2 years
Philippines	Male	35-44	< 1 year
South Africa	Male	35-44	< 1 year
South Africa	Female	35-44	< 1 year
Sri Lanka	Female	45-54	< 1 year
United Kingdom	Female	35-44	< 1 year
United Kingdom	Male	35-44	< 1 year
Vietnam	Female	25-34	1 year

## Appendix 2: Discussion Questions from the forum

### Discussion questions on Education

1. Did you know how the general education system worked in NZ when you first arrived (in NZ)?
2. How did you find out about it? Is there anything that could have made it easier to find out about the NZ education system?
3. Do you need any further help on understanding the NZ education system?  
In what way?
4. Are there any barriers for you to register your children into school?
5. Do you think there are any specific learning issues facing students who are new to NZ when they are learning at school? What do you think these issues are?
6. Do you have any other concerns about your children going to schools in NZ?  
What are the concerns?
7. Is there anything that could be done to make the transition into NZ schools easier for you and your child?

### Discussion questions on Emotional Wellbeing

1. Settling into a new country can be difficult and at times stressful. What would you do if things were getting too difficult to cope with?
2. Have you ever felt socially isolated or lonely without anyone to go to after arriving in NZ? If yes, who would you ideally go to if you could?
3. Is there anything that stops you from seeking help for your self, family member or friends when feeling emotionally distressed or disturbed?
4. What are the mental health and addiction services that you knew about in the Hutt Valley and where would you find them?
5. What do you think the common signs and symptoms of depression are?  
Do you know the effects?